

**BEHOLD, HE
COMETH WITH
CLOUDS; AND EVERY
EYE SHALL SEE HIM**

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INTRODUCTION

In this little book, we will be looking at an aspect of the Second Coming of the Lord, and how this relates to us as believers, “*alive and remaining*” at the time of the end. The title of the meditation is drawn from Revelation 1:7, which we reproduce below:

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.

A parallel reference is Matthew 24:30. It says:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

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Behold He cometh with clouds! In Matthew 24:30, He is said to be coming in the clouds. What does this mean?

CLOUDS AS USED IN SCRIPTURES

Clouds carry certain significations in the Holy Scriptures. First, they are used to represent visible manifestations of the presence of the Almighty God. God often revealed his presence to the children of Israel in clouds (Exodus 13:21; 24:15-18 for example)

*Exodus 24:15-16 says... And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount **in the eyes of the children of Israel.***

We find a similar situation in the New Testament. Matthew 17:1-9 records an event concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter, James and John on the Mount of transfiguration. Verses 1-2, 5 reads

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And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James and John his brother and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light...While he (that is Peter) yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

So, we see that the Almighty God sometimes reveals his presence in clouds. In such occasions, the clouds are not the literal physical clouds of the atmospheric heavens, but **a form of spiritual but visible body** with which the glorious One manifests his presence to men. They are clouds of divine glory.

Revelation 10:1 bears this out in a very convincing manner. It says *...And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his*

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face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.

The description of this angel (messenger) and the things that transpired between him and John reveal His identity. He is no other but the messenger (angel) of the covenant (Malachi 3:2), the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is worthy to open the book and to loosen the seals thereof. He is the Sun of righteousness, the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:1-10; Malachi 4:2).

So this Angel is the Lord Himself. He comes down from heaven (the invisible realm) to the realm that could be seen, and we are told, he was clothed in a cloud.

In the same way, from the human standpoint, clouds are also means of divine transport. Of course the Almighty God neither goes nor comes. He is ever present. But to convey a message to human minds, the Lord can be pictured as coming to us traveling in a cloud. This is the picture Isaiah saw in Isaiah 19:1... *Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come*

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into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence...

Psalm 104:1-3 says Bless the Lord, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art clothed with honour and majesty, who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind.

Now, because the believers in Christ Jesus are called to share with the Lord in His divinity (2 Peter 1:4; Revelation 3:21), cloud may be used to describe the believer when he comes to the fullness of Christ. For example, 1Thessalonians 4:17 says *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.* Daniel 7:13 also refers to the clouds of heaven.

But then, it is not only when the believers take on the fullness of the divine life that they can be described as clouds of glory. Once a believer has been able to crystallize the grace of Christ within, and is able to minister in blessing to others by the

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power of the indwelling Christ, such a one may be so described.

The symbolism of a cloud used in connection with the Lord's presence is very apt. A cloud outpours water upon the earth, reviving and replenishing it. Jehovah El Shaddai is the fully breasted One, the source of all blessing, of all living.

Proverbs 16:15 says *...In the light of the King's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.* Rain symbolizes spiritual and material blessings, everything that man needs for spiritual and physical existence and nourishment. So, when a believer can move in ministry to bring spiritual blessing to others, and labours thus beyond his locality, such is a cloud in the making. Amen.

It is consistent with the pen of divine inspiration to sometimes describe God's servants using symbols that have been applied to the Lord with respect to His redemptive work among men.

He is a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3; Hebrews 12:29), but He also makes his ministers

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flames of fire (Psalm 104:4). He is the cloud of glory, but His ministers are also described as clouds with rain, *bright clouds* (Zechariah 10:1-5).

In contrast unfaithful servants in God's vineyard are described as *clouds without rain*. Such are said to be *Spots and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with the Lord's people, feeding themselves without fear; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls; which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam who love the wages of unrighteousness* (2 Peter 2:13- 15; Jude 12).

There is however an additional element in the use of the word "*clouds*" in prophetic scriptures that we need to mention. The prophet Isaiah calls the Lord our Law-giver and the Judge (Isaiah 33: 22). See Exodus 24: 16-18 in this connection.

And so, when God moves in judgment, it could also be pictured as He coming as a cloud to cover the land. Joel 2:2 speaks of *a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick*

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darkness. In this connection, we may rightly posit that the rains that come from the clouds are not rains of blessings, but sourcing floods of divine judgments.

This is what happened in the days of Noah. Genesis 6:5-7, 17; 7:4 says

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.... And the Lord said I will destroy man whom I have created from off the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air, for it repented me that I have made them. And behold, I even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh. ...For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

The floods of judgment of Noah's day were typical. Mathew 24:38, 39 show that that natural flood is a type of a great tribulation that shall yet come upon the world.

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Thus, floods of water can be used to symbolize overflowing judgments from the presence of the Lord. Isaiah 8:8; Psalm 90:5, among other scriptures, confirm this.

THE THRUST OF REVELATION 1:7
He Cometh with Clouds

The above consideration links us with the subject of our meditation, i.e.; Revelation 1:7. It says *Behold, he cometh with clouds...* This describes the Lord's coming in mighty and terrible acts of divine judgments, in a great flood of troublous times upon the world.

But, before we examine this passage and how it relates to us at this time, let us show that the Lord has always come in this manner. In other words, what we find here in Revelation 1:7 has always had a measure of fulfillment even though its fullness relates to the time of the end. Let us read Mathew 26: 59-64

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea,

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*though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, **Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.***

Take particular note of verse 64. The people were to see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and at the same time, coming in the clouds of heaven. This event was to be fulfilled while the generation of the Jews who crucified Jesus was still physically alive to witness it.

The Lord was as it were telling the people, *“this is the day of your power; it is the day of my*

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humiliation. You can kill me now, but after you have killed me, I will rise again, and you shall see me exalted in glory and coming in the clouds of heaven”.

Joel 2:28-32 gives the two things that constitute a fulfillment of this prophecy. The first is the outpouring of the Spirit of the glorified Christ upon his followers on the day of Pentecost, transforming them from weaknesses and dishonour unto strength and honour. This, according to Peter in Acts 2:32, 33; showed that the Lord is exalted and sitting at the right hand of power.

The second is a terrible judgment that was to come upon the nation of Israel that would reveal the Lord coming in the cloud of heaven. The clouds are said to be “*clouds of heaven*” because the judgment was sourced in heaven, it was to be from God. It was to be “*the great and dreadful day of the Lord*”.

And Joel 2: 29-31 shows that associated with that great and dreadful day of the Lord is the

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“showing forth of wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke, the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood.”

Of course, the heavens and the earth in the above context do not refer to the atmospheric heaven and the planetary earth. The heaven in reference is the spiritual and political government over Israel, those who exercised rulership over the masses; while the earth is the masses, the governed, Israel as a polity.

In Deuteronomy 32, for example, Moses was addressing the nation of Israel, both the rulership and followership, and he said in verse 1, *Give hear O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.* So, the heavens here is a people that bear rule (Daniel 4:26).

In the context of Joel 2:31 as it was fulfilled towards the physical nation of Israel, the religious government over Israel is the sun in the heaven, while the political government is the moon. Both give light to the earth (the masses), directing and leading them in the way they should go. But the

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prophet, Joel said *the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.*

At the time of the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the judgment part of the great and terrible day of the Lord had not yet come, but the sun was already being darkened. Great darkness had come over the religious leaders of Israel, a darkness that caused them not only to kill the Lord Jesus Christ but to also begin to persecute and kill His followers. Blood guiltiness rested upon the polity (Mathew 27:25). The sign of an impending judgment hung upon the nation.

But that judgment did not come until about thirty-six years after. In AD 70, the dark clouds that had gathered over the nation were rent and the floods of tribulation came down unabated.

In that year, the Roman army, having two years earlier on encompassed Jerusalem but had to retreat, came back with great vehemence, and destroyed the city and the temple, burning them with fire. The Jews were killed in their hundreds. The surviving remnant carried captive into all the

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nations of the earth in fulfilment of the words of the Lord in Luke 21:24.

So, Revelation 1:7 is a prophecy of something that has had a measure of fulfilment. We say that what was observed concerning the nation of Israel was only a type or partial fulfilment because this vision (Revelation 1:7) was received by John in AD 96, twenty six years after the destruction of Jerusalem. This indicates that there is a fulfilment that goes beyond that which the physical nation of Israel experienced.

The parallel passage in Matthew 24:30 also show that it has application to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ at the time of the end of the church age. So, at this closing period of the church age, we can expect a fulfilment that will be similar in pattern to the one observed earlier.

There is a great and dreadful day of the Lord that is soon to come upon the world, and we do well to take heed to the things that the Lord is speaking to his people today.

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Hebrews 12:25-26 says *...For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.*

But then, why is the Lord coming with clouds? Why the great tribulation that is to come upon the world? Now, the Lord God Almighty has given his Son all pre-eminence, it has pleased him that in him should all fullness dwell (Colossians 1:17-19).

Philippians 2:9-11 says *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the mention of the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

In John 5:22-23 we are told *the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the*

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Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.

In Psalm 2:8-9, the Father told the Son, Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them like a potter's vessel.

Yes! The Lord Jesus Christ has been mightily exalted; he has been given the right to rule. By creation and by redemption he has secured the right, and he will exert that authority! He must reign till all his enemies are put under his feet (1 Corinthians 15:25). All must hear him!

So, the great times of troubles that is soon to come has a specific purpose to accomplish in the earth and amongst men, which is redemptive in nature. Take note that from the things we find in Genesis 9: 1-17, it is clear that the physical earth is not going to be destroyed at any time, nor the human race and other earthly creatures annihilated. God will only destroy all them which destroy the earth (Revelation 11:18).

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Also, *while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease* (Genesis 8:22). But the present spiritual government over mankind (the present heavens) in all of its expressions shall pass away, and so also will the present societal order (the present earth). Both lieth in wickedness and they must be utterly destroyed (2 Peter 3:12; 1 John 5:19).

Isaiah 24:1, 19-20 says *Behold the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. It says the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall and not rise again.*

But then, what is the great tribulation intended to realize in mankind? Revelation 3:10 says it is *the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

Jude 17 says in that time, the Lord comes to *execute judgment upon all, and to **convince all***

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that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

In Haggai 2:6, 7 the Lord says *Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens* (the sphere of spiritual rule, the religious heavens), *and the earth* (the spiritually governed, who bear a form of religion but have their desires and members upon the earth: Colossians 3:1-6), *and the sea* (the unregenerate, living in sin and wickedness) *and the dry land* (all those who deny religion but consider themselves good in their own sight because they have a semblance of righteousness). *And I will shake all nations, **and the desire of all nations shall come.***

Thus, apart from the overthrow of the present heaven and earth, a purpose of the Lord's coming in the great tribulation is to totally crush man's pride, to bring mankind to the state of complete hopelessness, to cast mankind into a furnace of deep affliction, so that in the midst of the untold suffering, mankind shall turn to the Lord, their Redeemer.

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Revelation 1:7b says *all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him*. Mathew 24:30 says *and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn*.

Oh yes! When the judgments of God are upon the earth, the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness (Isaiah 26:9).

In Psalm 22:27, 28 we are told that *all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the Kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations*.

For this reason the angel goeth forth in Revelation 14:6,7 saying with **a loud voice**, *Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountain of waters*. But if mankind will not hear the sound of the voice of the gospel, they shall both see and hear when the judgments are upon the earth.

The rod of iron is for the breaking to pieces of the nations. Out of those pieces, the Lord as a Potter

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would mould a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (Psalm 2:9).

So Haggai 2: 7 says in that day that the Lord shall shake all things and all nations, He shall become the desire of all nations. All the families of the earth shall look upon Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Him as a man mourneth for his only begotten Son (Zechariah 12:10-13).

And Every Eye shall see Him

That brings us to an interesting phrase in Revelation 1:7, “*every eye shall see him*”. What does this mean?

First, we must understand that it is impossible for man in his physical human estate to see or interact with the glorified Lord Jesus Christ. 1Timothy 6:16 shows that in his present glorified estate, He dwells in a light which no man can approach unto; *which no man hath seen, nor can see*.

The experiences of Paul and his companions on the way to Damascus (Acts 22: 6-9; 26:13), and

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that of John on the Island of Patmos (Revelation 1), when they both encountered the risen Lord, show that this is so. The appearance of the glorified Lord to each of them had very telling impacts on their human bodies. Yet those were not visible naked appearances of the exalted Lord as he now really is.

Brethren! The Lord Jesus Christ is no longer flesh and blood that can be seen and associated with by mere men. Who can dwell with everlasting fire? (Isaiah 33:14).

2 Corinthians 5:16 says *though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more*. Yes, there was a time He took on human flesh, but that was for the purpose of death. He will never take on that form again. He cannot take up those days of humiliation in which he humbled himself to take on the form of a servant, being found in the fashion of a man (Philippians 2:7).

Yes! The glorified Lord cannot be brought to the realm of limitation again. We are to know him no

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more after that manner. Christ *having died dieth no more!* (Romans 6:9).

So he no longer has a nature, form, or glory that man can relate with in a carnal way. Those among men who will see him and associate with him **must** be like him, having the same nature, life and glory he now has.

Yes! Only his associates, the glorified church, members of his body, his brethren (Hebrews 2:12) will see him as he is. The faithful, brought to fullness of life will see him. Their eyes shall behold the King in his beauty (Isaiah 33:17). This is the meaning of 1 John 3:2...*Beloved, **now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.***

It doth not yet appear. We cannot yet fully describe that glory, but we know that we shall see him, not in shadows, not in vision, but as he is! But first we must take on the heavenly, so that we would not need to fall down as dead or become

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blind like John or Paul. **We must be changed** into his likeness! (1 Corinthians 15: 49-24).

So then, what does the scripture means when it says *every eye shall see him*? To “see” here is to see with the eyes of understanding, to perceive, to have understanding (Ephesians 1:18).

The Lord talked about a people that have eyes but cannot see, and ears but cannot hear and hearts but cannot perceive, a people whose heart is waxed gross, and ears are dull of hearing, whose eyes they have closed lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and be converted, and he should heal them (Mathew 13:15).

Paul also talked about a people whom the god of this world has blinded their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (2 Corinthians 4:4).

But blessed be God! The overthrow of the present heavens and the great tribulations that are to

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come upon the earth will remove the wax from the hearts of men. It will cause all scales in the eyes to fall. It will awaken mankind from folly to the consciousness that the King who has absolute right to rule has taken unto himself his great power and has begun to reign (Revelation 11:17).

They knew not until the flood came ... (Mathew 24:39). That means, the flood shall bring about a knowing, a consciousness that had not been before, and every eye shall see him.

He says in Isaiah 45:22-23 ...*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.*

HOW THESE RELATE TO YOU AS A BELIEVER

How does all these things relate to you as a believer in Christ? The Bible says God is not a respecter of persons (Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34). He will judge wickedness wherever it is found,

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whether in the court of religion or otherwise. In fact 1 Peter 4:17 says *judgment must begin at the house of God*. And the apostle asked, *if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

A Prophecy for Today

Now, Revelation 1:7 is a prophecy concerning our day. We are shown prophetically in this scripture that at the time of the end there will be the piercing of the Lord by his own people. In his first advent, it was the Lord's people (the Jews) who killed Jesus. The Roman armies did it physically, but it was his people that handed him over to the Romans to be crucified.

The venom in the hearts of the Israelites, especially the rulers of the people, against him as revealed in the three and a half years of his ministry on earth, far surpassed the wrath of the Roman soldiers. *He came unto his own, and his own received him not* (John 1:11).

There is a repeat of history in our day. The people who pierced Jesus Christ physically in the days of

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His flesh are no longer alive today, but Revelation 1:7 shows that the same kind of piercing will be done against Him by some of His people who confess faith in Him, and even by His companions who are supposed to be His servants, His friends (John 15: 13-15). Zechariah 12: 2-6 shows that this will be so.

So, what does it mean in New Testament context to pierce the Lord? Hebrews 6:4-6 tells us. It says it is possible for believers to crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh by putting him to an open shame through the manner of life they live morally, and through their spiritual conduct.

Yes, it is possible to bring shame and dishonour to the Lord through our lives and the way we carry on in his service.

Right in the days of the early church, Paul talked and wept concerning some (including ministers) in the church *who walked as enemies of the cross of Christ: whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things* (Philippians 3:18-20).

Ah! There is a lot of “*piercing*” going on in the church today! There is a lot of treachery being perpetuated in the sanctuary today! We only need to clean our eyes a little, and we shall see the *abomination of desolation* right in the holy place (Mathew 24:15; Ezekiel 8). But God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap (Galatians 6:7). There is a desolation determined, and that which is determined shall be poured out upon the desolate (Daniel 9:27).

Two Categories of Overcoming Saints

The coming of the Lord in clouds of divine judgment is going to divide all them that profess faith in Jesus Christ into three classes.

The first is those who will be saved and glorified by means of it. The second is those who will be judged by means of it, and the third is those who will just turn away and suffer the same fate and destiny with the rest of the world (the unbelievers).

This third class hardly requires any consideration. They consist of people who have never really

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bowed their hearts unto the Lord, who do not have the holy seed in them (Isaiah 6: 13), but are found in the church just by association. So we shall focus on the first two classes and see what is that which brought the separation or difference.

Luke 21:36; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; 2 Peter 2:9 and Revelation 3: 10 show very clearly that a people shall be saved from the coming wrath of God outpoured upon the earth.

We are also shown in the scriptures that the salvation of these ones shall not be because they are taken out of the world (John 17:15) or hidden away somewhere in the earth.

Rather we are shown that they shall be saved from the judgments because they have obtained full salvation (1 Thessalonians 5: 9; 1 Peter 1: 5, 9). They have been transformed and brought to an estate of life where death can no longer be at work in or towards them, they have been brought into the fullness of the life that is in Christ (1 Corinthians 15: 49-56; Philippians 3: 20, 21).

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Yes, full salvation, unlimited glory, total victory, incorruptibility, an indestructible life while yet visibly present amongst men, is attainable, and is in fact, something that God has reserved for the faithful amongst His people. 1 Peter 1:5 says there is a *salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time* and that God will keep a people unto that time that He might work in them the experience of that victory. Glory be to the Lord on high!

So, there are a body of people to whom the power and great glory with which the Lord comes, would be to effect a transformation in their lives by completing in them the sealing process (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; Revelation 7:1-3). He seals them up against the coming judgment. Remember the days of Noah. We are told that the Ark was pitched within and without with pitch, *and God shut them in* (Genesis 6:14; 7:16)! And so we find that in the day God shakes all nations, He also fills His house with glory (Hagai 2:7).

The day of the Lord, though terrible for the nation of Israel was also a great day for the faithful, as

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we read earlier on in Acts 2. It is *a day of clouds*, but it is also *as morning spread upon the mountains* (Joel 2:2).

The day of destruction for many is also the day of glory and exaltation for some. May all praise and glory be ascribed to His holy name.

Now, there is a specific purpose of God in all these. There is a purpose for which he has reserved the experience of the fullness of salvation to the remaining of the overcomers that shall be alive at the time of the end.

It is that He might manifest them to the world as His mature sons (Romans 8:19), that He might reveal to the world through a body of people, the exceeding glory and power of His Son Jesus Christ, whom the world cannot see visibly, that Christ may be admired in all them that believe (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

Also, these saints that have come to fullness of salvation are to be the **principal** instruments by which the kingdoms of this world are to be overthrown and turned into the Kingdom of our

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God and of His Christ (Revelation 11:15; 15:5-16:1).

Concerning this end time army of the Lord, we are told they are *a great people and a strong, there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations* (Joel 2:2b).

However, while fullness of glory and power shall be revealed in some among God's people, 1 Corinthians 3: 13-15 show that there are others of the Lord's people who will suffer loss, whose works will be burned by the fires of tribulation.

So, there will be two categories of overcoming saints. There are those who will be kept from the judgment to come, whom the coming forces of evil will not be able to overcome (Revelation 17:14). There are others who are going to be overcome by the coming evil (Revelation 13:7). Though this latter class will eventually be saved, it will be as by fire (1 Corinthians 3:15).

These two categories of believers are further described in Revelation 7:1-4 and 9-17. The first

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class (Revelation 7:1-4) is said to be a hundred and forty four thousand. While this number shows that there are a fixed number of persons that make it to the highest and best that God has prepared for the saints, it is nevertheless symbolic, and shows a defining characteristic that may be found in these ones.

This defining characteristic is revealed in many words in Revelation 14: 1-5. Both scriptures speak of the same class of people, a little flock (Luke 12:32), lambs that follow the principal Lamb wherever he goeth, a people selected from among the spiritual Israel, the household of God.

The second category (Revelation 7:9-17) is said to be *a great multitude, which no man could number*. While this is a prophetic description of a people whose life falls short of divine expectation, a people that cannot be measured (Revelation 11:2; 2 Corinthians 10:13), it nevertheless reveals that majority of believers (we mean true born-again Spirit-filled believers) will fall into this category.

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Verse 14-17 says *...these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat. For the lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,* meaning that these ones will know a period of great affliction and tears.

What are the things that brought these saints to this condition, seeing that it is not the mind of the Lord for his people? (1 Thessalonians 5:9). We will consider three likely causes.

The first can be found in verse 14 of Revelation 7 that we just considered. **They were careless with their moral lives.** They did not allow the Lord to be lord indeed over them and to produce in them that holiness of life that is acceptable in his sight.

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Their garments were defiled and they did not do any serious thing about it until the time of God's judgments. It was during their tribulation and affliction that they were forced to wash their robes in the blood of the lamb.

The second is shown in Matthew 24:38, 43, and also in Luke 21:36. **They were engrossed with the affairs and cares of this life; they were worldly.** They loved the things of the world and gave themselves over to seeking them.

There were bereft of the spirit of consecration, there was no fire on their altar. The light of the prophetic word of the Lord's soon appearing was no longer burning in their hearts; **they were totally asleep in relation to the Lord's coming and our preparations to meet him** (1Thessalonians 5: 6-8; Mathew 25:8-13).

The third can be found in Revelation 18:4. **They did not receive, at an opportune time, the light of the Lord's call to separate themselves from the religious systems of**

our day which are no longer vitally representing his interest on the earth.

Because of some satisfaction they derived therefrom, they tarried in the religious systems of men until it was too late. By the time religious Babylon had become full grown, and it suddenly became clear to them that they had inadvertently become part of a system that is manifestly against God's kingdom, it was already too late.

The Lord Requires a Response from You

The last observation requires further emphasis. It shows us there are things we must do in order to escape the coming judgment.

According to the words of the Lord in John 9:4 and Mathew 24:20-21, there is a night season when no man can work, and our flight from the city of religion should not be in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day (two prophetic descriptions of that night season), *for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

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In its physical fulfilment, it would be more difficult for the believers to flee out of Jerusalem during the winter. It would also be costly to flee on the Sabbath.

So, there was a favourable time they were to understand and obey the words of the Lord to flee from the city of religion that has become desolate (Mathew 23:38).

So also, there is a call to flee the religious systems of our day that have enthroned man's rule in God's house and have turned their back to what the Lord seeks to do on the earth at this time. And there is an opportune time to respond to the call!

*When ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken about by Daniel (Daniel 12: 11) stand in the holy place, (**whoso readeth, let him understand**), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.*

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So, there is a note of urgency bound up with the call to flee the denominational church systems of our day. Revelation 18:4 says *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.* **Self-abandonment and total surrender to the will of the Lord is also required to clean break away,** for *churchianity* (religious Babylon) has a lot to offer to the uncrucified flesh.

Revelation 18: 19 says *in her is made rich all that have ships in the sea by reason of her costliness.* But we are told to remember Lot's wife, for *whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it* (Luke 17:32, 33).

Even the disciples could not, but marvel at the architectural wonders and the many precious stones and ornaments that adorned the temple that then was, even in its "*desolate*" state. They came to shew Jesus the building of the temple, as if to say, "*How can you depart out of such delightful wonder? How can you say their house is left unto them desolate?! Can't you see all these beautiful things going on?*"

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But the Lord said unto them, *See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.*

Please read the whole of Matthew 23 and verses 1 and 2 of Matthew 24 that the Lord might speak to your heart. May the Lord truly save us from the wrath to come.

Deliverance from the wrath that is to come upon the city of religion is not just left to human decision-making too. There is also the divine activity in the selection of those who are taken away and delivered from the impending judgment and those who are left.

Luke 17: 34-37 says *I tell you in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the*

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body is, tither will the eagles be gathered together.

So, even though God commands his people to flee Babylon, that the one in the field should not to return etc., we see also that there is a divine selection that sees some being taken away from the city to the place where the body is, where they would be prepared to escape the judgment to come.

This divine selection is determined by the conditions of our hearts, to what extent our hearts are loyal to Christ alone, to what extent our affection is singularly towards him. Daniel 12:10 says *and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.*

So, it all comes back to the condition of your heart, the things you have set your affections upon, your loyalty, your moral living. A man cannot see with the eyes of the eagle the coming judgment and receive the wisdom to flee, or see into the things the Lord seeks to do in His body at this time totally yielding himself to it, if his heart is wrong and his loyalty divided.

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The Lord Jesus Christ said in John 7: 16-17. *...y doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do my will, he shall also know of the doctrine.*

There is a darkening of the eyes that comes upon the morally and spiritually unfaithful one, and to the disloyal at heart. (Psalm 69:23; Romans 11:10). May the good Lord be gracious to us all.

Brethren! There is a great tribulation that is to come, first upon the city of religion, and thereafter upon the world. Before God judges the nations, He will judge His people and judge religious Babylon.

There is going to be a persecution of the saints, a tribulation, such as have never been witnessed before. Revelation 11: 2 says *...the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*

But, notice, the Lord will not allow this great tribulation to break forth upon the earth until he

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has fully sealed all those who are hearkening to his voice at this time of the end (Revelation 7:1-3).

History has it that none of the true followers of Jesus were overtaken in that great tribulation that came upon the nation of Israel in AD70. God allowed sufficient time (a period of about 40 years) for His followers to be prepared to escape the coming judgment. Many read the words of the Lord in Luke 21 and Matthew 24, noted the signs of the time, and fled the city before that destruction came.

So shall it be also at the time of the end. The Lord will gather the willing-hearted out of the denominational confusion to the place of safety before the great judgments. He will give sufficient time for this, until all true and willing-hearted ones have been gathered in.

The tribulation saints will ultimately come to a place of honour in the kingdom; because they will turn fully to the Lord and prove faithful to him in the midst of terrible persecutions, even though they had always been unfaithful before.

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For this reason they are described as “*the holy city*” in Revelation 11: 2. God also will deal kindly with them. But their experience is not what God desires for you, neither is the glory they are to come into the best that you can attain in the kingdom.

The Lord has prepared something much more glorious for you if you will turn to Him in this period of peace. Joel 2: 32 says *all those that call upon him shall be saved*.

In the typical fulfillment, a great number of God’s people, both priests and laymen, repented, and turned to the Lord, calling upon His name (Acts 2). May you also call upon Him at this time.

Even the Lord Himself at a time had to depart from the temple and never returned there again (Mathew 23:38-39). May you also receive the wisdom to flee from the wrath to come. May you see the abominations of desolation in the holy place and the desolation determined upon the desolate. May your life be found acceptable before Him at this time, in Jesus name.