

## **Behold He is Coming with Clouds**

### **Revelation 1:4-8**

*<sup>4</sup> John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:*

*Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.*

*To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, <sup>6</sup> and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

*<sup>7</sup> Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.*

*<sup>8</sup> "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

In our text today we cover one of the major themes of the Book of Revelation. This theme is the coming of the Lord. That being said, the coming of the Lord is one of those topics that is talked about very often, yet sadly, when most people speak of the coming of the Lord today, they speak of it according to the context which they have heard and very often miss what the Bible says when it speaks of the Lord's coming.

In last week's message we spoke about Jesus Christ the faithful witness and what that means.

Remember witness, as used here speaks not only of what someone sees, but an example that is

given to those following. A prime example of this is found in Hebrews the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter. After we are given a list of the many Old Testament Saints and their faithful lives and how they overcame all opposition because of their faithful lives we are told in Hebrews 12:1 and 2:

*12 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Christ is the author and the finisher of our faith and He is also for us a faithful witness. Through faithful obedience, through service, Jesus Christ overcame all opposition and was given a name that is above every name in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. We were told in verse 5 that He is the ruler over all the kings of the earth.

There are many who want to delay the reign and the authority of Christ to some date in the future. But John here early in the Book of Revelation spells out not only the scope of the authority of Christ, which is universal, He also spells out the timing of that reign. It has already begun. Now, there are many who may even understand that the reign of Christ is universal, but they often forget or are not aware what that means for them. In the very same verse where we read that Jesus rules over all the Kings of the earth, we also read that He has made us, and by us he means believers, kings and priests to His God and Father. Again, I must point out that it says, “He has made us...” and it does not say, “He will make us...”. What it says though is that He has made us kings and priests before His God and Father.

In Exodus 19:3-6 when the Lord is preparing to give His 10 commandments to the people of Israel He sends Moses to speak to the people:

*<sup>3</sup> And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: <sup>4</sup> ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. <sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. <sup>6</sup> And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”*

Notice when the Lord speaks to them through Moses, He reminds them of how He had delivered them in the past and lets them know the terms of His covenant. *“if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. <sup>6</sup> And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”* In Exodus 19 this is an if, then statement. If you obey...then you will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Of course, so much of the Old Testament shows us how Israel fell so short on the if part, and thus the then part became a problem.

In Matthew 21, Jesus told the chief priests and elders of the nation of Israel a parable. I want you to hear this parable and see how it applies to this passage. Beginning in the middle of verse 33:

*“There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. <sup>34</sup> Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. <sup>35</sup> And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup> Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to*

them. <sup>37</sup> Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' <sup>38</sup> But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' <sup>39</sup> So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

<sup>40</sup> "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?"

<sup>41</sup> They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

*'The stone which the builders rejected*

*Has become the chief cornerstone.*

*This was the LORD's doing,*

*And it is marvelous in our eyes'?*

<sup>43</sup> "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. <sup>44</sup> And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

<sup>45</sup> Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. <sup>46</sup> But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet."

In verse 41 the chief priests and elders pronounce their own judgment and Jesus confirms it in verse 43. The kingdom of God, will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. But then we hear that <sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

*'The stone which the builders rejected*

*Has become the chief cornerstone.*

*This was the LORD's doing,*

*And it is marvelous in our eyes'?*

Of course the stone which the builders rejected is Jesus Christ, because Jesus is the Faithful Witness. Peter confirms this in 1 Peter 2 speaking of Jesus starting in verse 4:

*<sup>4</sup> Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by*

*God and precious, <sup>5</sup> you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,*

*"Behold, I lay in Zion*

*A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,*

*And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."*

*<sup>7</sup> Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who <sup>[b]</sup>are disobedient,*

*"The stone which the builders rejected*

*Has become the chief cornerstone,"*

*<sup>8</sup> and*

*"A stone of stumbling*

*And a rock of offense."*

*They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.*

*<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; <sup>10</sup> who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*

Where the nation of Israel fell short, the Son of God was faithful. Where the nation of Israel disobeyed, Jesus obeyed unto death. And something we must remember, is that as the people of God, who were once not a people, we do not become this nation of kings and priests because of our obedience, we are that nation of kings and priests because of His work. We who were not a people, are the body of Christ. *He has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.* Knowing what Christ has done matters, and knowing what He has made us matters.

Verse 7 begins with a statement about the coming of the Lord. The verse begins with the word, Behold. This is a word that means we are to look and see. Behold, He is coming it says. In the Greek, Behold is a second person imperative. We are being commanded to see what is being talked about. Kenneth Gentry points out that this is the only appearance of the word Behold in the introduction to the Book and this is the major theme of the Book. What is being spoken of here is the coming of the Lord. What does it mean that He is coming, and why is He coming and what are the implications of that.

Today we sang from the 98<sup>th</sup> Psalm, “O Sing a New Song to the Lord.” The Book of Revelation speaks frequently about groups of people who are singing a new song. They sing songs that no one knows. The last verse of the song is verse 7, verse 9 in the Psalm we sing, “Because He comes, He surely comes. The judge of earth to be.” He is coming to His throne, and He is

coming to judge the world. Yes He judges with equity, but what does it mean that He is coming with clouds? There are some who see this passage as speaking of the second coming of the Lord. They do this because of the reference to clouds and they think that Acts 1:11 is being spoken about. After the ascension of the Lord we read about two men in white apparel speaking to the disciples who said to them: *“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”* but it helps us to remember, the Book of Revelation is not about the Second Coming of Christ. What it is about is the destruction of Israel and Christ’s victory over His enemies in the establishment of the New Covenant Temple. The word coming as used in the Book of Revelation never, not a single time, refers to the Second Coming. Revelation prophesies the judgment of God on apostate Israel; and while there are brief points where the Book looks beyond these immediate concerns, that is done merely as a “wrap-up,” to show that the ungodly will never prevail against Christ’s Kingdom.

Remembering the focus of Revelation is upon events which were soon to take place helps us greatly in our interpretive efforts.

When John writes about Jesus coming with clouds he is using one of the most well known Biblical images for judgment. Throughout Exodus the Lord leads the children of Israel through the wilderness and He is described leading the way by a cloud. In Psalm 18 and Psalm 104 the Clouds are seen as the Glory-Cloud chariot of the Lord.

The clouds are pictured as God’s heavenly chariot by which He makes His glorious presence known. The Cloud is a portrait of the throne of God from which He makes His judgments. He

He comes to protect His people and destroy the wicked. One of the most striking descriptions of God's "coming in the clouds" is in Nahum's prophecy against Nineveh in Nahum 1:2-8

<sup>2</sup> *God is jealous, and the LORD avenges;*

*The LORD avenges and is furious.*

*The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries,*

*And He reserves wrath for His enemies;*

<sup>3</sup> *The LORD is slow to anger and great in power,*

*And will not at all acquit the wicked.*

*The LORD has His way*

*In the whirlwind and in the storm,*

*And the clouds are the dust of His feet.*

<sup>4</sup> *He rebukes the sea and makes it dry,*

*And dries up all the rivers.*

*Bashan and Carmel wither,*

*And the flower of Lebanon wilts.*

<sup>5</sup> *The mountains quake before Him,*

*The hills melt,*

*And the earth heaves at His presence,*

*Yes, the world and all who dwell in it.*

<sup>6</sup> *Who can stand before His indignation?*

*And who can endure the fierceness of His anger?*

*His fury is poured out like fire,*

*And the rocks are thrown down by Him.*



<sup>7</sup> *The LORD is good,*

*A stronghold in the day of trouble;*

*And He knows those who trust in Him.*

<sup>8</sup> *But with an overflowing flood*

*He will make an utter end of its place,*

*And darkness will pursue His enemies.*

His coming in the clouds is portrayed as bringing judgment and deliverance in history. To think that these verses are speaking about the end of the physical world is to miss the meaning of Scripture. St. John is speaking of the fact, stressed throughout the “last days” period by the apostles. Remember in the New Testament the last days were already upon them. The term last days was a term describing the end of the Old Covenant age. Hebrews 1:1-2, which should be a familiar passage says: *I God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

His coming on clouds is a pronouncement that a time of trial or a crisis was approaching. Jesus told His disciples on more than one occasion that some of them would see the coming of the Kingdom in Glory. Mark 9:1: *And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”* that they would see the Son of Man coming in His glory. in Matthew 24:34 told His disciples that all the things that He had been talking about in the Olivet Discourse would be fulfilled in that generation. Just As He promised the chief priests and elders in Matthew 23:35 and 36: <sup>35</sup> *that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the*

*blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. <sup>36</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.*

The Lord had used the same terminology of His Coming against Jerusalem at the end of that generation (Matt. 24:30), and He even warned the high priest: “*You shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven*” (Matt. 26:64). To be clear, the apostates of that evil generation would understand the meaning of Christ’s Ascension, the definitive Coming of the Son of Man to the Ancient of Days as described in Daniel 7:13:

*“I was watching in the night visions,  
And behold, One like the Son of Man,  
Coming with the clouds of heaven!  
He came to the Ancient of Days,  
And they brought Him near before Him.*

His coming in Clouds would be against the present generation “in the clouds,” in wrathful judgment against apostate Israel. Our text today tells us that every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him. Those who crucified the Lord that were still living, would see Him coming in judgment. There is much written about this passage where people claim that it is speaking of visually seeing with the eyes the coming of the Lord, but the context is that they would experience and understand that His Coming would mean wrath on the Land.

That being said, I want to say something about the land as it is spoken of in the Book of Revelation. In many of our translations, throughout the Book of Revelation there is no distinction made between the word earth and the word land. When the Book of Revelation

speaks of the land it is usually talking about the land of Israel. When the sea is spoken of it is talking about the gentile nations.

Those in the land would see that the Son of Man had come to the Father. Jesus had said also that “*all the tribes of the Land will mourn*” on the day of His Coming (Matt. 24:30), that “weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 24:51). St. John repeats this as part of the theme of his prophecy: all the tribes of the Land, this is speaking of the Jews, will mourn over Him.

<sup>10</sup> “*And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.*”<sup>11</sup> *In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.* Both John and our Lord interpret this verse taken from Zechariah 12:10-11, where it occurs in an original context of Israel’s mourning in repentance. But Israel had gone beyond the point of no return; their mourning would not be that of repentance, but sheer agony and terror.

Yet this does not negate the promises in Zechariah. Through the judgment of Christ on Israel, by means of her excommunication, the world would be saved; and, through the salvation of the world, Israel herself will turn again to the Lord and be saved. Because Christ comes in the clouds, in history, judging men and nations, the earth is redeemed. He comes not simply for judgment, but for judgment unto salvation. We tend to look at judgment as all bad, however according to Isaiah 26:9 “*When Your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.*”

Christ's coming into the world from the very beginning has always been about redemption. ”  
John 3:17 says: *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him”* Christ “comes in the Clouds” in historical judgments so that the world may know the Lord God as the eternal and unchangeable Source and Goal of all history.

This section closes out with Jesus identifying Himself as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek Alphabet, and Omega is the last letter. Jesus is being proclaimed here as the A to the Z. In Isaiah 44:6 we read:

*“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,  
And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:  
I am the First and I am the Last;  
Besides Me there is no God.*

Jesus the second person of the Trinity is revealed here to be nothing short of Divine. It is Jehovah who is revealed to be the First and also the last. Now here in Revelation we see Jesus as the First and the Last. He is the beginning and the end. He is the one who is and who was and who is to come. The Greek Word here is *pantokrator*, which means the One who has all power and rules over everything. It is sometimes translated as almighty. According to David Chilton It is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament expression Lord of Hosts, the “Captain of the Armies.” Christ is about to demonstrate to Israel and to the world that He had ascended to the Throne as Supreme Ruler.

In referring to Jesus as the Alpha and Omega the Beginning and the End, the one who Was and Is and Is to Come, John is identifying Him as the Head of this Kingdom. He is the Almighty.

He has all the power and rule. He has it now, and the acts that are to follow are the beginning acts of his reign. His reign is over that Kingdom which will know no end which is spoken of in Daniel 7:9-10

*“I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.*

The second Psalms begins with a question. Why do the heathen rage, why do they plot against the Lord and against his Christ? Well, the response from the almighty is that he laughs. I often said of this text, that when God laughs it is not funny. But the real question that we must ask regarding the reign of Christ is are we submitted to His rule, the reign of Jesus Christ is a glorious and amazing thing. The second Psalms ends with a command to kiss the son. The son that is being spoken about here is the One who is coming in clouds to judge the world. Let us Kiss the Son and submit to His rule and to His reign.