

Revelation

*Part Six
Behold, He is Coming
Part Three
(Revelation 1:7, 8)*

With Study Questions

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Part Six

Behold, He is Coming

Part Three

(Revelation 1:7, 8)

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. ⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End,*” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:7, 8).

Introduction

Looking to take a tour of Circus Maximus in Italy, my wife and I happened upon a lady who volunteered to help us appreciate the history of the setting. She wasn't a tour guide and she didn't work for the venue. We were a bit suspicious. Turns out she was in Italy for a conference. She was a professor of world history and knew more about Circus Maximus than any employee on the site. It was delightful.

In our discussion we commiserated regarding the lack of appreciation people have for history. There are so many amazing things we take for granted and we have no idea where they came from and, or why, they are here. During our discussion she, as is common today, repeatedly referred to the dates when things happened as either part of the Common Era (CE) or Before the Common Era (BCE).

Even though these terms for dating aren't brand new, they have gotten legs in societies and disciplines which desire to promote a more secular understanding of history. According to many, the more historically used terms (BC-Before Christ and AD-*Anno Domini* or year of the Lord), are less inclusive and too religious.

After we had become cozy and friendly, I asked her a question. Recognizing her penchant for remembering and valuing history, my question was, “Historically, what happened that separated the two eras? Seems like it had to be a pretty significant event.” This launched us into another exhilarating conversation, but she got my point. You can call it

whatever you want, but it seems the entire history of the entire world utilizes the life of Christ to determine what year it is.¹

I mention this in our final message on Revelation 1:7 because I get the impression that most of us don't appreciate just how significant of an event it was when the Old Covenant came to an end and the New Covenant began. It is universally held by all theologians in all eschatological camps that the Revelation is a protracted Olivet Discourse. In other words, what Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 (where we read of earthquakes, famines, the abomination of desolation, stars falling, moon turning to blood, etc.) briefly record what John is writing about in Revelation in great detail.

And all three of those sermons in Matthew, Mark and Luke begin with Jesus talking about the destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Temple was the greatest symbol marking out the Old Covenant era. When that temple was destroyed, it annihilated any reasonably functional method of continuing the Old Covenant administration. The religious records and artifacts necessary for the Levitical Priesthood (the essence of the religion of the Old Covenant) had become unnecessary and would be destroyed.

In an effort to keep Jewish Christians from abandoning the faith and turning back to the shadows which prefigured Christ, the author of Hebrews writes:

In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away (Hebrews 8:13).

Significant portions of the New Testament, especially the Gospels, teach of this. Jesus will tell parables where a master plants a vineyard and puts it under the care of tenants. When the master sends his servants (likely the prophets), the tenants beat and kill them. He finally sends his son (clearly Christ Himself) and the tenants kill him as well. The consequences are death to the tenants and the giving of the vineyard to other tenants (Old Covenant to New Covenant).

¹ The French Republican Calendar began with the first year of the French First Republic and rejected the seven-day week (with its connections to the Book of Genesis) for a ten-day week. It lasted about 12 years.

These parables are not about the end of the world. How do we know this? We are not left to guess. Matthew records:

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them (Matthew 21:45).

Revelation is recording (largely, a prophetic future for the original readers, but past for us) that which took place which ended the Old Covenant and paved the way for the New. We should walk away from Revelation with the knowledge that history would be opened for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

In the Old Covenant, the light of Christ shone through one nation, Israel. It was like a firework during the 4th of July, where through a dark sky you can see one thin stream of light. But in the New Covenant, the firework explodes and fills the darkness with the light of Christ. It is the victory of Christ over all darkness.

Every Eye

Having discussed the coming with the clouds, we now move to what is meant by **“every eye.”** In an effort to avoid every conceivable explanation of every phrase (there are books on Revelation which seek to do that), we must make an effort to be brief. If Revelation 1:7 were referring to the Second Coming, this would likely mean every person, everywhere, who ever lived.

At the same time, we need to understand how the Bible uses language. It is often used the same way we use language. The World Series doesn't include every team in the world. If I say I love Texans, it doesn't mean I love every Texan. When Paul wrote to the church at Rome and said their faith **“is proclaimed in all the world” (Romans 1:8)**, it wasn't as if the Mayans of the Yucatan Peninsula had heard of the faith of the church in Rome. When Caesar August decreed a **“all the world should be registered” (Luke 2:1)**, that didn't include Greenland. When Luke records that during Pentecost in Jerusalem there were **“devout men from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5)**, we shouldn't expect there would be people from Imperial China at Pentecost.

In short, **“every eye”** includes every eye under consideration. This was going to be a massive event and all of the Jews and Romans will know it is happening. They will all see the **“see Him,”** which I take to mean they will see the judgment that He will bring.

They Who Pierced Him

The piercing of Christ was foretold in Zechariah 12:10 and actually recorded in John 19:34. Who are **“they”** (*hoitines* is a plural pronoun) who pierced Him? If you read John 19:34 you learn that it was a singular Roman soldier who pierced Jesus (again, a lesson on how to read the Bible).

But generally, most understand this phrase as referring to Israel. If you read the entire account in John 19:31-37 you will see it was both the Jews and Romans who were responsible for the piercing of Christ. Note that these are the two oppressors and persecutors of the church that will be under judgment in Revelation (see Revelation 11:8 and 17:9).

Nonetheless the mention of this piercing seems to put the crosshairs on Israel. Add to that the next phrase **“all the tribes of the earth.”**

All the Tribes

The phrase, **“all the tribes of the earth”** might make us think that it is referring to every person in the world (maybe even who ever lived). But there are many reasons why that should be questioned. First, is the actual language. The Bible makes a distinction between **“tribes”** *phylai* and **“nations”** *ethnos*. In just a few chapters we will read that Jesus ransomed people...

**...from every tribe and language and people and nation
(Revelation 5:9b).**

All this to say that **“all the tribes of the earth”** can just as easily be translated **“all the tribes of the land,”** which gives verse quite a different feel. The use of the word **“tribes”** is generally used to describe the tribes of Israel (Revelation 7) and the word **“land”** *ge* is often used to describe the Promised Land (see Hebrews 11:9).

Another reason to understand this as primarily referring to Jerusalem is the allusion from Zechariah.

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 weeps over a firstborn (Zechariah 12:10).

Zechariah

The Scriptures are so very remarkable! Zechariah, which was likely written about five hundred years before the birth of Christ records numerous events fulfilled in the life of Christ. We read of the annulling of the Old Covenant associated with thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:10-13). This is fulfilled in both the betrayal of Judas (Matthew 26:15) and the kingdom being taken from Israel and given to the New Covenant church (Matthew 21:43).

In Zechariah 13:7 we read the words **“Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.”** A specific reference to the abandonment of Christ by His follows recorded in Matthew 14:27. We also read of the Mount of Olives in Zechariah 14:4 and how Jesus will place His feet upon it, and it will be split in two. Jesus, in a certain sense, would be the great divider. He did not come to bring peace but a sword (Matthew 10:34-39). Families would be divided.

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel (Luke 2:34).

Zechariah 12:2 literally speaks of the **“siege of Jerusalem,”** which we have established to be the focus of the teaching of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse. Zechariah 14:8 speaks of **“living waters”** flowing out of Jerusalem. Again, an undeniable reference to Christ found in John 4:10 and 7:38. These prophecies and their fulfillment are virtually inexplicable apart from the divine hand of the Living God. Hence Revelation 1:8 and its reference to the Almighty!

This brings us to our final point. What is this mourning which takes place?

Mourning

There is great disagreement (imagine that) as to whether this is the mourning of lamentation, sorrow, grief and repentance or the mourning of fear and trepidation. Able theologians hold both views. Yet another fulfillment of that which is taught in Zechariah would favor sorrow and repentance. There seems to be a reference to Pentecost in Zechariah 12:10, along with mourning of faithfulness.

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 weeps over a firstborn (Zechariah 12:10).

Weeping over a firstborn is heartfelt sorrow. A fulfillment of this is found in response to Peter's sermon at Pentecost. It culminates with these words:

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."³⁷ Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:36-38a).

They were "**cut to the heart.**" It is worth noting that the word "**mourn**" *kopto*, literally means to cut. It is not the exact same word from Acts 2:37, but synonymous. Let us not miss the grace of God in these words. The determined enemies of Christ, those who pierced Him, would find forgiveness through the very blood they were complicit in shedding.

Truly, "**while we were sinners, Christ died for us**" (Romans 5:8). Remember, Revelation was designed to be both an encouragement and a warning to the church. For those who were faithful, for those with a godly mourning, this judgment would be good news. The church would be

preserved, and it would **“His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13b).**

The historical events/judgments found in the coming of Christ with the clouds would be good news for some and bad news for others. But let us not lose the deeper message. There will be an eternal judgment, which will make the good news and bad news of historical judgments relatively insignificant.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death (Revelation 2:11).

May we as a church, may all churches, may all Christians, ever proclaim that victory over the second death, the eternal judgment of God. May we herald that victory comes through faith in Christ alone.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God (Revelation 2:7).

Questions for Study

1. Discuss the significance of how the world determines what year it is. How does this interact with what we read in Scripture regarding God's covenant (pages 2, 3)?
2. What does the Olivet Discourse have in common with Revelation? What was the significance of the temple and why do you suppose it would be destroyed (pages 3, 4)?
3. In terms of global impact, compare the Old Covenant to the New Covenant (page 4).
4. How does the Bible use words, or phrases, like "every eye" or "all the world?" How does this help us understand Scripture (pages 4, 5)?
5. How can the phrase, "all the tribes of the earth" be misleading (page 5)?
6. Discuss the prophecies in Zechariah and how they are fulfilled by Christ (page 6).
7. What does it mean, in this context, to mourn? What does that look like in your life (pages 7, 8)?