

The Coming of the Lord Part 5

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We now reach the conclusion of our study of the coming of the Lord. His coming is a presencing of Him who is with us and in us and has promised never to leave us, an unveiling of Him who is always advancing toward the full and final manifestation of all He is as the bodily fullness of the Godhead (**Col. 2:9**). I remember a Greek scholar commenting that the best way to translate Jesus' statement about being in the midst when two or more are gathered in His name, was this way: "When two or more are gathered in my name there am I in-midsting them" (**Matt. 18:20**).

That reveals the dynamic of the Christ as He makes Himself known in and through us when we connect according to His nature ("in my name"). That presence/coming ("**parousia**") is the manifestation of God in all His glory and that statement brings us to the transition from lesson four to lesson five. We need not labor the fact that the coming of the Lord is a coming in glory.

Any Bible student is aware that His coming and His glory always go hand in hand (**Col. 3:4**), and that is why He in His coming is our hope of glory (**Rom. 5:2; Eph. 1:12; Col. 1:27**). It is our blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior (**Tit. 2:13**), Jesus Christ. So we transition with that thought and complete our commentary on the spiritual realities behind the language of **1 Thes.4:15-18**. He comes in glory, He comes with glory, He comes in the clouds of the air and with clouds (**Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mk. 13:26; 14:62; I Thes. 4:17; Rev. 1:7**). He comes to be admired in His saints (**Eph. 1:18; II Thes. 1:10**) and He comes with ten thousands of His saints (**Ps. 68:17; Dan. 7:10**).

Now it shouldn't be hard to take the short step of spiritual logic and realize that the clouds of our passage are not cirrus clouds, or cumulus clouds; they are not gatherings of condensation in the air. They are the clouds of the saints gathered together in all their glory (**Heb. 12:1**) which is the glory of God, in Christ, in them. Do your homework, dear reader, and you will find that all through scripture, clouds are associated over and over again with the manifestation of the glory of God.

It is not my style to elaborate in great detail but to put you on an obvious track that can lead you to this exciting discovery; the discovery that God as the kids say, does not have a "thing" about rain clouds. He does have a "thing" or passion about revealing Himself in and with humanity transformed into His likeness. The reality of who we are in Christ, both those from the other side and we who remain, both parties being "*spirits of just men made perfect*" (**Heb. 12:23**), shall descend with Christ, catching up our soulical dimension of

being, into the glory of all that God is in Christ and which we share as joint heirs with Him (**Rom. 8:17; Gal. 3:29; Eph. 3:6**).

Now I think a word of wisdom is in order at this point as we face the certain accusation of overly spiritualizing scripture. Is there anything physical involved here? Yes of course, the physical being will be transformed from its corrupted mortal state to incorruptibility and immortality. All this is going to actually happen within the sphere of the earthly before it spreads throughout all the universe. So how do we determine what is to be understood only in a physical sense and what is to be understood in a spiritual sense?

The answer is, we determine very carefully with the mind of the Spirit, and though some principles of biblical interpretation might be helpful at a certain level, they will not insure that we come to a true perception. We must be taught of God! Take for example the wondrous **53rd chapter of Isaiah** with its prophetic unfolding of the passion of Christ. It begins with these words (**from the NAS**), "*Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed*" (**Vs. 1**). We know that this does not have to do with the revelation of a physical arm but rather is a way of speaking of the outstretched saving power and ability of God. Isaiah goes on; "*For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground*" (**Vs. 2**). Again, obviously, we are not dealing with plant life here, and yet the rest of the chapter deals with actual physical events with spiritual meaning.

He was smitten and pierced and scourged physically (**vs. 4 and 5**) for a purpose that involves spirit and flesh. It is possible in this sense to overly spiritualize texts, for there are those who would deny the physical dimension of Christ's suffering. One must immerse himself in the holy scriptures and be made one in mind with the Spirit, and the writer, all the time looking at what is said in its immediate context and in the greater context of the whole Bible as to the subject at hand.

And we are greatly helped by the consistency of the Spirit in the use of words in the original languages as He inspired the holy writings. With these things in mind, I believe the Lord has helped us to be true to what is really being conveyed with the words "**heaven,**" "**caught up,**" "**air,**" "**meet,**" "**trumpet,**" "**shout,**" and the like. God has not meant us to understand these things in purely physical terms, but He does want us to know that this great work of His does occur to men of flesh in this world, but we are not to indulge in childish imagination, picturing in our carnal minds an event that appeals mostly to our flesh.

We are to be spiritually excited at the prospect of being transformed from within by the heavenly, transcendent reality of all that is true in Christ. There is a verse in **Romans 8**, that ties this altogether for us. It is **verse 11**, where Paul says, "*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.*" Stay with me here. We all must know surely that the important element in the so-called rapture is that we shall receive our adoption (**Greek, full placement as sons**), to wit the redemption of our bodies.

We shall become wholly like him even to the outer man. Now Paul, in that verse, describes this giving of life to our mortal bodies as that which occurs by the Spirit that indwells us.

This is a transformation that arises from the depths of the innermost man and yet in **I Thes. 4:16**, he describes it as coming from heaven. It is in our spirits that God dwells in the transcendence of His own glory (heaven). It is from that glory and with that glory that He catches us up. Be sure to know that verse 11 above includes both a progressive infusion of the saving life of Christ and a final, consummate, exceedingly abundant welling up of that life until this body of death is swallowed up in the victory of His life (**I Cor. 15:54**).

Commentators love to compartmentalize verses like that and tell us that Paul was just talking about a bodily empowering by the indwelling Spirit and that it has nothing to do with our final transformation. They want to speak of our final transformation only in dispensational terms so as to lead believers to focus on an event in the sky as opposed to the transforming Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus within us.

I spoke of transitioning with these final "**rapture**" insights, and that is what I'm doing, for now we get to the heart of the fifth lesson which is the unfolding of the Glory of God in the Bride of Christ. If you've been following with us through all the lessons thus far, you know that we've been looking at our multi-dimensional relationship to God. Fatherhood, Motherhood, brotherhood, sonship and the bride and Groom aspect are all a part of the marvelous relationship our God has brought us into with Him. I will not go over past ground again, but I will encourage you to give the past studies a fresh reading to fully appreciate the bridal dimension that we are looking at now.

Let's try to see a principle regarding the unfolding of the Glory of God as He comes to us, in us and on to others to repeat the process. A clear, though hidden picture, emerges when we grasp the essential thought of the apostle Paul in his instructions to the church in Corinth as recorded in **I Cor. 11**. Here we see a cultural analogy that still existed in that day of the unfolding of the glory of God. We no longer have that particular analogy in our western culture and the Lord does not intend us to legalistically try to merely reenact externally what Paul was dealing with.

There are cultural analogies that exist among all peoples; things about their manner of living and relating to one another that are, if viewed with spiritual sensitivity, analogous to God's way with men. In that day and in that place, head covering or the absence of it pictured something about the way God relates to us and reveals Himself to us and through us. If you think the only reason the Spirit of God included Paul's instructions for worship attire in the canon of scripture was solely to give us rules for appropriate dress, you miss the really important and beautiful thought found in this passage.

At first, it appears to be rather mundane compared with other portions of scripture and seems to just be a matter of proper modesty and sequential authority in the church and home, but this is included in Holy Writ to enlighten the believer who is called beyond the merely casual perusal of the letter of Paul's thought. The real subject here is the glory of God and how it unfolds in the relationship of family. We are told that God is the head of Christ and Christ is the head of every man (**Did you get that? The head of EVERY MAN**), and the man is the head of the woman.

Further into the chapter, we see that this headship has to do with glory, and that a man is the image and glory of God and the woman is the glory of man. Now when Paul says that a man is the image and glory of God He, of course, is viewing man in union with Christ who

is the express image of God and the effulgence and radiance of God's glory (**Heb. 1:3**). This is an established reality which cannot be essentially altered though man might, for a season, live in ignorance of it, and in that case, his behavior would be affected by that ignorance until the Father's love draws the prodigal back to the glory of home.

The glory of God, by the exercise of headship comes forth from the Father by the Son and from the Son by man and from man by woman. But don't miss something of great importance here: it is all the same glory! When it gets to the woman stage it is not at all diminished nor inferior, and in fact has reached the fulness of its manifestation.

Many of my readers will be those who are familiar with the truth of the manifestation of the sons of God as creation is set free into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God (**Rom. 8:21, NAS**). But let me share an important truth for this hour with you and it is this, that the glory of the sons of God will not come into full manifestation until you see the glory of man in a woman. Adam was not a fully revealed person until Eve was taken out of his side and then it could be seen what all there was to this man Adam. Before that, much of what was Adam was hidden. When our sonship reaches the point that a bride emerges from it then glory shall have had its way.

There must occur in our relationship with the Father such a partaking of His divine nature that both His Fatherhood and Motherhood are manifested as Christ the Groom and the Church the Bride. Now since the Church is both the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ, so both dimensions of that relationship must reach full maturation and that cannot happen until very feminine spiritual qualities begin to emerge. Christ is the Groom IN US making us what He is as the Groom, and the life of the Groom in us, makes us the Bride.

We do not carry on this divine romance from afar. Christ is not a Groom sitting up in some celestial palace sending love notes down to His lover. He, as the life of the sons brings them into participation with Him as Groom and in that union we love His bride and she loves Him in IN US.

Rom. 3: 23 tells us, "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" In the Greek it more accurately reads, "*are lacking of the glory of God.*" We have become depleted of glory and only the replenishment of that glory can make us whole, and when that replenishment reaches its consummation we see the city of God descending **AS A BRIDE** from heaven having the glory of God (**Rev. 21:10-11**). When all that God is in His gender completeness is revealed, the spot light will be on the Bride, but she will cover her head, for she is the glory of her Man and it is her passion that all shall know that her glory is His glory in her.

There must come to be in the Church the full sharing of the kind of love that the Groom has for His Bride so that He gives His life for her and gives her all His glory. Instead, we often live and minister for personal glory and merely use those who are to be His Bride for our own purposes. This must be the manner of sons we are with the Son loving His Bride through us and at the same time, we, as the Bride giving ourselves in complete abandonment to the Son in the sons, want nothing but to know His love and to delight in His will.

What I'm saying is that Christ nurtures and cherishes His Bride from within His Body and

loves her as His own Body from within that Body. As we need such Groom-type sons so also do we need such a quality of daughters to be a Bride who does not live for herself but only to be pleasing to the One who is her very light and life.

I know that there is an idea that there is a groom company and a bride company but I tell you with all boldness that **WE MUST, ALL OF US, BE BOTH TO ONE ANOTHER, FOR IN SO BEING, WE ARE THAT TO CHRIST HIMSELF WHO IS THE REALITY OF GROOM AND BRIDE EVEN AS HIS FATHER IS ALSO MOTHER.** Christ will in-midst us; He will presence among us; He will fully come when He has brought us to the place where we are the manifestation of this great love and this great family; as the nature of our Father/Mother God finds expression in the extended family.

Let me close by being careful not to lose the main thrust of this last lesson which is the importance of the manifestation of glory of God in Christ's Bride. There must come into the Church and into the experience of those who are receiving great revelation in this hour, that quality of the Bride which has to do with looking on her Lord, though she is in union with Him and one with Him, as being yet other than her and Who is the source of her very being and wonderfully greater than her. We must become lovers of our Lord as He fills our hearts with the sweet fragrance of Himself.

Stay tuned for future serious, seminal samplings.

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