

## A Glorious Declaration

Call to Worship: Daniel 7:13&14

Hymn #35- *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*

1<sup>st</sup> Scripture: Matthew 24

Hymn #26 (supp.)- *Now I Belong to Jesus*

2<sup>nd</sup> Scripture: Revelation 1:4-8

Hymn #237- *Lo! He Comes, With Clouds Descending*

### Introduction:

So far, John has opened this apocalyptic letter with a glorious, blessed salutation on behalf of our Triune God, which has led him to offer up a doxology of praise directed especially toward the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Person mentioned in the salutation. And now, following this, the Apostle makes a declarative statement about the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the central Figure of the Book of Revelation, and in fact, the central Figure in all of history. And this statement of declaration is meant to serve as a powerful, perpetual motivation for giving heed to all that is said in the remainder of the Book. So important is this declaration that God the Father follows it up with His own words, in such a way as if to righteously intrude upon John's comments with a divine exclamation point. And this actually serves to elevate John's "Amen" to the place where we can be sure with an absolute sense of assurance that what John has stated will and must come to pass. The language of verse 8 seems almost awkward and intrusive, but that is the very point of the interruption. It is given from a "first person" standpoint as a means of intentionally grabbing hold of the listener's attention, so that they will stop, consider and embrace the previous statement with an "ever remembering" sense of conviction. It is God's way of adding an exclamation point to what has just been said. It is God's way of saying, "Take special notice of this, and let it not be forgotten...ever!"

And so, for this morning then, we will spend some time considering the content of this declarative statement, followed by the divine exclamation point that God the Father places after it.

## **I. The Glorious Declaration**

“Behold, He [He, who loved us and freed us from our sins by His own blood, and has made us a kingdom of priests to His God and Father; He, who is the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead and the Ruler of the kings of the earth]...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.”

As we consider this statement about *a particular coming* of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is important that we identify some of the given facts that surround it, so that we can properly understand the nature and purpose of this coming. This will help us resolve such questions as, “Is this a coming that will lead to the repentance of any number of people, perhaps ethnic Israel as a whole or a significant number of people who will repent upon seeing Him?” Or “Is this a coming in judgment of some form, partial or universal?” Whatever our questions might be, there are very helpful hints given in our text, which can help us identify the nature and purpose of this coming.

The first important clue given in our text is that we are told that our Lord is “coming *with clouds...*” This is significant for two reasons, one relevant to our purpose at hand, and one relevant to further confirming the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are, in fact, several occasions where this idea of “coming with clouds” is found in Scripture. And it is important to note that such a description is *always only* used to describe God and especially with respect to the majesty He bears when He is preparing to come *in judgment*. Note several Old Testament texts that describe God (and never angels or anyone else) as riding upon the clouds unto judgment:

1) In Deuteronomy 33:26-27, Moses, preparing to die, leaves Israel with the assurance that God will prosper them, especially in the overcoming of their enemies when they enter the Land of Promise. “There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides the heavens to help you, and in His excellency on the clouds. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you, and will say, ‘Destroy!’ Then Israel shall dwell in safety, the fountain of Jacob alone, in a land of grain and new wine; His heavens shall also drop dew. Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the

Lord, the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty! Your enemies shall submit to you, and you shall tread down their high places.”

2) David uses such language describing God, “on the day when the Lord had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul” (2 Sam. 22:1). In 2 Samuel 22:7-20, David writes, “In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry entered His ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken, because He was angry. Smoke went up from His nostrils, and devouring fire from His mouth; coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. He rode upon a cherub, and flew; and He was seen upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness canopies around Him, dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. From the brightness before Him coals of fire were kindled. The Lord thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered His voice. He sent out arrows and scattered them; lightning bolts, and He vanquished them. Then the channels of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were uncovered, at the rebuke of the Lord, at the blast of the breath of His nostrils. He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me; for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support. He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because He delighted in me.”

3) Again in Psalm 68:1-4, 32-35: “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let those also who hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yes, let them rejoice exceedingly. Sing to God, sing praises to His name; extol Him who rides on the clouds, by His name Yah, and rejoice before Him. A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation...Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth; oh, sing praises to the Lord, Selah. To Him who rides on the heaven of heavens, which were of old! Indeed, He sends out His voice, a mighty voice. Ascribe strength to God; His excellence is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds. O God, You are more awesome than Your holy places. The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people. Blessed be God!”

4) And again in Psalm 97:1-6- “The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad! Clouds and darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. A fire goes before Him, and burns up His enemies round about. His lightnings light the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory.”

5) And lastly, for the sake of time, consider one more example: We are told in Psalm 104:1-4, “Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, Who makes the clouds His chariot, Who walks on the wings of the wind, Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.”

Here we see, brethren, a description given to God alone, whereby we behold His exalted majesty as we picture Him, even as the Israelites beheld His glory at Mount Sinai, engulfed in clouds, surrounded by thunderings, lightnings and earthquakes, and coming down upon His enemies (and the enemies of His people) with great judgment and power. Well, this same imagery of majestic, divine judgment is the imagery that John would have us recall to mind, as we ponder his declarative statement concerning our Lord’s coming, described in Revelation chapter 1:7. And as we behold his illustrative description of the Lord Jesus Christ given at the end of chapter one, we will all the more confirm what we are uncovering here in these words.

Christ will come again, and this time, it will not be as the gentle, harmless, sin bearer, but rather as the wrathful, fiery judge, who will destroy His enemies with all finality. The same Son of Man, whom the Apostles had seen ascending victoriously up to heaven, until a cloud had taken Him up out of their sight (Acts 1:9); and this same Son of Man, whom Daniel saw prophetically from the perspective of heaven, coming with the clouds of heaven to the “Ancient of Days” to receive His eternal Kingdom (Dan. 7:13 & 14), John states, this same Son of Man will return in judgment.

But notice then brethren, a second clue that we are given about this “coming of our Lord.” In our main text, in verse 7b, we are told that, “every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him...”

Here we see that this coming is not a partial or local coming of some sort, as if to assume that perhaps this speaks with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 or some other isolated form of judgment. No, “every eye will see Him, *even they who pierced Him...*” This particular coming is one that is beheld by all nations and all people. It is universally beheld. Every jaw is dropped to the ground upon witnessing it. The gentile nations will look upon the Lord of glory and they will see; whether they have ever heard of Him or not, they will behold the Ruler over the kings of the earth and the Lord of glory! They will look and immediately understand that this coming One is the One to whom they must give an account. He will be universally seen as the standard by which every nation will be judged. Every cult and false religion; every other form of idolatry and empty religion that has robbed God of His rightful due and glory (Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Buddhism, Taoism, Easy Believism and all of the other “isms” that exist) will crumble under the feet of Christ, and the One true King will be acknowledged and worshiped (be it willfully or not).

And even they that pierced Him will behold Him. Those Jews who have long rejected the true Messiah; those who have carried forth the tradition that delivered Jesus over to the Gentiles to be crucified...they will behold Him! They will see and confess that the Jesus whom they have rejected is indeed Lord, to the glory of God the Father! And all of their robotic, lifeless traditions and practices, which have been strapped to their own self-righteousness, will buckle and collapse beneath them. The whole system of Judaism will cave in, and it will be seen for the damning, useless system of dead works that it is.

His coming will be universally beheld by all. The Ruler over the kings of the earth will be seen and acknowledged as such. Even they who pieced Him and saw Him as nothing more than an impotent hindrance to their own religious system, will see Him coming with great power.

And then, we are given a third and final clue as to the nature and purpose of this coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the third portion of verse 7: “And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.” This is not a mourning unto repentance. Repentance is no longer

possible in this context of judgment. This is a mourning that is associated with shock, regret and extreme sorrow. It is a mourning that comes on the heels of utter surprise, when one finds out that he has been travelling in the wrong direction for the whole of his life. It is the type of mourning that weeps bitterly and flees, pleading with the mountains and caves to fall upon him. Every nation will behold Christ and their hearts will utterly fail. Why? Because the One whom they have rejected; the One whom they have failed to know and love and serve in truth; the One who bears the standard by which every nation will be judged; the Creator, sustainer and omnipotent power of everything that exists, will come to them in wrath and judgment, and they will have no place to turn for help or relief. They will then bear their iniquity; every wrong they have done will be brought to mind; brought out into the open and set against them in the final judgment. And there is nothing they or anyone else can do to ever change their eternity. Their condemnation has arrived and the wages of sin must now be paid in full for eternity.

And as horrifying as this reality is; as difficult as it would be for John or anyone else to ponder the reality of the coming judgment upon the wicked, John is led to say, “Even so, Amen.” It is horrifying; it is terrifying; eyes cannot behold the judgment of hell fire and torment that is to come upon immortal, never dying souls forever, but it is “just,” nevertheless. It is right and proper. And Christ will be glorified and vindicated in destroying all who have rejected Him and all who have not known Him in truth. “Even so, Amen.”

And so, brethren, we conclude our assessment of this coming of our Lord, by recognizing, that this particular coming, is that final coming of our Lord, when He will return to bring judgment upon the world; a universal judgment that will lead to the destruction and eternal condemnation of all who know Him not in truth. He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see Him, and every tribe (every nation) will mourn because of Him.

And is it not then understandable that the Apostle John would desire his tempted, tried and battling audience to carry this reality in mind at all times, no matter what is to be experienced at the level of the surface? No matter what happens in this world with nations, governments, worldly achievements, religious persecutions...etc, “behold, Christ is coming with clouds to judge the world!” And that is why God the Father chimes in with His own divine exclamation point; a restatement of who He Himself is, so as to further authenticate, seal and confirm exactly what the Apostle has just stated. Again, this is not to make the declaration any

more Scriptural, but it is a very helpful means of highlighting the declaration and motivating us to carry it with us at all times, especially as we consider all that is to be said about the future in this apocalyptic letter. And furthermore, this divine declaration helps reinforce the fact that this “coming of our Lord” is universal and not describing what had happened in Ad 70 to Jerusalem alone. This is very relevant for the churches *in Asia Minor* and for the churches of all times and in all places. And so, secondly, let us now briefly consider:

## **II. The divine exclamation point that God places after the Glorious Declaration**

“‘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.’”

Here then is the divine seal of authenticity pressed upon John’s declaration. And before we briefly consider the specific language of this statement, we can presume right from the outset, that when God speaks here, He is attempting to validate with the most firm sense of guarantee that Christ will and must come in judgment, and we ought to take note of it, lest we are surprised when it happens. And furthermore, it is an encouragement to those who are persevering under persecutions and trials; an encouragement that states, “Behold, Christ is coming and when He comes, you will be vindicated in the destruction of your enemies.”

Notice that in the last portion of this statement where we read, “who is and who was and who is to come...,” we clearly see that the first Person mentioned in the blessed salutation, namely, God the Father, is the One who is speaking here on behalf of what John has declared about the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. And all of these statements, which God attributes to Himself (and which are later attributed to Jesus as well), really say the same thing in three different ways. Only, the repetition is meant to highlight with the brightest and most pronounced highlighter, what is being said. Many of you can recall this type of an emphasis in Isaiah 6, where the seraphim, upon beholding the glory of God, are led to repeatedly cry aloud, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts...” Clearly, the holiness of God is meant to be emphasized as that particular virtue which is most prominent, and which serves as the soil for all of His other attributes and characteristics. Well, here we are given another three-fold formula, saying the same thing but in three different ways: “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...*” And all three of these descriptions of God are summed up in the one final word given, namely, the “Almighty!”

And so, what exactly is God stating about Himself in these words, as He seeks to add His divinely emphatic exclamation point to what John has just stated about the Lord’s coming? Keeping in mind that “Alpha” and “Omega” are the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet, in essence, He is saying in a three-fold manner, “I am the Almighty God who has maintained sovereign control over all things from the beginning, and I will continue to do so, right to the end. Everything I declare must and will take place, and nothing can ever thwart My will. I started it all and I will complete it all, exactly according to plan, and therefore, everything in between is set to fulfill every detail of My holy will.” “I am the Almighty!” “Don’t get caught up in the little details that you behold in your short life span. Rather, recognize that all of those fine details are moving in the very direction of satisfying all My holy will.” “I have all power to do this. I have been using all power to do this. I have every right to do this. And I will do this!”

In other words, it is God’s way of saying, “Rest assured, that no matter what *seems to be*, beyond the shadow of any doubt, My Son will return and He will judge the world, and every eye will see Him, and all who do not know Him will wail on that day! Keep this in mind at all times, and let it guide your conscience. Let it comfort the afflicted and let it warn the backslidden. The Almighty God has spoken!”

Our Lord’s exclamation point here is just like the words of Isaiah 9:7, which place an exclamation point on all that is declared by Isaiah concerning the coming Christ in verses 6&7. Consider Isaiah 9:6&7 for a moment to appreciate this:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. *The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this!*”



## Conclusion

Let me then close by leaving you with three very brief applications, brethren:

1) It is easy to read the New Testament texts which speak of Christ's final coming as imminent (soon/close), and to wonder why it was presented in such a way to the early church, when He would not return for at least over 2000 years. We might argue that these Scriptures are also for us and for every generation, as we are all called to live in keeping with the ever present reality of His imminent return in mind. This is most certainly true, but the relevance of Christ's final coming, to all generations, actually runs deeper than even this. For one, we can say that 2000 years is really not that long, but furthermore, the final coming of Christ completes a picture that is very relevant for all generations, and not just for the generation that actually lives to experience it. The final coming of Christ brings a completeness to history, to God's will for this world and creation, and to everything that is relevant and significant to the existence of mankind, which causes every generation from the time of His first coming onward, to look forward to it with a sense of imminence and eager anticipation. Even the earth itself groans with birth pangs until the day of redemption. Christ's final coming ushers in the back cover of a glorious "creation/redemption novel"; God's story concerning this wondrous creation created by God and for His glory. It makes complete what is yet incomplete. It is the conclusion of God's redemptive novel. And so, even those who die prior to the return of Christ, living somewhere in the midst of this glorious novel, are told of the imminence of this glorious end, because whether they are living on the earth at the time of Christ's coming or whether they have died prior to it, it is indeed coming very soon, and it has everything to do with them *still in an imminent sense*, even as it has everything to do with every successive generation. The Old Covenant people of God saw the first coming of Christ in this regard, which anticipated the coming judgment upon national Israel. And we still look to the final coming of Christ, in anticipation of the coming judgment upon the world. And so, we are warned and we are exhorted and we are encouraged to live in this imminent light.

2) Let the imminent and certain coming of Christ be an encouragement to the faithful believer. Your reward is soon to come. You may have lost much in this life; you may have undergone much suffering, but behold, Christ is coming! And you are His!

3) Let the imminent and certain coming of Christ be a caution to those who are backsliding. Remember the parable of the ten virgins! Regain your focus!

4) Let the imminent and certain coming of Christ be a warning to those who are yet outside of Christ. Every eye will see Him! Will you be one who is shocked and who mourns and who is devastated in all hopelessness? What if He were to return right now...this minute? Children, what would happen to you?

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24&25