

Look, He is Coming With the Clouds

1: 4-8

DIG: What is significant about the way John refers to God? What are the meanings of the titles he gives to Jesus? How does He refer to the Holy Spirit? In what way is He coming with the clouds? In what sense is Yeshua Messiah the Alpha and the Omega? What theme of the book of Revelation is foreshadowed in 1:7? What is significant about the fact that every eye shall see Him?

REFLECT: If you were asked to tell someone three facts about Jesus that are especially significant to you, what would you say? Why are they important to you? Do these verses elicit hope or fear in you? Why?

The book of **Revelation** is the ultimate action thriller. Anyone who loves books filled with adventure and excitement will certainly love this book. It contains drama, suspense, mystery, passion and horror. It tells of the apostasy of people who pretend to be religious. It speaks of unparalleled economic collapse, and of the ultimate war of human history. The war that will end all wars, the Campaign of Armageddon. It describes natural disasters rivaled in intensity only by the worldwide Flood of Noah's day, as **God** will pour **His** wrath out on the sin-cursed earth. It speaks of the political intrigues that will lead to the ascendancy of the most evil and powerful dictator the world has ever known. Finally, and most terrifying of all, it describes the final judgment and sentencing of all rebels, angelic and human, to eternal torment in hell. Yet, amazingly, it is also a book of hope and joy with a happy ending, as sin, sorrow and death are banished forever (**21:4, 22:3**). Therefore, it will take some time for the drama to unfold, so, like any good writer, **John** gives his readers a preview of what will come later in the book.

Modern letters have the name of the sender at the end, but ancient writers put their names at the beginning. So here **John** identifies himself as the writer **to the seven churches in the province of Asia (1:4a)**. Today we would think of this geographical area as Turkey. Because it was written to **seven churches**, it makes it clear that whatever else the revelation is, it was also a letter. To be sure, it is an apocalypse and a prophecy, but it was also a letter to real historical **churches** that existed in the first century in **Asia Minor**. The purpose of **John's** writing was to encourage, strengthen and admonish the believers that were a part of these **churches**, because they were under a great deal of persecution due to the problem of emperor worship. It is clear that **Yochanan** was deeply concerned with these **churches** because of **his** intimate knowledge of each. But all believers are to learn from what is written here.

Grace and peace to you (1:4b). The word **grace** comes from the Greek meaning *the unmerited favor of God*, and **peace** is the Hebrew translation of *shalom*, and had significant meaning to anyone coming from the Semitic side. *Shalom* refers to the prosperity of the whole person, not only his or her physical prosperity, but spiritual prosperity as well.

From God the Father: That **grace and peace** came *from*, the preposition of source, **Him who is, and who was, and who is to come (1:4c)**. This description emphasizes **His** eternity and takes us back to the burning bush where **God** revealed **His** name to Moses. **He** said: **I AM Who I AM**. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: **I AM** has sent me to you. After Moses objected to this, **God** said: **Say to the Israelites, "YHVH (or the Name), the God of your fathers - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob - has sent me to you."** This is **My name forever, the name by which I AM to be remembered from generation to generation"** (Exodus 3:14-15).

From God the Holy Spirit: This message is also *from the seven spirits* before the Father's **throne (1:4d)**. This word *from* is repeated three times for **the Trinity**. Here it points to **the Holy Spirit** in His fullness because **seven** is the number of completeness. To be sure, it is an unusual way to refer to **the Holy Spirit**, but **He** is the One spoken of here. Described in anthropomorphic language, just as **Yeshua the Messiah** can sit at the right hand of **God the Father**, the **Rauch HaKodesh** can minister *before His throne*. **The seven spirits** refer to **seven** attributes of **the Holy Spirit**, which are given in **Isaiah 11:2**. There, **Isaiah** describes the picture of a menorah with its **seven** branches (4:5). The middle stem of the menorah is what **Isaiah** calls **the Spirit of ADONAI**. Then **Isaiah** uses the word **Spirit** three more times after that, and each time two attributes are given: first, **the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding**, secondly, **the Spirit of counsel and of power**, and thirdly, **the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of ADONAI**.

All **seven** of these refer to the ministry of **the Holy Spirit**. Paul said: **I keep asking that the God of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better (Ephesians 1:17)**. But **He** is also the **Spirit of understanding**. When **Yeshua** was preparing to leave this earth, **He** told His apostles: **When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth (John 16:13)**. Certainly **He** is the **Spirit of counsel** because **Jesus Himself** called **Him the Counselor**, the One who would come along side of you and give you guidance (John 15:26). Undoubtedly **He** is also the **Spirit of power**. Just before being taken up into heaven, **Jesus** said: **You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you (Acts 1:8a)**. **He** is without a doubt the **Spirit of knowledge**. Paul tells us that **the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God**. For who among men knows the thoughts of man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the

Spirit of God (First Corinthians 2:10b-11). And **He** is also the **Spirit of the fear of ADONAI**. The response of the **Spirit's** ministry in the life of the believer is to give us a reverential **fear of God** to keep us from evil.

In **3:1** and **5:6** we are told that **Jesus Christ** has the fullness of the **Rauch HaKodesh**. In **Yochanan 3:34-35** it says that **He** receives the **Spirit** without limit. This is because **Christ** alone will have the fullness of the **Spirit**. Everyone else receives the **Spirit** with limits. Some greater than others, which is why people have different gifts and different numbers of spiritual gifts (every believer has at least one spiritual gift). But in the case of the **Messiah**, **He** is given the **Spirit** without limit.

And from God the Son: Lastly, **grace and peace** also flow *from Jesus Christ*, who has a three-fold designation that describes **Him** as **prophet, priest and king**. First, **He is the faithful witness** and a prophet (**1:5a**). Standing before the Roman governor, Pilate said to **Him**, "You are a king, then!" **Yeshua** responded by saying: **You are right in saying I am a King. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify, or bear witness, to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me (John 18:37).** This is how **He** describes **Himself to the church in Laodicea**, saying: **These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness** proclaiming **God's truth (3:14)**. The English word for **witness** here comes from the Greek word meaning *martyr*. **He** proved that **He** was a **faithful witness** in **His** earthly life, being obedient to **ADONAI** even to the point of death, and that would have had a particularly great significance to those first century believers who were also facing a martyr's death. **Jesus** is the model of how to stand firm and never compromise the truth of **God**. So first, **He** is a **prophet**.

Secondly, **He** is a **priest**. **He** is called the **firstborn from the dead (1:5b)**, literally *the dead ones*. The Greek word *prototokos* (**Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15 and 18; Hebrews 1:6**), has a two-fold meaning. Here, the Greek word **first** has to do with *first in time or first of its kind*. The Bible tells us that **Messiah** was with **God** in the beginning (**John 1:2**), and Rabbi Sha'ul tells us **He** is the **firstfruits** of many other believers to come after **Him (First Corinthians 15:23)**. But secondly, *prototokos* also has to do with *eminence* or first in importance, or a *supreme authority over the dead (Rom 8:29; Col 1:15 and 18; Hebrews 1:6)*. The concept that **Christ** is the **firstborn from the dead ones**, always refers to the priesthood in the order of **Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:15-17 and 23-25)**. The hope of the resurrection is always the background behind **His** **priesthood**. To those first century churches that lived under the threat of death, the fact that **Jesus** was able to save them **completely** would have been tremendously encouraging. We should be no less encouraged.

And thirdly, **He is the ruler of the kings of the earth, His defeated enemies (1:5c). He is the ruler now and He will be the ruler when He returns (19:11-18). Christ is absolutely sovereign over the affairs of this world, to which He holds the title deed (5:5). He is the Prince of princes, He is the King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16), He is Lord, having the name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9b).** In fact, **Christ's** ultimate authority is a theme that runs through the book of **Revelation**. It speaks of the sovereignty of **ADONAI**. When **He** returns **He** will be the only one ruling the whole world. **Jesus** was even **the ruler** over Domitian. This reference to **Jesus Christ** gives way to the first of many doxologies in **Revelation**.

Therefore, the message of **the revelation** is about **Jesus**. **He** reminds us at the beginning of the book that everything **He** is going to say in the entire prophecy can be counted on because **He is a prophet**. Secondly, **He is a priest**, this is our hope and security. **He** is alive and risen from the dead. That means that you and I do not have to face the horror of the coming Great Tribulation because we have One who has lived forever and makes intercession for us. Thirdly, **He is a King** and **He** promises that we will share in his **Kingdom**.

To Him who loves us and has freed us, and bought us back from our sins by His blood (1:5d), and has made us to be a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:5-6; First Peter 2:9, also see 5:10) to serve His God and Father - to Him be glory and power for ever and ever, literally, to the ages of the ages! Amen (1:6). When those first century believers were staring martyrdom in the face, I am sure they didn't feel like they were a kingdom of priests, but **John** confronted them with their true spiritual reality. And there are many times that *we* don't feel like *we* are a kingdom of priests. But we need to remember these words and see ourselves through our **Father's** eyes. This is **God's** love message to you.

While 1:19 gives the outline of the book, this verse gives the theme of the book, which is the Second Coming of **Jesus Christ**. **John** demands that we look, because **He is coming (1:7a)**. The expected One was a title for the Messiah. When **John** the Baptist heard in prison what **Jesus** was doing, he sent his disciples to ask Him, "Are you the *erchomai*, or expected One who was to come, or should we look for someone else" (Matthew 11:2-3; Luke 7:19-20; Yochanan 3:31, 6:14 and 11:27). The *erchomai* is used nine times in the book of **Revelation** to refer to **Jesus Christ**. Thus, the theme of **Revelation** is the expected One, the Lord, **Yeshua Messiah**. It deals with the events leading up to the Second Coming, events accompanying the Second Coming, and events following the Second Coming.

He is coming with the Shechinah glory, or with the clouds (1:7b). The Shechinah glory is the visible manifestation of **God's** presence, which is seen in the form of a light, fire, smoke, clouds, or a combination of these. It appeared as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22). The pillar of cloud stood

between the armies of Egypt and Israel (Exodus 14:19). The glory of ADONAI appeared in the cloud (Exodus 16:10). At the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, a thick cloud appeared over the mountain (Exodus 19:16, 24:15-18). As Moses went into the Tent of Meeting, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while God spoke to Moses (Exodus 33:9). Both the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38) and the Temple (First Kings 8:10-12) were filled with a cloud symbolizing God's glory at their dedications. Jesus ascended to heaven in the clouds (Acts 1:9), and, as the present verse indicates, the Messiah will return with the clouds of heaven (Psalm 18:11-12; Matthew 16:27-28, 24:30, 25:31; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27 and Revelation 1:7). The prophet Daniel prophesied: **In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven (Daniel 7:13).** Keep in mind that in Scripture, the clouds are always a symbol of God's glory, the Shechinah glory. That's the reason every eye will see Him when He returns. His glory will be obvious to the entire human race.

And every eye will see Him, and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him. **Sosshall it be! Amen (1:7c).** Though the literal executioners and rejecters of Christ are now dead and will not be resurrected until after the Millennium, the godly remnant of Isra'el will look upon Him the One they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10). The Jews will experience deep grief over centuries of having rejected Him as a nation; this grief will open the way to repentance and accepting Him as the Messiah and Savior of the Jewish people. Christ's Second Coming, however, will be visible to the entire world of unbelievers, in contrast with His First Coming at His birth in Bethlehem and in contrast with the future rapture of the Church, which will be unnoticed like a thief in the night (First Thess 5:2).

Yeshua the Messiah concludes by saying: **I AM the Alpha and the Omega, who is, and who was, and who is to come (1:8a).** Here we know that the Son is speaking and not the Father because the vision is of Jesus. It is in the first person, and Jesus is doing the speaking. Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last letter. During the days of Isaiah His prophet, God had said: **I, ADONAI, the first and the last, I am He (Isaiah 41:4b; also see Isaiah 44:6 and 48:12).** So it was Jesus saying: **Write down these words. And later in the revelation He will say: Behold, I AM coming quickly! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done I AM the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I AM the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star (22:12-13 and 16).** He would have the same characteristics as ADONAI because both are eternal. It would be a terrible mistake if we think that God cares nothing about what comes between the Alpha and the Omega. This is why He reminds us that not only is He the God of the past and the future, but of the present as well. As the Almighty God, the Lord exercises control over all time.

He is **the Almighty or God of heaven's** angelic **armies** (1:8b CJB). The mighty part of this word is translated **power** in 1:6. You could say **Jesus is the all-Ruler**, referring to the extensiveness of **His power** over everyone and everything. Who is **the King of all the earth**? Who is **the King of kings and Lord of lords**? Who is **the One** we are to praise and honor? It is **Jesus Christ!** Therefore, **God exalted Him to the highest place** (Psalm 110:1) and gave Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that **Yeshua the Messiah is ADONAI**, to the glory of **God the Father** (Philippians 2:9-11). He is the one who controls history and will bring to pass all the events described in this book. No one can prevent **Yeshua** from carrying out **His** sovereign will. No one or no thing can possibly hinder **Jesus Christ** from returning in glory. **Amen.**