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# The Coming

of the

# Lord



We have considered a spiritual fulfilment of these scriptures rather than a literal one.

This is not the path of unbelief, but is exactly what Jesus did himself. When he told the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, they took him literally and thought he was talking about physical bread. Actually he was referring to the doctrine of the Pharisees. When he spoke about destroying the temple and building it again in 3 days, he was not referring to the literal temple. He was talking about his own body, the real temple of God.

Many members of the early church had seen and talked with Jesus in the flesh. No doubt they found it difficult to relinquish their ideas of his literal presence with them.

At first sight it takes faith to believe in a physical return of Jesus to this earth and a physical rapture of his saints to heaven. Is it real faith? Or is it just sticking to a doctrine?

Real faith is not a set of beliefs about the future. Nor is it sticking to a literal interpretation of the Bible. Rather it is hearing and receiving the word of God, and acting on it.

Clinging to a particular teaching about the future is not real faith. All that this does for people is to consolidate their membership of the particular sect or doctrinal grouping to which they belong, and to separate them from everyone who holds a different view.

Seeing the real spiritual meaning of the scriptures strengthens our faith and walk with God.

May he grant us that **the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened in order that we may know the hope to which he has called us, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.** (Eph 1: 18,19).

Bible quotations are taken from the NIV or retranslated

you cannot be present without having come, it goes on to have the meaning *coming*.

Sometimes I believe God leaves words of double meaning in the Scripture when the time is not yet ripe for a particular revelation. The full truth is hidden till God wants to reveal it. Though both *coming* and *presence* are legitimate translations of the word *parousia*, I believe we will understand God's purposes more clearly if we retranslate it *presence*.

In human terms, an arrival can be a dramatic and emotional moment, but what happens after the arrival is more important than the arrival itself. The **presence** of Jesus is more important than his **coming**.

In Matthew's gospel the last promise Jesus made to his disciples was that of his presence. His words were "**surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**" Jesus was undoubtedly present with his early followers after he physically left them. He has been present with his people in their sufferings and victories throughout the centuries from then till now; and he is undoubtedly present with and in us today. However I believe that we will soon experience that presence to a much greater degree than ever before.

Paul told the Ephesians that they had received a deposit or down payment of their inheritance (Eph 1:14). The implication is that there was much more to follow. The main thing was yet to come. Pentecost was wonderful. It was the greatest outpouring of God's grace that the world had yet seen. It far exceeded all that went before it. Yet it was small compared with what now lies ahead of us.

## Conclusion

Millions of Christians have been taught to expect a literal and physical personal second coming of Jesus to the earth. This teaching has been based on certain key scriptures such as:

- "I will come again and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am".
- "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky".
- "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."
- "After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."
- "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him".

<sup>1</sup>Paul himself did not live till a physical rapture took place, which further indicates that this passage cannot be taken literally.

## Introduction

Some churches and Christian fellowships give great prominence to teaching on the "Second Coming" of Jesus Christ. You can hardly get through a meeting without at least a reference to this great event, and frequently whole messages or sermons are preached on the subject. Other fellowships hardly mention the "second coming" and many of their members are almost entirely ignorant of what the Bible has to say about it.

For some people then this writing will be an introduction to the subject, while for others it may be a re-examination of what they believe. We will look at various Bible passages on which the teaching of the "second coming" is based, and see if they mean what at first sight they may appear to. I have put the phrase "second coming" in quotation marks as, surprisingly for many people, it occurs nowhere in the New Testament.

It helps to compare today's situation with the way it was in New Testament times. The Pharisees of those days were expecting the Messiah to come. Not only were they expecting him, but they also had clear ideas about his coming. In spite of this they failed to recognise Jesus as the Messiah when he came. They could state confidently through their knowledge of the scriptures that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. The fact that Jesus appeared to come from somewhere else - Nazareth - was one of the reasons why they rejected him.

The disciples of Jesus heard the scriptures (what we call the Old Testament) read every week at the synagogue, and they probably knew them better than most people do today. However they had nowhere near the level of scriptural knowledge that the Pharisees had. In spite of this Peter recognised Jesus as the Messiah and the Pharisees failed to do so. This was not because Peter had studied all the scriptures more diligently and more carefully than the Pharisees. It was because he was drawn to Jesus himself, and he received a revelation from God. He said, "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God**". Jesus replied, "**Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven**" (Matthew 16: 16, 17).

So today, as then, we know nothing properly unless we know it from God. The scriptures confirm what we have learnt from him inwardly in our hearts.

## How Prophecies are Fulfilled

God reveals to his servants the prophets what is to come. That much is plain from the pages of the old testament. But prophecies were not always fulfilled in the way their recipients expected. God's ways are higher than our ways, and this is particularly true in the fulfilment of prophecy. Let us look then at how some ancient prophecies were fulfilled.

From the book of Genesis on there are prophecies of the coming Messiah.

God told Eve that her offspring would bruise the serpent's head. Eve was greatly consoled and encouraged with this word from God, but she had no idea how it would happen. Probably she imagined some physical conflict. Perhaps she envisaged dead snakes lying around on the ground. With hindsight we can look back on events enormously greater and more significant than anything she could have imagined. Her far off descendant defeated all the powers of darkness, not by force of physical arms, but by offering himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

God told Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore, and that through his offspring all nations on earth would be blessed. Millions of people today claim Abraham as their physical ancestor, and probably this is what Abraham understood the promise to mean. Four thousand years on we know that God's eye rested primarily on the multitudes of spiritual descendants that would be followers of Abraham's faith. The true fulfilment of the prophecy was better and higher than Abraham could have seen at the time.

God told Moses to tell the people that he would **raise up a prophet like him from among their brothers**. Jesus was like Moses in ways that a spiritual mind would understand. In other ways he was very different and many people would have totally failed to recognise the similarity. Moses delivered his people from the yoke of slavery in Egypt. Jesus did not deliver his people from their hated Roman overlords. Instead he delivered them from a far worse tyranny. He broke the yoke of sin and Satan from their backs.

God told David that he would **establish the throne of his kingdom for ever**. I imagine David was wonderfully happy to think of his descendants for hundreds and thousands of years sitting on his throne in Jerusalem. The fulfilment was very different, but much better than he had imagined. His throne was occupied for several hundred years by his descendants, but not for ever. A tragic day came when after a long siege the Babylonians breached the walls of Jerusalem. They put out king Zedekiah's eyes and led him captive to Babylon. They set fire to the royal palace and every important building in the city. What had happened to the prophecy God gave to David? The physical throne of David became desolate, but the spiritual throne of David will be occupied for all eternity. Jesus will reign, and his saints will reign with him, till he has put all enemies beneath his feet. The earthly Jerusalem has been trodden down by the gentiles for centuries and its throne left vacant, but the heavenly Jerusalem has Jesus on its throne. The fulfilment of the prophecy was better than David could have ever dreamt.

We can learn from these past fulfilments of prophecy. Before events take place we may know that wonderful things are coming, and we must prepare ourselves as best we can to play our part in God's purposes. Only with hindsight if ever will we fully understand God's plans, and, like the faithful of old, we will find they are far greater and more wonderful than we have ever imagined.

## With the trumpet of God

Trumpets were used to announce the great festivals of the Lord. The events of Mount Sinai occurred on the 50th day after the Exodus from Egypt, and prefigured the day of Pentecost which was 50 days on from the resurrection of Jesus. On Sinai the trumpet sounded loud and long, and the day of Pentecost was like a spiritual trumpet. Jesus also associates the sound of the trumpet with his coming (Mat 24: 31). I believe the passage we are considering describes the fulfilment of the festival of Tabernacles. (I have written separately on *The Festivals of Israel*.)

## The dead in Christ will rise first

To the Romans (6: 4, 5) Paul wrote, **"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."** He was not referring to physical death, but to spiritual death.

Many of us, I believe, are now undergoing a death experience. The Day of Atonement, which in some ways symbolises death, preceded the Festival of Tabernacles, as death precedes resurrection. Before we can reign with Jesus in the glory of that coming festival we must experience his sufferings and death. We must die to ourselves and to the world. As long as this world has a claim on us we cannot reign over it. The world has no claim on those who have passed through physical death. They are no longer subject to any of its laws or customs. They have gone. This spiritual death will have the same effect.

Those then who are spiritually dead in Christ will experience a spiritual resurrection.

**We' who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so we will be with the Lord for ever.**

Will we meet Jesus in physical air? The Greek word for *spirit* (πνευμα) originally means *breath* or *wind*. Both of these are moving air. We have already talked about the meaning of clouds as those who have been purified and drawn up to God. The air then is the realm of the spirit where those clouds dwell. There is where we are and will be with the Lord.

## Parousia

The title of this writing is *The Coming of the Lord*. Many times in the new testament, the Greek word translated **coming** is παρουσία (*parousia*). The literal meaning of this word is **being beside** (παρά ουσια) and hence **presence**. Because

interpretations can be described as *mysterries* as they are difficult to understand rather than difficult to believe. They are hidden from the natural mind. What I am saying is that rather than look for a physical rapture we must search for a spiritual understanding of these words of Paul.

Let us then consider other ways of understanding the various statements of this passage. Three of the most important events in scripture will help us.

- The law-giving at Sinai
- The birth of Jesus
- The day of Pentecost

### The Lord himself will descend from heaven

This is the foundation of every great divine event. In God's first great manifestation to Israel he descended on Mount Sinai. Jesus himself fulfilled these words when he came down from heaven and took human form and was born in the manger at Bethlehem. Pentecost was another divine descent of hitherto unimagined grace and glory. In each case, as in the event we are considering, he came down to bring man up. Each of these events had consequences of unimaginable magnitude for the human race. This next descent, dare we believe it, will have consequences yet wider and yet greater.

### With a loud command

When the Lord came down he spoke. On Mount Sinai he gave 10 commandments and followed them with the most significant and powerful verbal revelation that the world has ever received. *The Law came through Moses*. God spoke a word through the angel Gabriel to Mary, and the word was made flesh in her womb. At Pentecost the tongues of the assembled company were loosed, and they spoke the word of God with hitherto unprecedented power.

In each case the word of command had global effects. The 10 commandments, the gospel of Jesus, and the effects of Pentecost have spread throughout the world. The coming and presence of the Lord will have even greater impact.

### With the voice of an archangel

The scriptures tell us little about archangels. Only Michael is clearly described as one. By tradition he was the intermediary through whom the law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai (referred to by Stephen in Acts 7:38). To Gabriel was given the privilege of announcing the birth of Jesus, and according to tradition he is the angel named in this passage.

## I will come again and receive you to myself

The best starting point in the study of any teaching is Jesus himself. What did he have to say on the subject, and how does it relate to his life, death and resurrection? So we will begin with what people have taken to be a plain statement from his mouth with regard to his coming.

*“In my Father's house are many dwellings; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am”* (John 14: 2,3).

When I was young I learnt many Bible verses by heart, and I have never regretted the time I spent so doing. Sadly the practice is much less common now than it was then. However the disadvantage of learning verses by heart is that they can easily be taken right out of their context. This is particularly true of the verses just quoted. It occurs near the beginning of a long discourse recorded by John on the night of the last supper. It occupies part of chapter 13 and all of chapters 14, 15 and 16. We will look now at what Jesus said before and after these familiar verses.

### Troubled Hearts

John 14:1 reads: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.”* Jesus was about to depart from this world and was preparing his disciples for the trauma that lay ahead and his physical absence from them. Telling them that he was going to come back physically very soon and take them away to their heavenly home, when he was not going to do that for 2000 years, would not be very good or honest comfort! It would simply be a false promise. If a friend promised to come and see me, and then waited till a long time after I was dead before he rang my door bell, I would hardly think (if I were still thinking about it) that he had kept his promise. *‘Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life’* (Prov 13:12).

Did the disciples have troubled hearts for the rest of their lives, because Jesus had left them and hadn't come back? Should we have troubled hearts until he returns in person and takes us away to our future home with him? That is certainly not the impression you get from reading the book of Acts, or from hearing the testimonies of many saints from that day to this.

Their hearts were very troubled when Jesus was arrested and tried and put to death. When he came back from the grave and walked and talked with them, and when 50 days later the Holy Spirit came on them with wonderful power, their hearts were troubled no more. Jesus was no longer with them but in them, and unbelievably they had gained more than they had lost.

### Where was Jesus going?

Verses 4 and 5 read: *“You know the way to the place where I am going”*.

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

Thomas, like many people today, did not understand what Jesus was saying. He was not particularly thick or stupid. Simply like us and every other member of Adam’s race, he suffered from the darkness of the natural mind. Probably the other disciples did not understand what Jesus had said any better than Thomas did, but he at least was not afraid to show his ignorance and to ask Jesus what he meant. If Thomas did not understand what Jesus said without further explanation, it’s unlikely that we will either!

Jesus explained that he was going to the Father, and that he was one with the Father. “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.... Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?”

Having said that he was one with the Father, Jesus went on to speak about the Holy Spirit: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever -- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” He immediately followed these words with the promise: “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” Soon after this he said: “My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

3 times in this chapter (14) Jesus said that he would come again:

- verse 3 (the best known) “I will come again, and take you to be with me.”
- verse 18: “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”
- verse 23: “My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.”

These 3 statements cannot have different meanings from each other. In the third statement Jesus uses the word *we*, including the Father with himself. Several times also in this long discourse he speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit. How many different *comings* are there? I believe these comings are all one and the same. **The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was also the coming of the Father and the Son.**

Let us reconsider verses 2 and 3: “In my Father’s house are many dwellings; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

In bodily form Jesus was going to leave his disciples, but he and his Father were going to come again and make their dwellings in them. The dwellings are not mansions up in the sky. They are his people. We are those dwellings!

announce it. His spiritual visitation of his people on the day of Pentecost was more wonderful and more powerful still. His visitation which is yet to come will show the day of Pentecost to be only the first fruits of a harvest far beyond the thoughts or imaginations of those first apostles.

Finally we may detect a hidden rebuke in the way the angels addressed the disciples. They did not call them *men of God* or maybe *followers of Jesus* but just *men of Galilee*. They were acting and thinking (as many have done since them) in a carnal and human manner, and so the angels addressed them with a title that referred to their human and earthly origin.

So are we saying that Jesus returned at Pentecost or are we saying that his return is still future? Both! He certainly did come again at Pentecost, and his presence with his disciples was better and more wonderful than when in human form he had walked the dusty paths of Galilee by their side.

But that coming was not the full and final fulfilment of his promise. Rather it was the first instalment. It was a foretaste of greater things to come. Now at the end of the age we come to the time of that greater fulfilment. Paul’s Words

To the Thessalonians Paul wrote, “For this we say to you by a word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain till the coming of the Lord will not precede those who are asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ will rise first: Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so we will be with the Lord for ever” (1 Thes 4: 15-17).

Many readers of the Bible take these words absolutely literally and believe without question in a physical appearing of Jesus in the clouds and a physical rapture of the saints to meet him there. In the verses preceding these Paul is clearly talking about those saints who have *physically* died; and so at first sight it is logical to take these verses literally as well. However, why is it that at this point Paul has a “word from the Lord”? I believe it indicates that he is moving from the literal to the spiritual.

His language to the Corinthians is similar. After speaking about the resurrection of the dead, he writes, “Listen, I tell you a **mystery**: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed -- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Cor 15: 51,52).

A mystery is very different from a miracle. A mystery is difficult to understand, whereas a miracle is difficult to believe. A whole lot of bodies coming out of their graves and coming to life would be a miracle rather than a mystery. It is difficult to believe, but not too difficult to understand. The idea of a spiritual rapture and transformation, on the other hand, is difficult to understand. Literal interpretations of these passages may be difficult to believe, but they are not difficult to understand. They cannot therefore be called *mysteries*. Spiritual

## The Words of the Angels

We have rightly begun by considering the words of Jesus about his coming. With a better understanding of what he said, we can now consider the words of others. All too often we have begun with the words of Paul, and then tried to make the words of Jesus fit with what we think we have understood. Paul, as he himself tells us, saw through a glass darkly. Jesus saw face to face.

Acts 1:11 records the words of the angels to the disciples. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Were the angels referring to a physical return of Jesus due to take place in the same manner as his departure, but approximately 2000 years later?

The last recorded conversation of Jesus with his disciples was immediately before his ascension. They wanted to think about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. He wanted to tell them more about the Holy Spirit. He told them to wait in Jerusalem until they had received the promise of the Father. He said that they would receive power after the Holy Spirit had come upon them, and that they would be his witnesses. He said this would happen in a few days’ time.

Jesus was comforting and encouraging his disciples by telling them of an event in the immediate future. We would not therefore expect the angels to point the disciples to an event that was going to happen in something like 2000 years’ time. We would rather expect them to say something that would reinforce what Jesus himself had just said. The words of the angels appear to point the disciples away from what Jesus had just been talking about to an entirely different event. This cannot be right, and we must therefore have a new look at the words of the angels.

Further to this, if Jesus was soon going to come back out of the sky in exactly the way he had just gone, it would seem like good sense to keep on gazing up into the sky to catch the first glimpse of him coming back!

At his ascension Jesus disappeared in a cloud. This may have been a cloud of water vapour, or it may have been a cloud of glory. On the day of Pentecost Jesus reappeared in a cloud. However he did not appear in a physical cloud as his disciples may have expected. It was a cloud made up of them themselves and his other followers. They were now a cloud of witnesses lifted up into the heavens, and he appeared in them. Just as the angels said, it was the same Jesus. The same Jesus that had walked and talked with his disciples for 3½ years was now in them, and manifesting himself through them. He was appearing with great glory in a heavenly cloud of witnesses.

His physical visitation of his people when he came to earth 2000 years ago was something of great wonder and a multitude of the heavenly host was sent to

Jesus said, “Where I am there you will be also”. He did not say where I will be. For 3 years Jesus and his disciples were physically in the same place. Spiritually however they were not in the same place. He was above and they were below. From the moment they met him they knew that he was in a higher place than they were. What a wonderful promise this is when we see its true meaning. “Where I am there you will be also”. How much better a glorious spiritual reality now, than some future physical mansion in the sky!

## Mansions

The King James English Version of the Bible has the words: “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” Many hymns have been written and many sermons preached about beautiful mansions waiting for us in the skies. The original Greek word *μονη* (monee) does not mean a *mansion*, but simply a *dwelling* or *abode*. It occurs again in verse 23: “We will make our dwelling with him.” and nowhere else in the new Testament. The related *verbumenō* (meno) meaning to remain or abide, occurs many times. Notably in the following chapter we read: “Anyone who abides in me, and I in him, will produce much fruit.” The word *dwelling* is the most natural English translation of the word *μονη*, but the word *abode* relates better to the thought of *abiding* in Christ.

The many mansions of our Father’s house are not luxurious dwellings for us to live in hereafter. They are yourself and myself, the human dwellings where our Father has chosen to dwell here and now.

## The Clouds

We will now turn to the theme of clouds. Five separate writers or speakers in the Bible, including Jesus, refer to clouds in connection with his coming. Three are clearly quoting the first who was the prophet Daniel.

1. Daniel said: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.” (Daniel 7:13).

2. Jesus said: “They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky” (Matthew 24:30).

3. Two angels said: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in

<sup>1</sup>Literal meaning of the Greek word *πολυτοικιος*.

the same way you have seen him go into heaven,” (Acts 1:11) after Jesus had ascended in a **cloud**.

4. Paul wrote: “After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the **clouds** to meet the Lord in the air.” (1 Thes 4:17)

5. John wrote: “Look, he is coming with the **clouds**, and every eye will see him” (Rev 1:7).

Both Greek and Hebrew, like many other languages, have only one word where English has two for *sky* and *heaven*.

These 5 quotations invite the question, *Why should clouds play such an important part in the coming of the Son of Man?* After all they're just gaseous molecules of H<sub>2</sub>O. These days you can fly up through them and way above them in aeroplanes. Can water vapour really play such an important part in the coming of Jesus?

Let's think a bit more about clouds. Clouds consist of pure heavenly water. They are formed by the heat of the sun causing water to evaporate from the sea or the land. Sea water that is salty and barren, or muddy water from the land, is drawn up from the earth and purified and transformed into a rarefied state in which it can exist in the heavenly realms. From there this pure water returns to the earth and gives life to everything on it.

What a perfect picture this is of God's work in us. By nature we are like sea water, salty, polluted and barren. God draws us up by the warmth of his love and purifies us and makes us sit in heavenly places with Jesus. He transforms us into pure life-giving water. We then impart that life to those on the earth below.

Jesus is not coming in or with or on clouds of physical water vapour, but in and with his people. Jude (quoting Enoch) actually says, “Behold the Lord comes in (or with) **myriads of his saints**.” And in Hebrews 12:1 we read: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a **cloud of witnesses ...**” ***So coming with the clouds is the same as coming with the saints.***

It is natural that in ancient times people thought of the clouds as the dwelling place of God. As in many other ways God allowed people to have partial and incomplete concepts of his nature. We live in a time of fuller revelation and understanding and must be willing to move forward. God does not live in physical clouds, but in what those clouds symbolise - his people.

Clouds in countries like England are not always popular. They give us cold and gloomy weather and spoil our holidays! In other countries and to farming communities they are life itself. They bring that vital rain without which nothing can grow. They cause the desert to blossom as the rose. They bring life and growth where there was only barrenness and death.

Again what a picture of the saints of God. Those that are like Jesus do what he did. They themselves live in heavenly places, but they bring life and health and blessing to those that live on the earth.

## Every Eye will See Him

“Look, he is coming with the **clouds**, and every eye will see him” (Rev 1:7).

Suppose again we take these words literally, how can we understand them? Will Jesus be simultaneously visible in ever part of the world? And will it be a cloudy day in every single country? Or will Jesus appear on television, as some have suggested, and thus be visible simultaneously all over the world?

Of course it is true that everything is possible with God. However, some things are consistent with his nature and with scripture and with reason, and other things are not. God could cause there to be clouds simultaneously over all the mountains, plains, deserts and seas of the world at the same time. Jesus could appear simultaneously in every part of the world with those clouds. Or he could appear in the clouds over one country, perhaps Israel, and have the world's press lined up to photograph the event. God could do any of those things, but this kind of interpretation does not fit with his revealed nature and purposes.

I believe the truth is better and greater. I believe he will come with the clouds and that every eye will see him; but I believe those who sit with him in heavenly places will be those clouds. When the sons of God have been transformed into his likeness, then those who want to see Jesus need only look at them.

When some Greeks came to Andrew and said, “We want to see Jesus”, and Andrew passed the request on, Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24). God is not content with just one son, but wants many more just like the first one.

One son was not enough for everyone to see. The firstborn son was the seed that had to fall into the ground and die, and produce a harvest of many more sons in his likeness. God was manifested in Jesus of Nazareth, the man of Galilee; but he also wants to be manifested in males and in females, in young and in old, in Europeans, Asians, Africans as well as Jews. He must be manifested in the clever and the simple, the strong and the weak, the educated and the illiterate and in the multitude of other variations that make up the human race.

This will be the manifestation of the sons of God of which Paul wrote to the Romans. The whole creation is groaning and travailing, not for a divine visitation from the sky, but for the manifestation of these sons of God.

Paul told the Ephesians that the many-coloured<sup>1</sup> wisdom of God would be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. **There will be a rainbow in the clouds!**