

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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He is Coming!

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. (Revelation 1:7-8, AV)

As I ponder this passage and its context, a point that has resonated in my mind several times through this study again comes to mind. In our myopic way of isolating Bible topics into neat little paragraphs that we never connect to any other Bible topic, we have isolated the Bible doctrine of the Second Coming from its New Testament practical richness. We have allowed "Left Behind" and related fictional ideas to replace Bible teaching on the doctrine, and we have sadly lost the depth of richness and power the doctrine imparts to our present Christian pilgrimage. Lord, help us to regain this precious lost ground.

When Jesus ascended at the end of His time dwelling in human flesh on this earth (I suggest that He took that human body back to glory with Him and presently dwells in it, though it does not in any way limit his divine work, including His omnipresence), angels taught the disciples the meaning of the event.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:9-11)

John's teaching in our study passage links directly to this passage. At the end of Jesus' time of dwelling among men as a man, He arose from the dead in that same physical body in which He lived, spent about forty days appearing to and teaching the disciples before He ascended back to glory, as recorded in these verses. He "...shall so come in like manner as he have seen him go into heaven." Luke does not leave us to doubt where He went. On occasion, Jesus left the disciples only to appear to them shortly at another location. This leaving is not such an event. He leaves them for heaven itself. However, the angels comfort the disciples with the words that He "...shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." John picks up on the other side of this prophetic

event with "*Behold he cometh with clouds...*" In Acts 1 Jesus disappeared out of the disciples' sight in a cloud of glory. In Revelation 1 He shall appear in clouds of glory. Despite the brevity, these two verses tell us much that we need to know about His return. So needed in our day of fantasy fictional beliefs about the Second Coming, John goes to the heart of the matter and makes a powerful point. He knows nothing whatever of a "Secret rapture" or a secret coming. His coming shall be one of the most universal and visible events to occur in human history. "...every eye shall see him." Even "...they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." There is nothing secret about this coming. Nothing whatever.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending.... "Alpha" is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and "Omega" the last letter. In our English language Jesus would say, "I am 'A' and 'Z.'" And we'd understand that He means to teach us that He is the first and the last—and all in between—of God's revelation to His people in this world. The Holy Spirit could have directed John to use any number of encompassing analogies, but He specifically used the alphabet of the day. What is the point? The point shouts out in clarity to us. God's first and last true communication to His people on earth is personified in Jesus and in Him alone. (Hebrews 1:1-2) Forget about secret revelations. Forget about the fantasy of God's having a revealed and a "Secret" will. Scripture teaches us of only one will in God, His righteous will that Scripture describes. Scripture never implies a secret and contradictory will to God's revealed and righteous will that we find in the Scriptures. And, no, "*secret things*" does not so much as imply a hidden, much less contradictory will. (Deuteronomy 29:29; notice the second portion of the verse. Only the things revealed belong to us. The moment a man or woman starts claiming to know so much about God's "Secret will" they admit that they know more than this verse says they know. They are both contradicting the passage, and they are going categorically outside the field that the verse states belongs to them).

I grew up in the shadow of the atomic bomb's early years. In the 1950s the US government encouraged all public school teachers to conduct

atomic bomb drills, including elementary schools. Can you imagine the fear of an elementary age school child hearing a long loud horn and being told to crawl under his desk, bend over double, and tuck and cover his head? We were told that this bomb could actually happen, and we were to remember what to do in case the horn went off, and it wasn't a drill. And how many times I cannot remember that dreadful horn went off as a false alarm when there was no drill.

During the fear of atomic bombs in this era, it was sadly common for a certain class of preachers to preach whole sermons on the idea that some madman would gain custody of an atomic bomb and would end the world by atomic war. In that setting we heard no end of suggestions about various political leaders who were surely the final "Antichrist" of Scripture.

All of this fearful insanity ignores and contradicts the teaching of Scripture regarding the Second Coming. That event shall not be a cataclysmic holocaust produced by madmen or by atomic war. It shall be an event wholly brought by the Lord at His time and in His way, and in no way accompanied by the actions of depraved men. Instead of a day of chaos, Scripture describes that day as a day of order and glory, a day when the Lord shall speak and manifest His supreme judgment of all mankind. It shall be a day of joy, comfort, and celebration for all of God's children, not for a small select group deemed to be worthy to be secretly taken.

...saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. God never changes. He never needs to change. He never encounters a problem that requires Him to make adjustments to His eternal purpose to overcome it. He is "...the Almighty." He created this universe; He can fold it up and take it down just as easily.

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. (Hebrews 1:10-12)

These verses are quoted from Psalm 102:25-27). With each new generation we learn more about the expanse of the universe. For believers, every new discovery of the universe's expansive reality should be viewed as a renewed assurance of God's amazing power and gracious wisdom. At the same time we learn of the expansiveness of the universe, we also learn that our planet earth is very gradually slowing down. Expansive as it is, this universe bears the evidences of wear and tear. Watch the news reports around the end of each year. In most years you'll see notice that the international clock had to be reset to keep it

synchronized with the actual rotation of the earth because it's rotation is slowing down. Whether we read about God in creation or in Second Coming, we read in Scripture this same message. He is "**the Almighty.**" The longer we live the more we witness the endless change in clothing styles. Example; I still have some narrow neckties that were very much in style several years (Perhaps decades) ago, but today's style calls for wider ties. I keep a few of those old narrow ties, but I don't wear them. They are "Folded up" in my closet. Likewise with a significant number of other garments. When my closet gets too crowded, I'll pull them out and give them to a charitable organization that will give them to folks who need them. It will be no great task for me to simply pull these old garments out of the closet and take them to the charity's facility. In the language of Scripture, both in Psalms and in Hebrews, God's ending this universe is no more challenging to God than is my emptying my closet of old worn out clothes.

Not to fret, God in Scripture does not lend Himself or His eternal purpose to a vacuum. He always has something better in store when He takes something out of the way. And what God has in store has been the theme of our present study.

Behold, he cometh with clouds.... In these words, "cometh" is a present tense verb. "He is coming" is the impact. Grammatically, this present tense makes the Lord's return as certain as if you awoke to the sound of the last trumpet this morning. That day cannot be more certain than God has made it, and He repeatedly bears witness to that certainty in Scripture. Every spiritual experience that you realize in your life bears witness to this truth. The God of the Bible hasn't left His creation, especially His new spiritual creation of a people redeemed from their sins and reserved for His glory in the end, alone. He constantly involves Himself with intervention and kind grace to remind us of His presence and His goodness. No, He never causes our sins or the enticements that tickle the sinful fancy of the broken human heart so that we cannot avoid sinning. (James 1:13-17). Good and perfect gifts indeed come from God, but never the enticements and resultant sins that we experience. We are the cause of those sins, and we alone. God is not indirectly responsible by "Withdrawing from us for a small season." (Hebrews 13:5). And our present acts of righteousness are all influenced by Him, but not in mindless robotic style. He provides the permanently indwelling Holy Spirit, His law written permanently in our minds and hearts, but He commands us to use those spiritual attributes with a willing mind and heart.

The weight of the present tense that points us to the certain future of the Lord's return urges us to be "...steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58). When we keep the Lord's promise of return

fresh in our minds, we find the strength for
steadfast, abounding, not-in-vain labor “in the Lord.”

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Worship service each Sunday	10:30 A. M.
Joseph R. Holder	Pastor