

What Did Stephen See?

By Francis Gregory Febus

Revelation 1:7-8



7 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.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. KJV

Many questions immediately arise when one reads this passage. To be quite honest its impact generates a deluge of inquiry from those who do not readily acquiesce to the canonized rhetoric of dispensational gobbledygook. An important decision one must immediately make is how we are to chronologically frame this statement by John. It cannot be understood within the framework of its own statements as if it were written in a vacuum. There is ample evidence of its significance through the passages presented in this article. The scriptures do draw a definitive conclusion. It is woven within the word of God in such a way that only the breath of His presence can reveal it.

I will attempt to innumerate a few of these questions:

- Do I interpret this passage universally to all human beings?
- Does Jesus arrive on literal clouds to judge?
- In assessing this passage, do I dismiss similar Old Testament prophetic language addressed to other nations when they were to be judged?
- Would the executioners of Christ be alive at the second coming?
- Who were “the kindreds of the earth?”)

All Eyes / Those who pierced Him / All the kindreds of the earth

The contrived assumption of a universal application to this event is most damaging. This view is promoted in spite of the glaring internal evidence to the contrary. The verses that precede Revelation 1:7 set the chronological and sociological environment for which they were intended. If the chronological element is secured by internal scriptural evidence, the question of whom this applies to would be solved. To force a universal application on the passage without the consideration of these elements would be misguided at best.

The chronological stage is set in the first verse of Revelation. The expression “shortly come to pass” should frame the timing of the Lord coming in clouds later on in verse seven. Unfortunately, instead of associating the two verses in their proper setting, they have attempted to redefine what the word *shortly* means. This is reminiscent of what a certain President said in defense of his apparent adulterous escapades. When confronted with his actions, he began to redefine meaning of the word sex. So transparent are

these attempts to refute the word of God that it suggests a felonious streak that is inexcusable on any level.

Audience relevance also raised its head by the identification “His servants” to whom this message was addressed. The expectations engendered by the Apostle John are worth noting. Either the book of Revelation was the first ancient attempt to frighten its audience beyond the pale of “The Chainsaw Massacre”, or it was intended that his audience would be duly warned of “the wrath to come”. As the little nun that instructed me in primary school would say, “common sense is not very common”.

“Every eye..... all men,” what is that all about? As we pointed out earlier, the internal evidence bonds these statements to a time that its audience served their God. The universal application of significant events throughout holy writ consistently dismisses the covenantal focus of their intent, this is done with impunity. The literal impracticality of the statement “every eye shall see Him” begs the practical application of common sense. Two obvious questions arise immediately upon reading this passage..

1. Would those who were physically blind immediately be healed to view this event?
2. How would a 5 foot 7 inch Jesus be viewed by the entire population of the globe by “coming in clouds?”

Everyone would agree that the words of Jesus to Nicodemous in John 3 promised a **spiritual awareness** of those who desired to embrace the kingdom of God. I believe that the Jews were painfully aware that His prophecies had come to pass when the Temple and its city were destroyed in the flames of age ending judgment; every “eye” witnessed that event.

John 3:3

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Matthew 13:16

16 But blessed are your eyes , for they see: and your ears, for they hear. KJV

At this juncture, it would be good to properly define “the kindreds of the earth.” The Englishman’s concordance categorically defines the word “tribe” uniquely as one of the **twelve tribes of Israel** in its contextual setting. The contrived interpretation of this word to represent the population of the entire globe is wishful at best. Copious sociological references to Israel as the recipient of this age ending wrath are telling. To dismiss these covenantal specific references is to dismiss the focus of this prophetic theme; the tribes of Israel are that focus. In reality, the application of the word “kindred” always finds its Biblical environment in association with the twelve tribes of Israel. Those few instances which seem to borderline the issue are interpreted by futurists as a global phenomenon. The entire Bible has consistently expressed this covenantal relationship with God by referring to its constituents as “Heaven and Earth”. Therefore, the term “kindreds of the **Earth**” only refer to a particular segment of humanity, His covenant constituency. An improved articulation for this expression would be *the kindreds of covenant earth*.

Kindred:

1. a tribe; in the N.T. all the persons descended from one of the twelve sons of the patriarch Jacob. (from Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

The next step in our inquiry is the phrase “those who pierced Him”. According to all that has been stated thus far, it logically leads us to the historical and Biblical record. This is another glaring time statement that associated those who crucified the Lord as living in the first century. This statement by John assured his audience that those who survived the crucifixion would witness Jesus “coming in judgment”. We will resume this theme when we discuss what Stephen witnessed.

The Clouds of Prophetic judgment

Many who study the bible fail to apply the proper approach when deciphering the expression “clouds”. The principle element that should be considered is the *nature* of its usage. What I am referring to is the setting in which it is being applied. The setting in this case is obviously prophetic judgment. When a scripture assumes a prophetic posture we should not immediately infer a literal rendering because the *nature* of all prophetic expression is fundamentally symbolic. The most notable example of this is the parables of Jesus.

The word cloud is also utilized in scripture prophetically in association with themes other than that of judgment. As we all

know, the text ultimately determines the final usage of all interpretive applications. Since the expression “coming in clouds” in Revelation 1:7 evidently enunciates a prophetic foreboding, we have no other choice but to seek its counterparts in the Old Testament.

A passage in the book of Isaiah should give every bible student pause to reflect upon its similitude to the scripture at hand. Those acquainted with its historical and Biblical destiny know it refers to the Judgment of Egypt which diminished it from being the ancient superpower of its day to a tributary of the emerging nations of yesteryear.

Isaiah 19:1

19:1 The burden of Egypt. Behold, **the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud** , and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. KJV

When we consider these passages it should not come to us as a surprise that they were used in New Testament writings and applied in like manner. The High Priest was appalled when Jesus utilized this precise language in Matthew 26:64. The high Priest did not overlook the significance of what Christ predicted. We will address that point in a later portion of this writing.

To bolster our position, we have selected a scripture that designated the destruction of the first Temple and its City. The repetition of this scenario should begin compel a few to revise their view on the subject of prophetic clouds.

Jeremiah 4:13-14

13 **Behold, he shall come up as clouds**, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled.

14 O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? KJV

Taken in a Cloud

Acts 1:9-11

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven

KJV

The angel spoke prophetically within the constraints of an age old pattern of established prophetic imagery. What is disturbing is that most futurists hang their hats on this particular scripture to dismiss

the evident pattern well established in the Biblical record. Can we honestly do this and be satisfied with this type of eschatological positioning? In essence, Jesus left on a literal cloud and He returns in a prophetic cloud of judgment.

The right Hand of God

The key figures who were to witness this judgment keenly understood the meaning of the phrase “the right hand of God”. This was because they were Jews who understood the nuances of the prophetic narrative handed down to them for many centuries. The ignorance of ancient Hebraic expressions has eluded many Christians due to the poor teaching methods of their leaders. This is where a little diligence on the part of the student is required.

Common sense plays a vital role in deciphering the important role this phrase plays in the scheme of prophecy and its perception. We should know that God does not possess a right hand. There is absolutely no way that we could determine a positioning when it comes to an omnipresent God. We are the ones who are locked into time, space and direction. God has no such limitations, why do we assume such things about Him?

When this phrase is used in prophecy, it alludes to the favor, salvation or in many cases, the judgment of God. We have provided a number of texts below that substantiate our claims to its usage in prophetic wrath.

[Ps 110:5-6](#)

5 The Lord at thy **right hand** shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.

KJV

Psalms 21:8-9

8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: **thy right hand** shall find out those that hate thee.

9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

KJV

Matthew 22:44

44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on **my right hand** , till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

The prayers of vengeance

A very important aspect that is virtually ignored in the study of age ending wrath is the prayer of vengeance by the Church. You heard me correctly, the Church played an important role in praying “Thy will be done” for forty years. The passages that follow will astound you as it connects vital aspects of the prophetic components of this subject. We never witness the Church praying the prophecies of Jesus and the Prophets away. This is because:

1. The judgment was destined by God to redress the centuries of harlotry committed by Israel.

2. The consummation of that age would deliver the new Kingdom into its fullness with the Old Covenant vanishing into historical oblivion. (Hebrews 8:13)

Revelation 5:7-9

7 And he came and took the book out of **the right hand** of him that sat upon the throne.

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and **golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.**

What were they praying for? They were praying for the seals of wrath to be loosed and rejoiced at the appearing of the Lamb of God that was worthy to loosen those seals. The enemies of God were to be judged and they prayed His wrath be done. Special attention should be paid to the book of seven unopened seals taken **out of the right hand** of “He that sits on the throne”. This “right hand” imagery has a direct correlation to the seven unopened seals of wrath. This “right hand of God” imagery will play a crucial role in this article as it develops.

The four beasts and the twenty four elders is a picture of the Church and its leadership. The harps in their hands represent worship and the golden vials the prayers of the saints. (The word odors are translated as incense from the Greek.)

The question that should arise at this juncture is what are the prayers of the saints all about? As we will see shortly these prayers

play a crucial role in the in bringing about of the judgments as they develop in the book of Revelation. The fifth seal gives us a glimpse into the content of those prayers. The reference to the avenged blood of martyrs is telling. Jesus accused the Jews of their portion of National guilt of the righteous blood of the prophets and righteous men in Matthew 23:29-36. See also: Revelation 17:6-6, 1 Thessalonians 3:15-16, Jeremiah 26:15, Revelation 18:24.

Revelation 6:9-10

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, **dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?**

In the 18th chapter of Luke Jesus delivered a teaching on prayer. He inadvertently touched upon an issue very close to His heart; the avenging of His innocents. The Church only prays that His hearts' desire come to pass.

Luke 18:6-8

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7 And shall not God **avenge** his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when

the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

Further evidence of this prayerful wrath is in Revelation chapter eight. The “golden altar” described in the passage refers to the golden altar of incense that was located in the Holy Place before the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (the throne). This illustrates the effect a generation of prayer had on the awful events that transpired at that time.

Revelation 8:3-5

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the **prayers of the saints**, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

5 **And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth:** and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

KJV

All that preceded this writing will serve to be foundational for what we are to declare shortly. That which “every eye” witnessed was the climax of the old order giving way to the new. The imagery we have utilized thus far in this article will aid us in deciphering the events that will follow.

The Trials of Jesus and Stephen

In my studies I observed that the trial of Jesus and that of Stephen drew uncanny parallels. The expressions in the following passages depicted an event that only the populace of that day would have witnessed. The uncanny replication of events, accusations, prophecies, imagery and what they “saw” could not be a coincidence of Biblical happenstance. If what we have discovered is accurate, then we will have undoubtedly exposed another important connection to the age ending wrath of 2000 yrs. ago.

The prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem by Jesus and Stephen ultimately brought their demise.

Both were charged with blasphemy.

Both were brought before the high priest and the council.

Both were subjected to false witnesses.

Both predicted the destruction of the Temple.

Both had the same witness of the Consummation of the age.

Both were executed for their testimony.

The charges against Jesus

Matthew 26:59-60

59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

61 And said, This fellow said, **I am able to destroy the temple of God**, and to build it in three days.

62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

KJV

64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall **ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power**, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

The High priest was familiar with the prophetic verbiage Jesus used when informed that he was to witness the Son of man coming on the right hand of power. That was the last straw; he tore his garments in a rage and proclaimed that Jesus had blasphemed. There was much more to what the High Priest understood that prompted such a violent reaction from him. He could have easily dismissed Jesus as just being a raving lunatic bent on grandiose Messianic delusions. The words of the prophets were bearing down upon this corrupt religious system and their leadership was keenly aware of it. Was it not John the Baptist that warned them of the **wrath** to come? Were they not in the midst of the seventh week of years when the Messiah would be cut off? They were also well aware that this prophetic timetable was encroaching upon their

kingdom; it was time to act quickly.

The charges against Stephen

A few short years after the death of Christ, similar events transpired in the death of Stephen. From the time of the first outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost to the martyrdom of Stephen the central messages of salvation and the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple were propagated with great zeal, the scriptures attest to that. Therefore we can only conclude that this message was not unknown to the inhabitants of Judea.

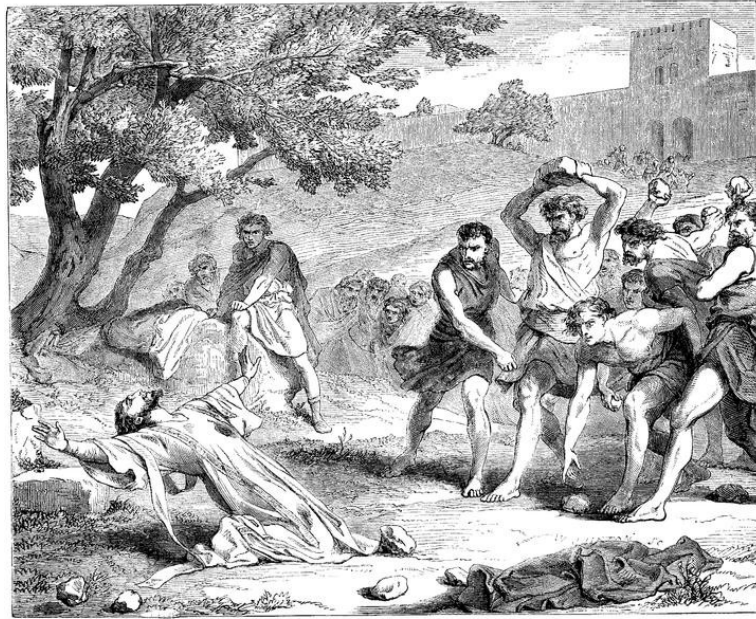
What is truly striking about the charges against Stephen is that he claimed that Jesus was to destroy “this place” meaning Jerusalem or the Temple. The glaring historical fact is that both were destroyed by the Roman armies 2000 yrs. ago. That being the case, we must conclude that our Lord arrived in “clouds” of judgment through the might of that same Roman army. If the city of Jerusalem would have remained intact then Stephens’ prediction could have justifiably been called a false prophecy. Hence, Jesus destroyed Jerusalem!

The Charges against Stephen

[Acts 6:13-14](#)

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, **This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place**, and the law:

14 For we have heard him say, that **this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place**, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.



What Stephen witnessed :

[Acts 7:55-57](#)

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on **the right hand of God**.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

KJV

What the high priest witnessed:

Matt 26:63-65

63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter **shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.**

65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

KJV

What the tribes of the earth witnessed:

Matt 24:29-30

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all **the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven** with power and great glory.

KJV

The sign of the son of man in heaven is the sign or proof that the son of man is ruling in heaven. The passage does not say that Jesus is the sign in heaven but that the sign would appear to indicate that the prophecy concerning His victory and restored kingdom was complete

They all witnessed the same event:

- The kindreds of the earth saw it.
- Those that pierced Him saw it
- The high priest saw it.
- Stephen saw it.
- [The 12](#) tribes of the earth saw it.

Additional scriptures to consider:

Ex 15:12

12 Thou stretchedst out thy **right hand, the earth swallowed them.**

Ps 74:10-16

10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?

11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom.

12 For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.

14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers.

Ps 21:8-10

8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.

9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

Ps 98:1-2

O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: **his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.**

2 The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.