



Peninsula City Church

BEHOLD!

BEHOLD! The Cloud Rider!

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Contents

BEHOLD! The Cloud Rider!	3
An Introduction.....	3
1. It's all up in the clouds.....	3
2. Your Kingdom come.....	4
Some concluding thoughts	6

BEHOLD! The Cloud Rider!

An Introduction

Q. What does it mean that Jesus' coming with the clouds and are you ready for His coming?

If we think about it, this is a weird statement that Jesus is coming with the clouds. When was the last time that you saw a person flying in the clouds without any plane or machine? I know that I have not seen anything like that, but this is what the Bible says will happen. This will be Jesus' second coming as He came the first time to deal with sin,

²⁷ "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin (already done in His first coming), but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him" (Heb 9:28 ESV).

So let's briefly look at what it all means and what we need to do.

1. It's all up in the clouds

Q. Why is He coming in the clouds?

In the 'Revelation of Jesus Christ,' John recorded that Jesus will come again, but this time in the clouds. That is,

"Behold, He (Jesus) is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him. Even so. Amen" (Rev 1:7 ESV)

(Firstly, it needs to be said here that, the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is just that, it is about Jesus Christ the rightful rule of the kingdom of God. So, it is not a book about the latest end time theory or fad. It is about the person Jesus Christ! Throughout the last two thousand years, the church has used this book for all sorts of reasons and especially for selfish and hurtful means. Therefore, as it has been said,

"The 'Revelation of Jesus Christ' portrays in dramatic fashion the paradoxical present rule of Jesus Christ as King of all the kings of the world, His ultimate triumph, and the salvation of His people through tribulation."¹)

Having said this, coming back to the matter at hand Jesus is coming back, Rev 1:7. This is not a new idea as it mentions in the Old Testament for example,

"Sing to God, sing praises to His name; Extol Him who rides on the clouds, By His name YAH, And rejoice before Him" (Ps 68:4 NKJV)

"I (Daniel) saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a Son of Man, and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him" (Dan 7:13 ESV).

In the second half this verse in Revelation, John quoted the prophet Zechariah who stated the fact that, every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him.

¹⁰ "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on Me, on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one

¹ "The Book of Revelation Is Not Just about the Future." <https://www.crossway.org/articles/the-book-of-revelation-is-not-just-about-the-future/> (26th August 2017).

weeps over a firstborn. ¹¹ On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ¹² The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; ¹³ the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; ¹⁴ and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves. (Zech 12:10-14 ESV).

So, John interpreted what he had seen and heard here through the lenses of Scripture. John based his subjective experience in the objective known Scriptures. That is, he did not just come up with some fanciful interpretation but grounded it in the revealed Word of God. (As a side note here, we need to do the same if we see or hear anything that claims to be prophetic.)

Even Jesus Himself commented to His disciples regarding His second coming (that is even if they did not get it at the time it was still truth),

“Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt 24:30 ESV). See also “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory” (Mk 13:26 ESV).

Then Jesus repeated this great truth to the Sanhedrin when He said,

“You have said so (that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God v63). But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matt 26:64 ESV). See also, “And Jesus said, ‘I Am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven’” (Mk 14:62 ESV).

Consequently, Jesus also knew that He was doing the will of the Father in accordance with the declared Word of God in Daniel 7:13.

Then after Jesus' resurrection, they saw Him go back to heaven in the Ascension and were given some comforting news,

⁹ “And when He (Jesus) had said these things, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven’” (Act 1:9-11 ESV).

It is important to understand the second coming of Jesus, as an actual event that will take place whether we believe it or not. While not all Christ-followers will agree on the details and order of the events related to His second coming, we still need to have an understanding of the matters involved.

2. Your Kingdom come

Q. What will Jesus be like when He comes again and what should we do until then?

In brief, Jesus Christ is coming again. Some will scoff at the idea, but even in the early church, there were some who scoffed at the idea. Peter in his second letter pointed this out,

“They will say, ‘What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created’” (2Pe 3:4 NLT).

But just because some disbelieve, it does not take away from the fact that He is coming back. There were those who did not believe that Jesus was the Christ, but it did not alter the truth that He was who He said that He was the Christ. It has been said that,

"In the New Testament's 260 chapters, Christ's return is mentioned no less than 318 times. Statistically, one verse for every 25 pages of the Bible refers to the return of Jesus Christ in some way, shape, or form. Make no mistake about it: Jesus Christ will come back again, and God has given us specific instructions for what we are to do while we wait."²

So, there are some things that we need to know about Jesus' coming back. As pointed out in Acts 1:11,12 that He left literally, it will be a literal and physical return. It will be both personal and for His church as it is all about Jesus being reunited with His people, (Jn 14:2,3). Despite all of the guesses as to the date of His return throughout the years, no one knows the timing of His coming, (Matt 24:36; Acts 1:7). The Bible itself hinted that there would be a delay between the first and second comings of Jesus. In Matthew 25:19 Jesus Himself said that the Master returns after a long time (in the parable of the talents), (see also 2 Peter 3:3-9; Matt 24:14).

However, Christ-followers are told to be wide awake and excited and live a life of righteousness and holiness, expecting the unexpected return of Jesus, (Matt 24:44-50; Mk 13:35-37; Titus 2:12,13; Jn 3:3). He will come in the clouds, consider the following verses: 1 Thess 4:16,17; 2 Thess 2:1; 1 Cor 15:51-54. So, Christ-followers everywhere need to be eagerly waiting for Him. As it has already been said from the letter to the Hebrew's,

²⁷ "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,"²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin (already done in His first coming), but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him" (Heb 9:28 ESV).

So, do not get caught up in the silliness of trying to know that date of Jesus' return. The reason for this is that nobody knows when He is coming back, except the Father, not even the angels. We in fact "live in the overlap of two ages, this present age and the age to come."³ We live in the tension of the now and the not yet of the establishment of the kingdom of God. This idea of the now but not yet was proposed by one Gerhardus Vos (who was a theologian from Princeton University in the early 20th century), which was based on New Testament theology and especially Pauline Theology.⁴ He based in on passages like 1 Cor 15; Eph 1:15-23; 6:10-20; Col 2:15 cf. also Heb 2:8-9 His kingdom has come, and Jn 18:36 Titus 2:11-15; Heb 10:19-25; Jas 2:1; 5:8; 1 Pet 1:13-25 His kingdom is still to come. Or as it has been said,

"The new element in the New Testament is not eschatology, but what I call the tension between the decisive 'already fulfilled' and the 'not yet completed,' between present and future. The whole theology of the New Testament, including Jesus' preaching, is qualified by this tension."⁵

So, we need to spend our time here doing His will and making disciples (Matt 28:18-20). It was said by Benjamin Franklin that,

"Work as if you were to live a hundred years. Pray as if you were to die tomorrow."⁶

² "What Do We Do in the Meantime?" <http://www.jesus.org/early-church-history/promise-of-the-second-coming/what-do-we-do-in-the-meantime.html> (26th August 2017).

³ "The Already and the Not Yet." <http://reformedanswers.org/answer.asp/file/43089> (26th August 2017).

⁴ Ladd, George Eldon. A Theology of the New Testament. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 713.

⁵ Cullman, Oscar. *Salvation in History*. (London: SCM, 1967), 172

⁶ Stubbs, Len. *Decision Time: A Guide to the Real Answers, Real Solutions and Real Results of Christ Centered Living*. (Bloomington, IN: IUniversity, 2008), 101

Or to put it another way, 'Plan as if Jesus is not coming back in your lifetime, but obey the Father as if Jesus is coming back today.'

But remember that He is coming back again,

⁷ "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book... ¹² Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done... ²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!'" (Rev 22:7,12,20 ESV).

"And to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels" (2 Thess 1:7 ESV)

So what is Jesus like now? Well, He is not like the baby in the manger or a weak religious figure. When He appeared to John, it was enough to fall down like a dead man. John recorded that,

¹² "Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the lampstands one like a Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around His chest. ¹⁴ The hairs of His head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵ His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶ In His right hand He held seven stars, from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and His face was like the sun shining in full strength. ¹⁷ When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying, 'Fear not, I am the first and the last,' ¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades" (Rev 1:12-18 ESV).

This is the portrayal of the glorified Christ who had finished His work of salvation. This is not the baby in the manger, but the King of kings of creation. Now He needs to come again to see His kingdom come.

Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

Q. What does it mean that Jesus' coming with the clouds and are you ready for His coming?

Jesus came the first time to deal with sin, but He is also coming again. Somehow this event will be seen by all. It will be an actual event that will take place whether we believe it or not. As it was a literal and physical ascension, it will also be a literal and physical return. It will be both personal and for His church as it is all about Jesus being reunited with his people As John said,

"Behold, He (Jesus) is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him. Even so. Amen" (Rev 1:7 ESV).

Do not get caught up in the silliness of trying to know that date of Jesus' return. There are some more important things to think about this truth. For example,

- Are we as His church ready for His anytime coming?
- Are you personally ready for His anytime coming?
- What will be our response to Jesus the cloud rider?

So, are you ready for Jesus Christ's coming again, because the truth of the matter is that He is coming whether you believe it or not, or are ready or not. Some things to think about,

- We now live in the tension of the 'now and the not yet' of the establishment of the kingdom of God.
- We need to live in a state of readiness and expectation of His coming
- We need to be found to be doing His will when He comes and not ours or someone else's will.
- We need to be loving and serving one another
- We need to be living as holy, righteous, faithful, wise and obedient children as He will judge us
- Plan as if Jesus is not coming back in your lifetime, but obey the Father as if Jesus is coming back today. This is the tension of the 'now and the not yet.'

Let us all shout, "Although we now live in the tension of the 'now and the not yet. Let us declare, 'O Come, Lord Jesus, Come as the cloud rider and establish Your kingdom.'"