

Presence

(Matthew 24:3) While he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately, saying: "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?"

What does "*presence*" mean? Let's examine the other related scriptures and let the Bible itself tell us the definition of "*presence*".

(Matthew 24:27) For just as the lightning comes out of the east and shines over to the west, so the presence of the Son of man will be.

His presence will be as visible as lightning that strikes across the entire sky. (not invisible)

Presence = Visible

(Matthew 24:36, 37, 39) "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ For just as the days of Noah were, so the presence of the Son of man will be.... and they took no note until the Flood came and swept them all away, so the presence of the Son of man will be.

As the flood suddenly came and destroyed the wicked, "*so the presence of the Son of man will be*"

Presence = "*That day and hour*", meaning Armageddon, not an extended amount of years before Armageddon

(1 Corinthians 15:23) But each one in his own proper order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who belong to the Christ during his presence.

Although the original Greek word "en" (meaning "in, on, at") is translated here by the Governing Body (GB) as "*during*", the sentence structure dictates that it should be translated as "at". Here is how the GB translates "en" in other scriptures with parallel usage:

Mt 7:22 "in that day"; Mt 10:15 "on Judgment Day"; Mt 11:22 "on Judgment Day"; Mt 11:24 "on Judgment Day"; Mt 12:2 "on the Sabbath"; Mt 12:36 "on Judgment Day"; Mt 12:41; "in the judgment"; Mt 12:42 "in the judgment"; Mt 13:1 "On that day"; Mt 14:1 "At that time"; Mt 22:23 "On that day"; Mt 24:45 "at the proper time"; Mt 24:50 "on a day that he does not expect and in an

hour that he does not know"; Mt 26:55 "**In** that hour"

The GB mistranslated "en" as "*during*" to promote their claim to have been appointed to positions of authority in 1914, thus creating a need for an "invisible presence" doctrine, but 1 Corinthians 15:23 should read "**at** his presence", not "*during his presence*". Those who belong to Christ and have died, are resurrected at his coming at Armageddon, and "**together with**" the other "*chosen ones*" (Mt 24:31) who are alive are "*caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*" (1Th 4:15-17 - see the next referenced set of verses)

Presence = Day of Armageddon

(1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) For this is what we tell you by Jehovah's word, that we the living who survive to the presence of the Lord will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep in death; ¹⁶ because the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel's voice and with God's trumpet, and those who are dead in union with Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Afterward we the living who are surviving will, **together** with them, be caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will always be with the Lord.

The "*presence*" Paul speaks of is when "*the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel's voice and with God's trumpet*", that is to say, at Armageddon. The "*chosen ones*" (Mt 24:31) who are alive on that day will not die, but will be caught away. If our Lord's presence began in 1914, as the GB teach, then according to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the living "*chosen ones*" (Mt 24:31) would have been gathered at that time. (1Co 15:51, 52)

Presence = Day of Armageddon

(1 Thessalonians 3:13) so that he may make your hearts firm, blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the presence of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones.

When does Jesus arrive "*with all his holy ones*"? At Armageddon. (1Co 6:2; 2Th 1:7-10)

Presence = Day of Armageddon

(1 Thessalonians 5:23) May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may the spirit and soul and body of you brothers, sound in every respect, be preserved blameless at the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They will be preserved at his "*presence*", that is to say, at his coming at Armageddon. (1Co 1:8)

Presence = Day of Armageddon

(2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2) However, brothers, concerning the *presence* of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered♦ together to him, we ask you ² not to be quickly shaken from your reason nor to be alarmed either by an inspired statement or by a spoken message or by a letter appearing to be from us, to the effect that the day of Jehovah is here.

Their "*being gathered*" is referring to when the living "*chosen ones*" (Mt 24:31) are gathered to him by being "*caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in the air*" as the scriptural reference (♦1Th 4:17) in the NWT shows. Therefore they are gathered at his "*presence*", that is to say, on "*the day of Jehovah*". (1Th 4:15-17)

Presence = "*Day of Jehovah*" (Armageddon)

(2 Thessalonians 2:8) Then, indeed, the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will do away with by the spirit of his mouth and bring to nothing by the manifestation of his *presence*.

The lawless one is done away with at Armageddon, that is to say, at "*the manifestation* (Greek = appearing) *of his presence*." To identify when that is the NWT Reference Bible references these verses: Mal 3:2; Mr 8:38; 2Th 1:7

Presence = Day of Armageddon

(James 5:7) Be patient then, brothers, until the *presence* of the Lord. Look! The farmer keeps waiting for the precious fruit of the earth, exercising patience over it until the early rain and the late rain arrive.

Patience is only needed "*until*" his presence, that is to say, "*until*" Armageddon. Therefore those in these last days must continue to remain patient because Armageddon has not yet arrived. (Php 1:10)

Presence = Day of Armageddon

(2 Peter 3:12) as you await and keep close in mind the *presence* of the day of Jehovah, through

which the heavens will be destroyed in flames and the elements will melt in the intense heat!

We await *"the presence of the day of Jehovah"*, that is to say, Armageddon.

Presence = "*Day of Jehovah*" (Armageddon)

(1 John 2:28) So now, little children, remain in union with him, so that when he is made manifest we may have freeness of speech and not shrink away from him in shame at his presence.

He "*is made manifest*" (Greek = appears) at Armageddon (Col 3:4), which is "*at his presence*."

Presence = Day of Armageddon

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So according to the Bible "*presence*" means the day of Armageddon. Does that definition fit with the question that his disciples asked?

(Matthew 24:3) "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?"

They asked two questions. The first question was "*when will these things be*"? What things? The destruction of the temple when not a stone would be left upon a stone. (Mt 24:2)

The second question was "*what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things*?"

In the second question they asked for a single sign to show two things. Why? Because they knew that both of those things happen simultaneously. Did Jesus' answer also show that both of those things happen at the same time? Let's look and see.

Matthew records the answer to their first question in verses 15-22.

(Matthew 24:15-22) "Therefore, when you catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation, as spoken about by Daniel the prophet, standing in a holy place (let the reader use discernment),¹⁶ then let those in Ju-de'a begin fleeing to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let the man on the housetop not come down to take the goods out of his house, ¹⁸ and let the man in the field not return to pick up his outer garment. ¹⁹ Woe to the pregnant women and those nursing a baby in those days! ²⁰ Keep praying that your flight may not occur in wintertime nor on the Sabbath day; ²¹ for then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again. ²² In fact, unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the chosen

ones those days will be cut short.

For a detailed discussion of those verses, see my article "The Great Tribulation - Discussion".

Here is Jesus' answer to their second question: "What will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?"

(Matthew 24:4-14) In answer Jesus said to them: "Look out that nobody misleads you, ⁵ for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. ⁶ You are going to hear of wars and reports of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for these things must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ "For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another. ⁸ All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress. ⁹ "Then people will hand you over to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be hated by all the nations on account of my name. ¹⁰ Then, too, many will be stumbled and will betray one another and will hate one another. ¹¹ Many false prophets will arise and mislead many; ¹² and because of the increasing of lawlessness, the love of the greater number will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who has endured to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this good news of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

In verse 6 he says "*but the end is not yet*." And in verse 8 he tells them that "*these things are a beginning*." And then in verse 14 he ends with the words "*and then the end will come*." Why does he say all of that? Because in the second part of their question they asked about "*the conclusion of the system of things*." Jesus did not want them to think that the wars and earthquakes and food shortages **marked** "*the conclusion of the system of things*." No, those signs would occur, but the end was "*not yet*". Those signs only marked the beginning of the "*pangs of distress*", that is to say the beginning of the tribulation that **precedes** "*the conclusion of the system of things*", which is Armageddon.

Well if they only asked about the conclusion, that is to say Armageddon, why did he tell them about all of those things that lead up to Armageddon? He answers that in verses 32 and 33.

(Matthew 24:32, 33) "Now learn this illustration from the fig tree: Just as soon as its young branch grows tender and sprouts its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ Likewise also you, when you see all these things, know that he is near at the doors.

Compare those two verses with these verses in James.

(James 5:7, 8) Be patient then, brothers, until the presence of the Lord. Look! The farmer keeps waiting for the precious fruit of the earth, exercising patience over it until the early rain and the late rain arrive. ⁸ You too exercise patience; make your hearts firm, because the presence of the Lord has drawn close.

In both accounts the signs of the growing season are used to illustrate the nearness of our Lord's arrival. In Matthew we are told that "*when you see all these things*" that he will be "*near at the doors*", meaning Armageddon is very soon. James describes it as "*the **presence** of the Lord has drawn close*" showing that Christ's presence comes at Armageddon.

And compare this verse in Matthew with its parallel verse in Luke:

(Matthew 24:39) and they took no note until the Flood came and swept them all away, so the presence of the Son of man will be.

(Luke 17:30) It will be the same on that day when the Son of man is revealed.

In Matthew the day of destruction is referred to as his **presence**, but in Luke **that day** is "*when the Son of man is revealed.*"

As you can see from **all** of the scriptural quotes, every time that the Bible refers to his **presence**, it is referring to **the day of Armageddon**.

A Warning

After answering their first question in verses 15-22, he provides a warning for those living in the last days leading up to his presence at Armageddon.

(Matthew 24:23-27) "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look! Here is the Christ,' or, 'There!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will perform great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the chosen ones. ²⁵ Look! I have forewarned you. ²⁶ Therefore, if people say to you, 'Look! He is in the wilderness,' do not go out; 'Look! He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷ For just as the lightning comes out of the east and shines over to the west, so the presence of the Son of man will be.

We know that this warning was not for those Christians living in Jerusalem before its destruction in the first century because Christ did not return at that time.

And here in the end we will not have to look for Christ in hidden places like "*the wilderness*" or in "*the inner rooms.*" No one will have to be told "*Here is the Christ,*" or, "*There!*" because his presence will be as visible and as obvious as lightning that strikes across the entire sky from east to west. (Mt 24:27) So heed his warning and do not listen to those false prophets who say that our Lord's presence is a hidden one.

But could his "*presence*" be said to describe him being invisibly present in heaven? No, since Jehovah and His Son have been present in heaven, that is to say the spirit realm, since before the creation of mankind, with the exception of his time on earth of course. And at Matthew 28:20

Jesus said: *"And look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things."* So his invisible presence in that sense is nothing new either. At Matthew 18:20 he even said that *"where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst."*

So his prophesied "presence" at the conclusion of the system of things cannot represent him being here with us invisibly since that has been the case since his time on earth.

Consider again Matthew 24:26:

(Matthew 24:26) Therefore, if people say to you, 'Look! He is in the wilderness,' do not go out; 'Look! He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.

Do the GB say that he is *"in the wilderness"* and *"in the inner rooms"*? Yes, because they say that he is invisibly present everywhere on earth.

And what does Jesus say? ***"Do not believe it."*** (Mt 24:26) And how do we know that what the GB says is a lie? For (which means because) of what Jesus says in the next verse.

(Matthew 24:27) For just as the lightning comes out of the east and shines over to the west, so the presence of the Son of man will be.

So do not believe the GB because his presence will not be invisible. It will be seen by all, like lightning that strikes across the entire sky. (see my article "The Sign of the Son of man")

That Day

After Christ told his disciples what to look for leading up to his presence at Armageddon he next shares with them what the day of Armageddon itself will be like.

(Matthew 24:29-31) "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will beat themselves in grief, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a great trumpet sound, and they will gather his chosen ones together from the four winds, from one extremity of the heavens to their other extremity.

Do his followers have anything to worry about? Will their lives be in danger on the day of his presence when Armageddon strikes? No. He comforts them about that too:

(Matthew 24:36-42) "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ For just as the days of Noah were, so the presence of the Son of man will be. ³⁸ For as they were in those days before the Flood, eating and drinking, men marrying

and women being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, ³⁹ and they took no note until the Flood came and swept them all away, so the presence of the Son of man will be. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken along and the other abandoned. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the hand mill; one will be taken along and the other abandoned. ⁴² Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

On the day that our Lord comes, life will be carrying on normally. People will be eating and drinking, and buying and selling, and marrying and going to work as usual. (Lu 17:28) Of course "*with persecutions.*" (Mr 10:30) Satan is the ruler of this world after all. (1 John 5:19)

Conclusion

So to conclude, the definition of his "*presence*" being the day of Armageddon fits well the question that Jesus' disciples asked and the answer that Jesus gave.

The conclusion of the system of things "**and**" his presence arrive together at Armageddon, after all of the signs occur.

(Mt 24:3b) ...what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?

And from that time on we will enjoy his continued presence on earth. Satan, the ruler of this world, will be thrown into the abyss for a thousand years. (Jn 14:30; Lu 4:6; Re 20:1-3) And our Lord will begin his 1,000 year reign. (Re 20:6)

What do *you* think?

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