

His Appearing

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

(Col 3:4)

"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."

(1 Jn 3:2)

Many Christians speak of a desire to see the Lord someday. They are looking forward to that day when they can go to heaven and see Jesus. Others are waiting for Jesus to come to earth again or to rapture us to heaven. They look forward to these events much like Israel looked forward to the coming Messiah. In fact, many Christians relate to the Lord and look for His coming as if the Messiah still had not come. Was what Jesus accomplished somehow incomplete? Did He not say, "It is finished!" Did His death, burial, and resurrection really only accomplish something for the future?

We have only to read the Bible to find the answers to these questions, but somehow we justify away the power of what the cross accomplished and replace it with our own carnal interpretations. We don't see ourselves walking in victory over sin, so somehow that must be speaking of the future. God's word is clear, it says that we are dead to sin, not that we will be someday. So how is it that so many struggle with something that they are supposed to be dead to? Could it be that like blind Bartemaeus, we need to have our eyes opened? Could it be that we are to believe the Word of God over our own experiences.

We are not to just sit passively back and wait for the signs to show us when He is coming again. We are to wait on the Lord, but our waiting is not like waiting to see if we picked the right numbers for the lottery. Our waiting must be with faith and anticipation that the work is finished and Christ lives in us. His coming is supposed to be manifest in His people today. The power of the cross put away not just the consequences of our sins but the nature from which they emanate. The church has relegated Christ to being a spectator of, rather than the life of, His Body.

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal 1:11-12)

The word revelation means to uncover or unveil, so the revelation of Jesus Christ means the unveiling of Jesus Christ. The revelation of Jesus Christ relates to His appearing. The New Testament speaks of two veils. These veils are what block His appearing, our seeing Christ, so it is important to understand how these veils are removed. The first veil is the veil of the temple that separated the holy place from the Holy of holies. Only one, the high priest could enter in to His presence through this veil, but what was behind this veil represented the place of true communion. It was the Holy of Holies where God spoke of meeting with Moses at the mercy seat between the cherubim.

"And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." (Ex. 25:22)

Have you ever longed for this kind of communion with Jesus? This veil represented something that was unfinished. It was the veil that covered His face. *"And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;" (Matt 27:51)* This veil was rent when Christ died. He entered in as the true High Priest and offered Himself a living sacrifice. This veil was rent only after His work was finished. So, the renting of this veil relates to the work that was finished at the cross.

It is important for us to understand what it means that the work is finished. So many Christians never understand the full significance of what Jesus accomplished at the cross. When Jesus died on the cross He did much more than just purchase the forgiveness for our sins. He certainly did that, but the cross was much more than that. He was desiring to bring us into a Father/Son relationship that until that time only He and His Son Jesus had experienced. He wanted to make us sons of God through union with Christ. He wanted us to become the bride of Christ. These relationships describe the depth of intimacy that God desires to have with us. We are One with Christ, joined to Him. This makes us One flesh and One Spirit. Just as a bride is one with her husband, we are one with the Lord. Because of our oneness with Christ God sees us as He sees His Son. This was God's purpose for the cross. Through this oneness we have become partakers of the divine nature. This is not some strange new doctrine but is clearly stated in the scripture, *"by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."* (2Pet. 1:4) But we must have our eyes opened to this through revelation. We must see the Lord and as we see the Lord, we will see ourselves properly.

The word church means "called out", but called out to what? God brought Israel out of Egypt into the wilderness so that He might bring them into something, the land of promise. That is a shadow of what He desires to do with His church. He brought a people out of death to bring them into life. Our promised land is Christ Himself. He does not just want a church but a bride, one who would be bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, a bride that will act out of the same substance and nature as her groom. His death, burial, and resurrection accomplished just this. We were joined to Him. This joining was His intent and purpose long before sin ever entered into this world. His plan to go to purchase His bride with His blood came before the fall ever happened. *"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* (Rev 13:8)

Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He knew just as it was necessary for Adam to fall into a deep sleep of death in order to have his bride, He too would in death have His bride taken from His side. Thus, the first veil that was rent opened the way for us to enter into this relationship. His death put away our old sinful nature forever. We have been joined to Him and this is how He wants us to relate to Him,

not as separate but as His very flesh and bone. The veil is gone but there is in a sense a second which prevents us from relating to Him in this way even though the way has been opened. The veil that remains relates to our individual comprehension, our blindness. This veil now prevents us from seeing Christ. It relates to our heart condition.

“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” (2 Cor. 3:14-16)

Therefore, in order for this veil to be removed we must turn to the Lord. However, what does it mean, "turn to the Lord" and how does this remove the veil? Man's principle problem is not Satan but self. We want to blame everything on the devil but the truth is our self-focus is what brings us defeat. Self-focus equals unbelief! We look within ourselves seeking to see what God says that He accomplished in Christ. For example, the Bible says, *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:"* It also says in (1 Jn 1:5) *"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."* (1 Cor. 1:30)

We read this and then look at ourselves to see if it is true. We look and we see darkness and so we enter into unbelief. We think, "I must not be in Christ." Wake up! It is of God you are in Him. You have nothing to do with it except that you believe. His Word also says that in Him is no sin, no condemnation, etc. We look inwardly and find all of these things so we reason away what is in His Word. We think it must not mean that. It does mean just that, but it is only in Him that it is true. Stop looking within yourself for the evidence and believe in Him. He is the evidence not us.

Yes, we are crucified with Christ. Yes, we are baptized into His death. Yes we are seated together with Him in heavenly places, but a self-focus will prevent us from seeing these things. Our carnal mind (earthly understanding) gets in the way of our just believing God. We try to find holiness, righteousness, love or whatever in ourselves when it is only found in Him and in our ONENESS WITH HIM. It will flow out of us as we walk in that union.

Therefore, the problem that prevents our seeing Christ is a heart condition. It relates to where our heart is focused. If we are focused on our self, our heart needs to turn. We need to repent of our self-centered view and turn to the Lord.

Another part of this is holiness. *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."* (Heb. 12:14) What does God mean by holiness? The Bible is all about relationship. It is about Israel's relationship to God and now the church's. When you think of holiness in this context it takes on a very different connotation. Holiness is about being set apart for a purpose. Holiness can be seen clearly in the relationship between the bride and the bridegroom, and it relates to a love relationship. A bride is to be set apart for only One. When she relates as a bride, she is not to love many, but only

One. This is the relationship that Christ desires with His church. This is His view of holiness. It is not about what we do or do not do. It is about being set apart for Him.

As Christians, we want to focus on the things of God, on prayer, on scripture reading on service, ministry or any number of good things, but Jesus said to Martha that only One thing is needful. We need to stop seeking the things of Christ and just seek Christ. We must make Him our focus and everything else will fall into place. Our idea of holiness relates more to the things that we think God does not want us do than they do on our relationship with Him.

Just imagine a bride that was so busy serving her groom and cleaning herself up that she did not really have time to be with him. How pleased would that husband be? We see a picture of this in the Song of Solomon in chapter 5. The Shulamite had washed herself and climbed into her bed. She was clean, she was lovely and her beloved came knocking on her door. She did not want to get her feet dirty to answer the door. Suddenly she remembers why she cleaned herself up in the first place. It was for Him, so she runs into the streets calling for Him, running after Him and before it is all over, she is a mess. At that point, she realized that it was not about getting cleaned up but about being with Him.

We must turn our hearts after Him so that we can enter this new relationship for which He paid so dearly. That is why it is necessary to get our eyes off of us. If we look to ourselves, we will only become frustrated. If we comprehend that our death is with Him, we will understand that we have died to all of the things that would come before Him. It is because we have been joined to His incorruptible life that we may truly be more than conquerors in Christ. It is Christ alone who now lives in us, and we know that He is holy. As He said "Be ye holy because I am Holy." He is in fact our Holiness *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30)*

The word here that is translated sanctification can also be translated holiness. When our hearts are divided and belong to many, we will not see the Lord, but it is of God that you are in Christ. Our eye must become single. In Him, we have been given a new heart. If you look in the first verse of Revelation chapter one, it says that the Revelation of Jesus Christ has been given to Him. When we turn to Him to give Him our whole heart, we see that He has removed the veil. We will not find victory in or efforts or even our desires, but only in a realization of our desperate need for Him. In this realization we will become like blind Bartimaeus who chose to press through to get to Jesus at any cost. We become like a man underwater, deprived of oxygen, fighting to get to the surface to get air. I MUST KNOW HIM!

The first veil was removed at the cross. The second veil is over our understanding and we are not to trust in our own understanding. We must have our minds renewed. *"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2 Cor. 5:14)*

“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,” (Phil. 3:8)

Paul is speaking here out of a changed mind. This is the mind of Christ. This is the new mind that we have been given. This is when we cease many cares and seek only One. Luke 10:42 says, “But one thing is needful.’ and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” This is the relationship that our bridegroom longs to have with us, that He would be our first love. This is what it means for us to turn to the Lord. It is also what He expresses to the seven churches in Revelation.

It is not about accepting a teaching or a doctrine but embracing Him and our death with Him as a reality and as the only way. We are joined to Him, and He is our salvation. It is very possible to hear this message and still walk away unaffected by it. It is not a matter of receiving and understanding information but of our having a hungry heart.

With many, there is no true turning to the Lord but only an acknowledgment that the Holy Spirit bore witness to a teaching. "Good sermon!" However, if there is no turning of the heart, this message will lose its luster quickly, but if your heart turns to Him, you quickly realize that this message is Him. We preach Christ!

“I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos,” (My killing) (Rev. 1:9-12) When we begin to embrace the cross we will find ourselves in a place of death. However, this is a place that we have chosen willingly because it leads us to Him.

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;” (Rev. 1:10-12)

John was not satisfied with just hearing the voice of the Lord; He wanted to see His face. He wanted to see the face of the One who spoke to Him so he turned to the Lord. When He turned, He did not just see Jesus by himself but Jesus in the midst of His church, the seven golden candlesticks. Christ cannot be revealed apart from His Church. He is revealed (He appears) in us. This is where He is unveiled. This is His appearing. This vision was not just of Christ but of Christ in the midst of His church, the New Man.

“To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:” (Gal. 1:16)

When we see Him, we see that we are dead with Him. This is what God desires. He wants Jesus to be seen in His church. He wants us to love Him the way that He loves us.

Behold He Cometh With Clouds

"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." (Rev. 1:7)

One of our biggest enemies in regard to seeing Jesus is our own perception of who He is. In this verse it says, "behold, he cometh with clouds". This word behold is there to call our attention to what follows. It is as if Jesus is saying, "Listen to this. Understand this. Perceive this." He wants us to get what follows. He cometh with clouds. Any time you see the "eth" on a verb in the King James this denotes a continual state. So John is saying "Understand this, Jesus is always coming with clouds". This verse is not saying that someday Jesus will come. It is saying that Jesus is always coming. Jesus is always coming, always appearing. His desire is that we would see Him.

However, His appearance does not mean that we will see Him. It is possible for the Lord to appear and for us to still miss Him. As long as we fail to see our union with Him, we will miss His appearing. Think about the road to Emmaus. Jesus appeared on the road, but did they really see Him? His appearing is continual and is always present but very possible to miss. We can miss Him because of our preconceived notions about who He is. We may know Him on a certain level but then He appears in a way we do not know Him and we say, "That's not Jesus! I know Jesus and that's not Him" The disciples even took Jesus for a ghost once when He came to them walking on the water. Not only may we miss the Lord in His coming but we may even be offended at His appearing. Sometimes He may appear in a leader or a brother, manifesting in a way that we do not know Him and we are offended.

Behold He cometh with clouds. What does this mean; why with clouds? "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night." (Ex. 14:19-20) In these scriptures, the angel of God is seen in a cloud. There is only one cloud. So, both Israel and Egypt were "seeing" the same cloud but to one it was darkness and to the other it was light.

Continuing from above: "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake" This is one view of the cloud. In this case, it is Israel who is seeing but not seeing. Israel looked at this and saw a dark cloud. But if we read on with these verses "*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of*

just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. 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. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be move" (Heb 12:18-29)

Looking at the road to Emmaus again, Jesus was revealed to these guys who had walked with Jesus for years. They had "seen" Him many times. They had "seen" Him heal, cast out demons, feed the multitudes, walk on the water etc.... The Pharisees saw Jesus but they did not see who He was. Have you ever met someone that had a "vision" of Jesus? They saw Jesus, but did they really? Was this person changed forever or are they basically just the same person they were before but now they have seen a vision. We are not talking about seeing a vision of Jesus. The kind of seeing that this speaks of will change you forever. His appearing is not out there but in the midst.

Part of our problem is that we are waiting for Jesus to appear out there somewhere! Where was this first verse, "Behold, He cometh with clouds..."? It was in the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the book of His unveiling or appearing. This book speaks of ONE. It speaks of Christ dwelling in His Body. We say, "I want to see the Lord", but we do not mean the same thing that Jesus means. We want to see Him in the scriptures; we want to see Him in heaven, or even standing right in front of us. This is not the appearing we must seek. We must understand that His appearing can never be separate from us! All of these ways of seeing Jesus are fine but Jesus wants us to see that we are One. Colossians 3:4 says, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." If we are relating as separate, that cloud will be black and it will be like coming to Mount Sinai. Remember, we are joined; We are now One with Him. So Jesus will appear, He will be revealed, in us.

Our seeing must be by faith not by sight. We must trust the Lord's view. We cannot trust our own eyes, our own understanding, our own strength, or anything that is of us apart from Him. God says, "There is One and you are in the One" We say, "But God, I don't feel one with Jesus. Did you see what I just did over there?" No, He did not see that! He does not see you that way. He sees you in Christ. He sees you as one with His Son! This is the view that we must trust! For us, everything begins with faith. We must trust His view; we must trust His heart. So now, we begin to trust Him and His view and wait for His appearing.

What does it mean that He will not be revealed apart from us? He is revealed in us not to us. The church is ONE with Him. He is in the midst of the candlesticks. Christ in us is God's hope of glory. If we do not understand this, we will miss His appearing.

His appearing is darkness to those who are separate from Him but light to us who have been joined. That is why so much of the church is afraid of the end times. From the earth's perspective it is a dark time, but notice what is happening with those who dwell in the heavens in the Book of Revelation. So many Christians want to escape in the rapture, to be caught up, but we have already been caught up into Him. We must abide in that heavenly realm by faith. We do not need to escape our circumstances. But for those who do not understand what the cross accomplished, they continue to relate to Him as if they were separate. These dwell in the earth and are motivated by circumstance more than by the Lord. When they read the things of which the Book of Revelation speaks, they do not understand. So many Christians believe that God will not let Christians suffer. That is a convenient belief but one you could hold in just a couple of places in the whole world, but the truth is no one likes suffering.

We see suffering coming our way and we say, "Take it away God! Suffering is bad!" God says, "You don't understand! See from my point of view. Fellowship in my sufferings. That cloud looks dark, but I am in it and you are about to be caught up together with Me in the clouds, with Me! I want to appear in you in the midst of this. You cannot do this, but I can do it in you." How many of us for years questioned God about the Book of Job? What is up with this book God? Why did you do this to Job? God just says, "Behold I cometh with clouds." Job said it like this, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You." Everyone is going to see Him but those that are of the earth will mourn at His appearing. Remember in the Book of Revelation where some said, *"And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:"* (6:16)

That is our Groom! Do we think that Jesus is an abusive husband, the Lamb of God who died for us? Do we need to hide from Him? We do seek to hide from Him when we try to escape those things that He has put in our lives that are meant to help us see Him.

Think about this. There is someone that God has put in our life, or job, or a situation that we are praying and asking God to take away. Stop it! Stop asking God to take something away that He has put there for a purpose. Stop seeking God for deliverance and just seek God. You are saying, "God, I don't like this cloud! This cloud scares me! This cloud looks dark to me. It takes me out of my comfort zone", and He says, "I am in this cloud. Do not run from this cloud for through it I will be revealed in you. Trust Me!" If you run away from the cloud, you are not the only one who is affected. We are One. The Lord may want to use what you are going through to open the eyes of others. Death works in us that life might work in others. Jonah ran away from what God had called Him to do. God wanted to reveal His Son in Jonah not only for Jonah's sake but also for the sake of any in Nineveh who would hear His voice.

Sometimes God gives us an opportunity to live the cross and we miss it. Maybe we are not at a place where we are able to see it for what it is. Our focus is wrong. We see the cloud and we see another path, but we think God has given us this choice just for the sake of blessing us and so we miss the cross and we miss His appearing. Certainly, God wants to bless us, but there was more to it than that. Think of it in terms of Jesus. He did not

choose to stay on earth and accumulate wealth. Certainly, Jesus had that choice. He died willingly! He chose the cross. What if Jesus had said, "Thanks God, I think I'll pass on the cross!"? Where would we be now?

He wants us to see Him. He does not want us to miss Him because of what we think we know of Him. Maybe a church leader or just another Christian has done something to offend you. Is God sovereign? Do you really believe He is in control? Could it be that He is in that? Could it be that He allowed that to happen for a purpose? Could it be that He wants to appear through you in that cloud. Maybe it is even worse than that. Maybe it was Christ in that brother that offended us. Maybe they know the Lord in a way that we do not and because we did not recognize or perceive His appearing in this brother, we are offended. Try reading the gospels with that perspective. Think about some of the things that Jesus said. If one of your brothers or sisters said some of the things that He said, would you be offended? If Jesus in your brother made a whip and drove out the moneychangers, would you be offended? If Christ in your brother spoke harshly to you in love, would you be offended? Would you fail to perceive His coming to you in that brother? Would you find Jesus speaking your name as He spoke Saul's name when He said, "Why do you persecute me?"

So now, "Behold He cometh with clouds". Will you be with the kindred of the earth who mourn and who say "Hide me from the wrath of the Lamb" or will you rejoice and say "Thank you Lord for this cloud for I know you are in it and all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. God is sovereign!