

The Certainty of the Second Coming

Scripture: Revelation 1:7-8

Code: 66-3

We return to this great first chapter and look at verses 7 and 8. We read in these two verses, "Behold, He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him, even so, amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come the Almighty."

Anyone who loves books with action, books with excitement will certainly love the book of Revelation. There is absolutely no book like it. It is loaded with drama. It is loaded with suspense. It is loaded with mystery, passion, horror, disaster upon disaster.

It tells, for example, of the coming story of the apostasy of the church. It tells of the collapse of world economics. It tells of the final war of the world. It tells of the unparalleled natural disasters. It tells of the final judgments of the wrath of God. It speaks of blood baths, political conflict that opens the way for a wicked hellish world ruler to take over. It speaks of the total destruction of the entire universe and the damnation of both the bodies and souls of people to eternal hell.

It is a book of unbelievable excitement and yet amazingly it is a book of hope and a book of joy and a book with a happy ending. It will take some time for us to unfold its story. It will take some time for John to unfold it. And so he gives us here in verses 7 and 8 previews of coming attractions, a brief glimpse of what the book is all about. It is all about the One who comes, the One who comes. It is a book about the Second Coming. Here is the great glorious announcement of the thesis, the theme, the heart of the book in verse 7, "Jesus is coming." That great fact summarizes the book. That condenses the book into one colossal affirmation and it takes John 21 chapters really and then the twenty-second chapter taking us all the way into glory to unfold all of this.

Here we have in verse 7 the first prophetic oracle in the book, it comes after the opening greeting. And that prophetic oracle is, "Behold, He is coming." That is what the book is about. And so here for the first time he says, "Look, pay attention." Why? He is coming. This is present tense. Would you notice that? It doesn't say He will come. It doesn't say that. It doesn't say He shall come. It says He is coming and the use of a present- tense verb is intended to give you the feeling that He's already on the way, that the process of His coming has already begun.

This statement, "He is coming," is really drawn out of Daniel chapter 7 and verse 13 which says, "I kept looking in the night visions and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of man was coming." And then verse 14 of Daniel 7 says, "And to Him was given dominion." So John receives an oracle, a prophetic revelation here that He is coming that echoes the promise of Daniel 7:13.

The coming One was a title for Messiah. The coming One was a special name for Messiah. In fact, back in Matthew we have an interesting reference to it. I'll just read it to you. In Matthew, John the

Baptist was in prison and he sent word by his disciples to Jesus. And they said to Him, "Are You the coming One?" You see, the Jews all knew that the coming One was a Messianic title. Jesus is the coming one. That same verb, *erchomai*, that means coming is used directly or indirectly with reference to Christ nine times in the book of Revelation. Seven of those nine times it is the words of Jesus Himself, referring to Himself as the coming One. This book then is about the coming of the coming One. And the present tense indicates to us that He's already coming so that we have this sense of expectation that leads John to say, "Look, He is coming," as if we are to be living in eager expectation. This again is the great heart of the book.

We must open up our understanding to the greatness of this event by sort of getting our arms around how important it is in the Scripture. Let me see if I can help you. It is said that prophecy or future prediction takes up one-fifth of the Scripture. Of that one-fifth of the Scripture that speaks of future prophecy, one-third of that refers to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Some have calculated that there are over 660 general prophecies, 333 about Christ, 109 fulfilled at His first coming, 224 at His Second Coming. So the Bible has much to say about His Second Coming.

Of the 46 Old Testament prophets, less than ten of them speak of His first coming, 36 of them speak of His Second Coming. There are over 1500 Old Testament passages that refer in some way to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. One out of every 25 New Testament verses directly refers to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. For every time the Bible mentions the first coming of Christ, it mentions the Second Coming eight times. For each time the atonement is mentioned is once, the Second Coming is mentioned twice. Jesus refers to His Second Coming 21 times and over 50 times we are told to be ready for His return. And so this is a major theme of Scripture and I only throw those numbers at you not so you'll remember them but so that you get a feeling for the breadth of the prophetic word referring to the Second Coming. It was curious to me that in a convocation of church delegates from around the world meeting in Evanston, Illinois under the direction of the World Council of Churches, they surveyed them and found that only ten percent of the American Protestant clergymen found any significance at all in the doctrine of the Second Coming. Ninety percent of them said it's not significant. Frankly, Peter predicted that kind of unbelief when He said, "Where is the promise of His coming, the scoffers ask?" Scoffers have always wanted to deny the Second Coming because it's connected with judgment and they're not ready or willing to face the judgment of God. But in spite of what the scoffers say, the Bible makes it clear that Jesus will return.

Now just to give you a little bit of a support for that, some undergirding, there are many things in the Scripture that demand the return of Christ, not just this proliferation of prophecies. There are some other compelling issues that demand the return of Christ. Let me suggest some to you and you follow very carefully as I say these. First of all, the promise of God demands that Jesus come. The promise of God demands that Jesus come. For example, in Genesis 49:10 the very first prophecy concerning Messiah's rule, it says the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes and to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Out of the loins of Judah will come Shiloh the Messiah and the nations will obey Him. That hasn't happened but God promised it would. If it didn't happen the first time Jesus came, it has to happen the second time He comes.

In Psalm 2 God promised that the nations would bow down to Jesus Christ and He would rule them with a rod of iron. That hasn't happened. It has to happen in the future. It didn't happen at His first coming, it will happen at His Second Coming. Isaiah said that He would be the mighty God, the everlasting Father, this child born unto us, and the government would be upon His shoulders. That did not happen the first time He came, He did not raise up the government. He did not become the ruler. That has to happen then in the future.

The Bible tells us in Zechariah that when He comes He'll split the Mount of Olives and the nations will be gathered there and judged. The Bible tells us that when He comes He will bring a glorious Kingdom, read in Isaiah. None of that has happened, it didn't happen the first time. It demands then that it happen the second time. Numbers 23 says God is not a man that He should lie. God says this will occur therefore the Son of God must come back so that it can. The promise of God demands the Second Coming.

Secondly, the words of Jesus demand the Second Coming. Jesus said in John 14 I'm going to go away but I'm going to prepare a place for you and if I prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am there you may be also. Jesus promised that when He went away He'd come back, the promise of Jesus demands the Second Coming.

In Luke 19 Jesus said, "A certain nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then return. And he called ten of his slaves and gave them ten minas and said to them, Do business with this until I come back. But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him saying, We do not want this man to reign over us. And it came about that when he returned after receiving the kingdom he ordered that these slaves to whom he had given the money be called to him in order that he might know what business they had done." And you know how the rest of the story goes. Down in verse 26, "I tell you, everyone who has shall be given more but the one who does not have even what he does have will be taken away. These enemies of mine who do not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence." And Jesus was saying I am that King, I will go away, I will come back, I'll check on what you did with your gospel privilege. If you did nothing with it I'll damn you. If you exercised in faith toward Me, I'll take you to glory with Me. He is the King who went away who will come back, come back to reward His own, come back to judge those who rejected Him.

The Lord Jesus sent an angel to John. And that angel came to John as he wrote the book of Revelation. And six times to that angel Jesus said, "Tell him to write, Behold I come quickly." Jesus promised that He would come back. And His promise demands the Second Coming. He is coming because God who cannot lie said so. He is coming because Jesus Himself who speaks only truth said so.

Thirdly, the guarantee of the Holy Spirit demands it. After all, the Holy Spirit is called in John 15:26 the Spirit of truth. In John 16:13 Jesus said, "He'll guide you into all truth. He'll speak to you of the things concerning Me." And what He was saying was He's going to inspire the Scripture. He's going to move on writers who will write inspired Scripture. And so every time you read about the Second Coming, 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 4 to 8, Philippians chapter 3 verses 20 to 21, Colossians chapter 3

verse 4, James chapter 5 verse 8, 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 13, 1 John 3:2 and 3, etc. Every time you read about the Second Coming of Christ, that is the witness of the Holy Spirit as He inspires the writer.

God promised He was coming. He Himself promised He was coming. And the Holy Spirit promised He was coming. He must come because the promises of the trinity, the credibility of the trinity is at stake.

Fourthly, Jesus must return because the program for the church demands it...the program for the church demands it. In Acts chapter 15 I would just show you one very brief but potent passage...Acts 15:14, Paul and Barnabas are coming and bringing a report about Gentile conversions and so forth. And then James speaks, and this is what he says starting in verse 14, "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name." In other words, God has a purpose and that purpose is to collect from the Gentiles a people for His name. Verse 15 says, "And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written...and here he quotes out of the Old Testament from Amos and Jeremiah...After these things I will return and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen and I will rebuild its ruins and I will restore it in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord, who makes these known from of old."

Now let me just explain what's happening here. Peter has just come back and he has reported that God is saving Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas obviously know and experience that as well. And they say God is taking out a people, God is pulling a people from all nations to Himself. And verse 11 says, "And they're being saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus the same way as Jews." This is the church. And this is startling that God would call a people out of the Gentiles. So James pops up, the half-brother of our Lord, and he quotes a prophecy primarily out of Amos 9:11 and 12, and he says, "Well isn't this exactly what Amos said that not only would He rebuild the tabernacle of David but He would also call together a group of people from out of the Gentiles? And then He would bring the Kingdom." Yes the tabernacle of David or the kingdom, the house of David, the royal house will be rebuilt and it will be restored and that's the Kingdom. But before that happens there's going to be a people called out. So what you have is a sequence here...the calling of the church, after this you have the kingdom, verse 16, after these things I will return and rebuild the tabernacle of David. That's exactly what the prophets said.

So the point is, God's going to call out a church. Then He's going to return and establish His Kingdom and in that Kingdom all nations will be under the rule of Christ. We're really still back in verse 14, let's go back to that key verse. God is taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name, after this, verse 16, He will return. So the program for the church is call out the church and then come back. The church, according to Paul, is like a virgin waiting for her husband, Ephesians 5:25 to 27. First Thessalonians talks about the church waiting to be raptured. So the program for the church demands Christ's return.

The program for the nations demands it as well. And we don't have the time to go fully into developing all of that but God's program for the nations demands that He return...why? Psalm 2 says He's got to

come back and rule the nations. I mean, that is familiar prophecy to any student of Scripture. Joel chapter 3 talks about a time, verse 2, when the Lord comes and gathers all the nations and brings them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat and enters into judgment with them there. That's future. Down in verse 9 he talks about a war. He talks about beating plowshares then into swords and pruning hooks into spears and he's talking here about the great battle of Armageddon, multitudes, multitudes in the Valley of Decision. There's coming a future time, a future war, a future judgment and during that war and at the time of that judgment the Messiah will come and effect His great judgment. In fact, it says in verse 12 of Joel 3, "There I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations." That's the Messiah's duty. So, the program for the nations' future judgment, the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the Valley of Decision, the judgment of the nations demands that Jesus come back.

Number six, the program for Israel demands that He come back. You can read the Old Testament, I don't even need to give you very many Scriptures, but you'll find repeatedly in the Old Testament God promised to Israel a Kingdom. He promised the Messiah would come and give them the Kingdom. Messiah came but they didn't get a Kingdom. For example, Isaiah 59:20, "A redeemer will come to Zion and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, declares the Lord, and as for Me this is My covenant with them, says the Lord, My Spirit which is upon you, My words which I've put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring, says the Lord, for now and forever." In other words, God says I'm going to come and I'm going to save you with an eternal salvation. Well obviously that hasn't happened to Israel. Messiah hasn't done that. The first time He came they killed Him, they rejected Him. But He'll come back another time and they'll believe in Him. Jeremiah 23:5, "The days are coming, declares the Lord, I'll raise up for David a righteous branch and He will reign as King and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely." Well you know that hasn't happened. Messiah will come, save them, give them peace, prosperity, security and a Kingdom.

The very trinity guarantees the coming of Christ...God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit promised. The program that God has laid out for the nations, for Israel, for the church all demands the return of Christ. He has to come back to judge the nations. He has to come back to collect the church. He has to come back to give the Kingdom to Israel.

Three other simple points...the humiliation of Jesus Christ demands that He come back...the humiliation of Christ demands that He come back. He came into this world and they rejected Him. They turned their back on Him. They refused Him. That cannot be the way the story ends. It cannot end like that. He will come again. There will be a time when Jesus returns in glory and they worship Him.

In Matthew 26, you know the terrible story is being told in this section of Matthew about the death of Christ. But in the middle of it in conferring with the high priest, listen to what Jesus says in verse 63 of Matthew 26, "Jesus kept silent. The High Priest said to Him, I adjure you by the living God, You tell us whether You are the Christ the Son of God. Jesus said to him, You have said it yourself, nevertheless I tell you hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the

clouds of heaven. And the High Priest started ripping his clothes at what he thought was such blasphemy. And then they spit in His face, they punched Him with their fists." Jesus said you have not seen the last of Me. I will not let this saga end with My humiliation. You will see Me in power and you will see Me in glory. The world, believe me, has not seen the last of Jesus. It is inconceivable to any Christian to say nothing of God that the last view which the world would ever have of Jesus Christ is that of a bleeding, dying, crucified criminal, with blood, spit and flies all over His flesh, hanging naked in the Judean sky. Not the Son of God, that is not the final view.

Number eight, another reason Jesus is coming is the exaltation of Satan demands it. Satan has a temporary exaltation. Three times in Scripture he's called the prince of this world. Paul calls him the god of this age. John says the whole world lies in his arms. The writer of Hebrews says he has the power of death but Jesus has broken that power. In 1 John 3:8 it says Jesus came to destroy him, to destroy the devil. He came to destroy him. Romans 16:20, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan." Jesus has to come back to dethrone the usurper who has taken the throne of this world.

And finally, number nine, the expectation of the saints demands it...the expectation of the saints demands it. The promise of the trinity demands it, the program for God demands it, the humiliation of Christ demands it, the exaltation of Satan demands it, and our hope demands it. If we have hope only in this world we are of all men...what?...most miserable. We have hope because we know Jesus is coming, that there is an eternal life ahead. But not only that, we're not just looking for heaven, we're looking for Christ. Listen to Titus 2:11, "The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus." We're looking for Christ. Second Timothy 4:8 says, "We love His appearing." So it is central to the Christian gospel and the Christian faith to believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The credibility of the Trinity is at stake, the integrity of the program of God for the church, for Israel and for the nations is at stake. And the dethroning of Satan is at stake as well as the fulfillment of the anticipation and hope of the believers.

The book of Revelation will unfold elements of all nine of those as we go through. But all of that discussion I gave you just to underline the opening statement of verse 7, "Behold, He...underline the word...is coming." Everything demands it, He is coming.

Now as John gives us a preview, watch very carefully, I'm going to give you some very simple and direct thoughts...he shows us the glory of it, that's the first point. All of that past was just introduction, here's the points I want to really have you concentrate on. Now that you know He is coming and everything calls for it, first of all, the glory of it. The glory of His coming is indicated by the phrase "with the clouds." If you study your Bible you find clouds play an important part. A cloud was the symbol of God's presence with His people in the desert in the wilderness wandering. You remember they were led by a cloud by day. You also remember that the cloud of the glory of God filled the tabernacle in Exodus 40 when it was built. You will also remember that when the temple was completed in 1 Kings 8:10 the cloud of the glory of God filled the temple. You also remember in Daniel 7:13 that the Son of Man will come with the clouds of heaven. You remember when Jesus

came and went on the mountain and was transfigured, you know that in Matthew 17:5 it basically says a cloud came down on the Son of Man on that mount of glory. When Jesus ascended in Acts 1:9 a cloud received Him out of their sight. And when He comes again, Matthew 24:30, He will come in the clouds of heaven.

And so, here we see again He is coming with the clouds. What's the point of that? Well it could mean it's a heavenly origin. He's coming from the heavens where the clouds are. But I think it's more than that. In fact I don't even think the point here is so much some kind of earthly cloud. I think what this is a glory cloud or clouds...clouds and clouds of glory. If you go back in the Old Testament, all the way back to Genesis, you read about the Shekinah glory which was light...light, blazing shining light. God manifesting Himself in light that could be seen, it also could be heard because they heard it in the Garden. They said they heard God moving God in the Garden. It must have been energized light. God is a spirit and not a body, God is not a man but He did reveal Himself in some kind of energized blazing light.

It was so powerful and so blazing that no one could see it fully and live, he says in Exodus 33. So you can just see a little bit of it. It had to be veiled. But, in the future when Christ returns, the glory won't be veiled. The first thing that God will do is turn out the universe. The sun goes out, the moon goes out, the stars go out and the entire universe goes pitch black. And in the pitch-black universe the glory comes out of heaven, the blazing glory of Jesus Christ like a million suns.

So we see then the glory of His coming. By the way, do you know what makes up that cloud? The very blazing brightness of Christ who is the express image of the Father, who is the brightness of His essence, Hebrews 1 says. And you add to that ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands and thousands which means an innumerable number of holy angels in blazing glory and you add to that all of the glorified saints of the Old Testament and the New Testament who are in blazing white robes riding blazing horses...the word is leukon which means blazing and not just flat white. You've got a pageant coming out of the dark black sky that is indescribable light. And when it says He's coming with clouds it doesn't mean He's going to be gently sailing down on a little white puff. Not at all. So the glory of it, and believe me, there's more details to come on that.

The second thing he introduces is the scope of it. Verse 7, "Every eye will see Him." Every eye...His coming will be visible to the entire human race...everybody, the whole world. This time there will be no mistake. The first time Jesus came His glory was veiled, wasn't it? It was veiled in human flesh. Once on the mount of transfiguration He pulled the veil aside and they saw the blazing glory and they were panicked...Peter, James and John...they were filled with fear. And they were believers. And that was just a little glimpse of the glory but it was veiled by His human flesh. It was covered, it was hidden. When He comes back it won't be. And every eye on the face of the earth will see Him. And then he divides that into two groups. Even those who pierced Him and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Those are the two groups. You say, "Who are they?" Those who pierced Him...not the Roman soldiers, they're long dead, they won't see Him. Who is he talking about? Let me show you who he's talking about. Go to John 19:37, they came around, of course, the soldiers and they pierced His side with a spear, verse 34, and blood and water came out. They didn't have to

break His legs, He was already dead, so verse 36 says, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken as what Scripture said, and it came to pass." And then another Scripture says, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced." What does that refer to? He is talking about the prophecy of Zechariah. And who did Zechariah say this group was that would look on Him whom they have pierced? Zechariah said it was the Jews, it would be the Jews. Zechariah said the day will come when they will look on the One they have pierced and he meant the Jews.

You say, "How do you know that?" Because that's exactly what he says. "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication so they will look on Me whom they have pierced." Who pierced Jesus? Not the Romans. Who was responsible for His death? Israel.

Look at Acts chapter 2. In Acts chapter 2 verse 22, "Men of Israel, listen to these words, Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know, this man delivered by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God...here it comes...men of Israel, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men." But you did it. You used the hands of Romans but you did it. Acts chapter 3 verse 14, "You...he's speaking here to the Jews...disowned the holy and righteous One and you asked for a murderer to be granted to you and you put to death the prince of life." That's right. It's the Jews. And so, what is he saying in verse 7? The Jews who pierced Him, they'll see Him. They will see Him. Now listen to me. What you're going to find out in the book of Revelation is some of those Jews will have been saved by the time He comes. In fact, there's a 144 thousand of them, 12 thousand out of every tribe that are saved, and they are evangelizing the world. And there will be other Jews that will be saved in the second half of a time called the Tribulation right before He comes. And so some who will look on Him, some of the Jews will have been saved by that time, but for other Jews when they first see Him coming out of heaven they will not yet have been saved. But at that moment they will be saved. There is a period of time when Christ comes out of heaven before the final judgment, maybe days, maybe hours, we don't know the length, but there is time to repent. And I believe for the great vast nation of Israel that will be the moment of the Jews' salvation, those who are alive at that time. Go back to Zechariah chapter 12 and I'll just unfold this tremendous truth to you. Zechariah 12:10, "And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication." What does that mean? I'm going to save the Jews...I'm going to save them. "They will look on Me whom they have pierced and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn." Why will they weep? I'll tell you why they'll weep, they'll weep because of what they did to their Messiah. There is a day coming when God saves the house of David, when He saves the Jews, when He pours out grace and supplication on them...the word supplication, He gives them the spirit of repentance by which they plead for forgiveness. They supplicate for forgiveness. I'll do that for them and they'll see the one they pierced coming out of heaven and they'll mourn for Him like somebody mourns when they lose their only son and they'll weep bitterly like losing your firstborn because they'll realize what they've done. They'll realize their sin and their tears will be tears of repentance.

"In that day...verse 11 says...there will be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo." There will be a terrible mourning, a terrible time, much like the mourning in the valley of Megiddo when godly king Josiah was murdered by Pharaoh Necho, and that's recorded in 2 Chronicles 35. It's going to be a terrible time of mourning. Verse 12, "The land will mourn, every family by itself, the family of the house of David by itself, their wives by themselves, the family of the house of Nathan and their wives by themselves, and Levi and the Shime-ites and everybody is going to mourn and all the wives are going to mourn and every family is going to mourn." This is all of Israel. Christ comes in blazing glory. Everybody in the world sees Him. The Jews see Him. Some of them will be saved but in this moment the ones that haven't yet been saved are going to cry in repentance and supplication and they're going to feel the grace and forgiveness of God, chapter 13 verse 1, this is so beautiful, "In that day that very day when He comes a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for iniquity." What is He going to do? He's going to cleanse them...He's going to cleanse them. Oh what a wonderful truth. Salvation.

In that day, in one day, God says, I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. And that's the day of His coming. That's back, by the way, in Zechariah 3:9, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." You know what it means to mourn, to strike the breast in grief, to lament, to wail? This is the mourning of repentance. Now mark that in your mind. When Jesus comes, blazing glory, the Jews repent...the Jews repent. Isaiah 25:9 says, "It will be said in that day, Behold this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us." Wow...the 144 thousand will already have been saved. They will have evangelized the world and most particularly the Jews so the Jews will have heard the gospel. They will see Christ coming out of glory and they will pound their breasts as sovereignly God graciously pours out upon them a spirit of supplication and makes them plead for forgiveness and in that moment He sends a fountain of cleansing to wash them from their sins. And Romans 11 will come to pass where Paul says, "So all Israel shall be...what?...saved." The Jews will see Him and they will mourn the mourning of repentance.

But notice the other group that will see Him. "And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him." All the tribes of the earth? Who is that? Matthew 24:30 tells us very pointedly, it says in Matthew 24:30, "The sign of the Son of Man appear in the sky and all the tribes of the earth will mourn," same thing, "and will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory." Now when they see Him coming they're going to mourn. Listen carefully. It's not the mourning of repentance, however, this is the Gentiles, this is the rest of the world.

The word for mourning here is interesting, it's the word kopto, it literally means to cut. Why did they use the word to cut? Because it comes from oriental imagery. When people were in deep despair for some strange reason they cut themselves. Do you know people still do that? It is not uncommon for me to talk to someone who tells me they were in terrible despair and in their despair they cut themselves. In 1 Kings 18:28, the frenzied panicked prophets of Baal in horror that Baal was not hearing their prayers quote: "Cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out." People in despair cut themselves. The Orientals did that commonly. And as I

said, some people still do that. And so, cutting oneself became a means of expression for mourning. When Jesus comes the Jews will mourn a mourning of repentance, according to Zechariah. The world will mourn, too. You want to see the character of their mourning? Look at chapter 6 verse 16, "They cry to the mountains and the rocks and they say, Fall on us, hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, hide us from the wrath of the Lamb for the great day of their wrath has come and who is able to stand?"

Yeah, they cry all right, and they mourn all right, but it isn't the mourning of repentance. Verse 21 of chapter 9, "They did not repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their immorality, nor of their thefts." It's not the remorse of repentance. In fact, they actually end up cursing God, blaspheming God and not at all repenting.

Two groups, the scope of the coming of Christ, everybody is going to see Him. The Jews will mourn the mourning of repentance, the Gentiles will mourn the mourning of judgment and fear. Third point in this little summary, the response to the Second Coming. The glory of it seen in the clouds, the scope of it seen in the people who see it, the response to it...I love this..."Even so, amen." That is the original spiritual Hi-Five. John's saying "Yeah, this is it, do it." That's the response.

He uses two words here, a Greek and a Hebrew, nai is a Greek word that means "yes." Amen is a Hebrew word that means "yes." And so he takes both languages and makes an affirmation. He does the same thing in chapter 22 verse 20, "Amen, come, Lord Jesus," yes, do it. John is thrilled. This is his response, this should be our response.

Finally, this is just thrilling, you've got to grip this. The last feature of this summary of the book regarding the return to Christ to earth is the certainty of it...the certainty of it. And here it comes in verse 8, "The Lord God says, I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

I read some commentaries, in fact, I probably read about 20 commentaries this week on this section, and some of them say, "We don't know why this verse is here. We don't know whether there's any connection with verse 7. It seems as though he just says this and we don't know that it has any significance in the context."

The first time I read this I understood why it was here. You know why it's here? Because God is saying if you think this may not happen, I just want to affirm who is in charge of this event and who He is. "So the Lord God says," the speaker is Jehovah, this by the way is His signature on the certainty of the Second Coming. This is absolutely magnificent. God puts His signature on this prophecy by emphasizing three of His attributes, three very familiar ones. Number one, His omniscience...I am the Alpha and the Omega. What are alpha and omega? First and last letters of what? Greek alphabet. What does this mean? Listen, an alphabet is an ingenious way to store and communicate all knowledge. How many letters in our alphabet? Twenty-six. How many words can be formed out of that? An infinite number of words out of 26 letters. It's a rather ingenious thing, an alphabet. And with 26 letters in our alphabet, arranged in almost endless combinations, we can hold and convey all knowledge. There is no combination of letters outside our alphabet that makes any sense. If you throw some crazy thing up there that doesn't work with our alphabet and isn't familiar and doesn't

belong, it's nonsense to us. Our alphabet contains all knowledge.

Why is God saying, "I am Alpha and Omega?" He is saying I am the supreme sovereign alphabet in which is contained all knowledge. That's what He's saying. I am alef(?) to tau, I am alpha to omega, I am A to Z. Because somebody might come along and say, "Well you say Jesus is coming, well maybe you don't know everything. Maybe there's something that can thwart this deal that you don't even know about." And he says, "Look, I am A to Z, I contain all knowledge, there is no information, there is no knowledge, there is no truth, there is no understanding, there is no wisdom outside of what I know. When I say Christ is coming, I'm telling you there won't be any surprises because there's nothing outside My knowledge, I am Alpha to Omega. I know everything. And since I have all knowledge, there is nothing I don't know about, there is nothing that exists or could happen to ever foil this plan because there's nothing I don't know about. There are no unknown factors that could sabotage the Second Coming."

The second attribute he points out is His omnipresence. He identifies Himself as the One who is and who was and who is to come. This is...this is really an astounding statement. He doesn't say I am the One who was there, who is here, and who will be over there. He just says, I was, I am and I will be. And it is open ended. Here God is affirming His eternal presence. He is everywhere at all times. He is always has been, He always will be and He is. His presence is not bounded. His presence is not limited by time or by space.

Somebody might say, "Well, you know, you might know what you know because you know what you know about the places you've been, but there might be some places outside of where you've been so there might be something there you don't know about." And God is saying, "I am everywhere all the time at all times and so there's nothing outside of where I am. There's nothing that can happen before I'm around and there's nothing that can happen after I leave because there's never a before I'm there and there's never a time when I'm gone. And when I say Jesus is coming, it is settled because all matters, all issues, all persons, all events, all places and all realities for all eternity are visible to Me."

The third attribute is omnipotence. At the end of verse 8 He says, "I'm the Almighty." Somebody is going to come along and say, "Well, yeah, maybe He is omniscient and He knows everything and maybe He is everywhere and there's nothing anywhere that He is not fully aware of, but maybe there's somebody who is more powerful than Him. And that somebody can overthrow the plan." And so He says if you're thinking that, I remind you, "I am pantokrator, Greek, the One of all power. It wouldn't do much good to have all knowledge and to be everywhere present if you didn't have all power, would it? Because all that information and all that observation wouldn't mean anything if you couldn't control what was going on.

The "Almighty God," by the way, is used nine times in the book of Revelation. He is the supreme power. Yes He has all knowledge. Yes He is ever and everywhere present. And yes He is in absolute sovereign complete control of every single thing. When John says He's coming, He's coming. And God is going to guarantee it. And He's going to come in a glory cloud and the whole world is going to see Him. The Jews are going to mourn and be saved. The Gentiles are going to mourn and be destroyed. And our response ought to be, "Yes, yes, let it happen." And God says, "Believe Me, it

will." Verse 7 is true because God guarantees it by His person in verse 8.

Jesus Christ once left heaven for earth in humiliation, He'll be back in exaltation. He once left heaven to be killed, He will do it again to kill. He once left heaven to serve, He will do it again to be served. He once left heaven to offer grace, He will do it again to demand justice. He once left heaven to seek and to save, He will do it again to search and destroy.

The question always in this book is: are you ready? He is coming. John Phillips writes, "One of the most stirring passages in English history tells of the conquests and crusades of Richard I, Richard the Lionhearted. While Richard was away trouncing Saladin(?), his kingdom fell on bad times. His sly and graceless brother John usurped all the prerogatives of the king and misused the realm. The people of England suffered longing for the return of their king and praying that it might be very soon. Then one day Richard came. He landed in England and marched straight for his throne. Around that glittering coming many tales are told woven into the legends of England, one of them is the story of Robin Hood. John's castles tumbled like nine pins, great Richard laid claim to his throne and none dare stand in his path. The people shouted their delight, they rang peel after peel on the bells, the lion was back and they cried, `Long live the king.'"

And one day a King far greater than Richard will lay claim to a realm far greater than England. And those who have abused the earth in His absence, and those who have seized His domains and mismanaged His world will all be swept aside. And only those who love Him and bow the knee to His sovereignty will participate in His Kingdom. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank You for this hurried and yet thrilling glimpse of the coming of Christ. And we say with John, "Even so, amen, let it happen." At the same time, Father, we pray that every person here would be ready...ready because they have submitted to Christ.

While your heads are bowed for just a moment and you're just meditating. If you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, you're not ready for His coming. There's no guarantee at all that you will even survive the holocaust of events that lead up to His return for most of the world will die. There's no guarantee that you would even be among those people who would see Him coming out of the air but were you able to see that there's no guarantee that you would then repent for the vast population of the world does not. That's why Paul said, "Today is the day of salvation," asking Jesus Christ to save you, repenting from your sin, embracing Him as Lord and Savior is for this time, for now, for tonight. I trust that you'll open your heart to Him.

Father, speak to hearts. May no one be unprepared for the inevitable moment and all of those tragic events that precede the coming of Christ in judgment. Be gracious to many souls and save them for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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