

COMING WITH CLOUDS

BY: J. PRESTON EBY

I would draw your attention to the book of Revelation, the unveiling of Jesus Christ. This marvelous book contains deep and rich teaching for the elect saints concerning the coming of Christ; symbolic, mysterious, wonderful, but always to humbly, with head bowed low and shoes removed from off our feet, as people standing on holy ground.

Nineteen hundred years ago the beloved disciple on the lonely isle of Patmos saw unfolding before him the enthralling drama of the coming of his Lord. As the awesome sight began to unfold he cried out in astonished wonder and surprised joy, "Behold! He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." (Rev.1:7) The coming of the Lord as revealed in the book of Revelation is complex and progressive, extending through a variety of diverse scenes, stages, events, and manifestations, until He has come in such measure of fullness that we know Him finally in that dimension where HE IS the glorious fulfillment of all that our heart has yearned for, and desired so earnestly.

All the lacks swallowed up into completeness, all the voids filled with His fullness, and we know the bliss of Himself as the All in All. BEHOLD! This is the word with which John begins his description of what he saw. Someone has said that the word "behold" in the scriptures is the Stop, Look, and Listen sign of the Bible. It always calls for special attention and directs our focus to a truth of unusual importance. The word comes from the Greek idou, a demonstrative participle.

There are four things we should understand about this word. First, it bids the reader or hearer to give attention to what is being said, as if we were to say, "Now listen!" Second, it is used when an event is specified which seems impossible, yet occurs. Third, it is an exclamation of one pointing out something and calling attention to it. Fourth, it means to observe what is about to be said and consider it thoroughly.

Now let us look at the two words that follow: HE COMES. "Behold! He comes." This phrase is from the Greek erchomai. It is the third person singular, present indicative. Any reader who knows the conjunction of verbs knows what that means. First, it means HE COMES as a present tense reality. The verb is present indicative. He comes. He is in the act of coming. Behold! He is (now) coming! In other words, He has been coming, He is still in the act of coming, and He continues to come.

This is extremely important. More than once the coming of the Lord is spoken of in this tense throughout the book of Revelation. It's not a future thing, not something that shall happen somewhere down the course of history, but it is something that is. Oh! that God with flames of His holy fire would burn this truth indelibly upon the hearts of all who read these lines.

The Church world is either looking back to an historical Christ, or forward to a futuristic coming of Christ, and they miss this word erchomai altogether, their spiritual understanding never being quickened to this grand truth that HE COMES, He is coming, He continues to come, He will continue to come. It is something that can happen right now. It can happen in your life right now. It means that He comes from one place to another. He comes out of the realm of Spirit to be manifested in flesh, expressed and revealed in a visible, tangible way to the physical creation. Erchomai means to come, to make one's appearance come before the public. It means that He comes and appears before the view of the people round about. And this coming has already happened, it is happening now, and shall continue to happen.

This is the revelation that so captivated the apostle John that he could only exclaim with amazement, "Behold! He comes!" And the Spirit has borne witness for many years now among God's Spirit-led people that soon Christ shall come in the manifestation of Himself on a plane and in a measure never before seen or experienced by men upon this planet. He shall come to be glorified in His saints, manifested in His sons to set creation free from its bondage to corruption - sin and sorrow and death. Yes, He HAS come, and He is STILL TO COME.

There are two more words: WITH CLOUDS. "Behold! He comes with clouds." With is from the Greek preposition meta. It means with, but it also means together with, in the midst of, among, between, in common with, with the help of, and by means of. Behold! He comes WITH clouds, denoting an association. Behold! He

comes TOGETHER WITH clouds, denoting a communion. Behold! He comes IN THE MIDST OF clouds, denoting an indwelling. Behold! He comes AMONG clouds, denoting a fellowship. Behold! He comes BETWEEN clouds, denoting a union. Behold! He comes IN COMMON WITH clouds, denoting a participation. Behold! He comes WITH THE HELP OF clouds, denoting an interdependence. Behold! He comes BY MEANS OF clouds, denoting an instrumentality. CLOUDS are the vehicle He uses in this coming.

Here is where I wish to point out a most significant fact of scripture, which has entirely been overlooked by the average Bible student, and almost all preachers and teachers in the church systems. All the way through the scriptures, from the crossing of the Red Sea by the children of Israel to the ascension of Christ from the Mount of Olives, God consistently manifested Himself in one glory cloud. There was always ONLY ONE SINGLE CLOUD. One cloud over Mount Sinai. One cloud resting upon the tabernacle in the wilderness. One cloud shining in the Most Holy Place. One cloud filling Solomon's temple. One cloud overshadowing the virgin, implanting the seed of the Christ. One cloud shimmering over the summit of the Mount of Transfiguration. And finally, we read, "And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and A CLOUD [only one!] received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). Christ ascended in one single cloud of God's shekinah glory - the very SAME cloud in which He had manifested His presence throughout the long ages of time.

It is when we come to the return of our Lord that we notice a distinct difference in the circumstances surrounding that coming. For suddenly, the one single cloud disappears and we are introduced to a great plurality of CLOUDS. Christ departed this earth in one cloud. He comes again in many clouds! "Behold, He comes with CLOUDS: and every eye shall see Him" (Rev. 1:7). Daniel in vision beheld Him thus: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like a Son of man CAME WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN ... and there was given unto Him dominion." (Dan. 7:13-14) Jesus Himself said, "And they shall see the Son of man COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN with power and great glory." (Matt. 24:30) And again, "Hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and COMING IN THE CLOUDS of heaven." (Matt. 26:64) Finally, the apostle Paul relates this dramatic experience: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them IN THE CLOUDS, to meet the Lord..." (I Thes. 4:17). In the clouds! More than one cloud. Many clouds. A great company of clouds!

The question follows: Why are there many clouds attending Christ's coming again, and what are these clouds? To aid our understanding of this truth, let us not for one moment forget that we are dealing with THE cloud of God's glory and presence. The shekinah. When Jesus, the firstborn Son of God, was in the world, John said of Him, "And we beheld His glory." (John 1:14) WHEN did they behold His glory? You may reply that they beheld His glory when He went about doing good, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, performing miracles and teaching the glorious truths of the Kingdom of God. I do not deny that in all those things they beheld His glory, but the apostle Peter pinpoints for us what is really meant about them beholding the glory of the Son. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty [glory]. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory [the glory cloud], saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." (II Pet. 1:16-18) How very significant that at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry He said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us ... and the glory which you gave Me I have given them... I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one... Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which You have given Me." (John. 17:20-24)

And this is the crux of the whole matter! From the dawn of creation's light until Jesus stepped upon this planet, God manifested to His creation in singular way His own glory. He, the one eternal God, exhibited His presence in one glory cloud. But as Jesus approached the cross and the glorious events to unfold shortly thereafter, He disclosed the grand truth that God purposed from eternity to SHARE HIS GLORY WITH HIS VAST FAMILY OF SONS ... that glorious Body which is the fullness of Him who fills all in all!

Let us see then what great encouragement God has given us concerning His glory. "And you know how we exhorted you, as a father does his children, that you should walk worthy of God, who has called you to His kingdom and glory." (I Thes. 2:11-12) Peter asserts, "I ... also am... A partaker of the glory that shall be

revealed." (I Pet. 5:1) "Whereunto He called you... to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (II Thes. 2:14) "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed IN US." (Rom. 8:18) The writer to the Hebrews adds this significant testimony: "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Heb. 2:10) That there is to be a mighty and universal revelation of the glory of God, that very same glory which was revealed in the cloud of old, is evident.

When Jesus ascended nineteen hundred years ago, He ascended glorified in that singular glory cloud in which He had dwelt from eternity. He was the One God manifested in all fullness in one Man, the Son. But when He comes again, "He shall come to be GLORIFIED IN HIS SAINTS, and to be admired in them that believe." (II Thes. 1:10) Centuries ago the apostle Paul wrote these words to the saints in Rome: "And if [we are] children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8:17) It should not be difficult for any believer to understand that since the majesty and glory of God is now to be shared by and imparted to a vast company of sons of God, each of these sons to whom is given that same glory that Jesus had from eternity shall stand ultimately in his own realm of the glory of the LORD. The glory is shared, so the cloud, which represents that glory, is shared. Each elect son becomes a manifestation of the glory - of the cloud - of the shekinah! Each son becomes the expression and revelation of the Person of Deity. There is still only one Person of God, but He shall eternally indwell a many-membered body of like ones unto Himself, the extension and projection of His own Being. In the light of truths so sublime let, us then search our hearts and sanctify ourselves in the knowledge that WE ARE THAT BODY. The cloud of old rested upon the tabernacle and filled the temple with the glory of the Lord. We are now his tabernacle and his temple! We are now his ark and his most holy place and his holy mount! The glory is now given to us, rests upon us, increasingly fills us, and shall radiate out through this holy habitation of God forevermore. Under the Old Testament economy God dwelt in the one singular cloud. But now He says, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them... and you shall be My sons and daughters." (II Cor. 6:16-18) What, then, are those clouds with which, and in which, the Christ comes again? WE ARE!

The apostles Peter and Jude both tell us that FALSE MINISTRIES are "clouds without water ... carried about of winds." A TRUE ministry then, is a CLOUD with water. A true ministry has life to give, and is willing to empty himself out in order to be a blessing to dry and thirsty souls. Jesus was a bright cloud laden with water, for "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give His life..." (Matt. 20:28). The one glory has become the multiple glory. The one God has reproduced His life into a many-membered body. The ONE CLOUD of His presence has become MANY CLOUDS of His presence IN HIS PEOPLE. Isaiah foretold of this day: "Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen UPON YOU. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen UPON YOU." (Isa. 60:1-2) The "sign" of the coming or presence of Jehovah has always been the shekinah glory cloud. It was His sign to Moses, and when our Lord comes again in fullness in a many-membered body of saints, it will be IN THE CLOUDS OF HIS PRESENCE.

This treasure we have in earthen vessels. (II Cor. 4:7) Ah, there is a glory even now as we glorify God in these mortal bodies. Christ had and disclosed such a glory in that dim and distant past when He walked the shores of Galilee. But in His resurrection He came forth in new garments, clad in a sin-free and death-free body of incorruption and immortality! Now His wonderful life is swallowing up the sin and death in us, bringing to His chosen ones also a change of raiment, and the hour is wonderfully near at hand when even this corruptible shall put on incorruption and this mortal shall put on immortality.

Though His glory has generally been hidden throughout the ages, at certain times and on special occasions that hidden glory has flashed forth into prominence before the eyes of the few who, by the predestined counsel of God, were permitted to experience unspeakable things unlawful for a man to utter. We are coming ever nearer when God shall unveil His power and glory before the face of all nations and peoples in a manner far beyond any measure experienced by men of any age. The whole world shall soon see the glory that is to be revealed in God's matured and perfected body.

BEHOLD! HE COMES WITH CLOUDS, IN GREAT POWER AND GLORY!

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