

• The visions progress from John's present day to the new creation at the end of history

⁷Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him. Those who pierced him will see him, and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. Yes! Amen! ⁸'I am Alpha and Omega,' says the Lord God, he who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. Vision after vision is brought before the readers, each one concentrating more on the end of the world. The final vision brings us to see the new creation at the end of world history.

John's book is about the future, **beginning with his own time**. John must show God's people 'what must soon take place'. 'The time is near' ^{□1}. Although the book reaches into the undated future it had relevance for John's own time. It is not exclusively about the far-off times ahead of John's day. Daniel spoke of 'the latter days'; John spoke of 'soon'. The latter days arrived when Jesus came.

□1 1:3

• The second coming is always near in at least three ways...

At any moment the 'Day of the Lord' can break through into our situation. The second coming of Jesus is **always** near. This is true in at least three ways. (i) It is always possible for God's final day of judgement to break through into the present and we have a foretaste **now** of God's final judgement, a foretaste of the second coming of Jesus. (ii) The second coming of Jesus is always to be real to us. We are to be conscious of the Lord Jesus Christ and aware that he could come at any moment. (iii) We are to be ready for Jesus' second coming, as if it might come today, but at the same time we plan for the future and know that there might be long delay.

He is coming with the clouds

• As a divine saviour

• Firstly, as Daniel explained, to receive a kingdom from the Father

When Jesus comes he appears as the **divine** Saviour. 'He is coming with the clouds'. God appeared in a cloud when he redeemed Israel. The clouds speak of deity. Daniel 7:13 used the picture of a King 'coming with the clouds'. In Daniel 7 the human figure ('One who is like a son of man') approaches the throne of God and is given God's kingdom. He is a heavenly figure, human in appearance and yet divine. He comes from the heavenly realm; he comes with the clouds that hide the divine majesty. We remember the cloud around God's presence on Mount Sinai; it covered the glory of God which could not be totally and directly observed. This human figure is (in Daniel's vision) universally worshipped. He acts as God's King, ruling over the nations in judgement. His kingdom will be everlasting. The 'coming of the Son of Man' is **firstly** something that happens in Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, when Jesus comes to the Father to receive the position of being King in the Father's kingdom. The one who came to the Father to receive a kingdom and become the Father's 'right-hand Man', administers the Father's kingdom and brings it to total triumph. Finally Jesus will come **from** the Father to exhibit visibly before 'every eye' what he has done.

• Finally to exhibit visibly before 'every eye' what He has done

Jesus will come visibly. 'Every eye will see him.' His humiliation will be reversed. At the time when Jesus was crucified, people treated him with contempt, piercing him, treating him cruelly. This will be reversed. 'Those who pierced him will see him'. The entire

- *Alpha and Omega*

Jesus invites His church to be ready for His coming

- *Leading His church through days of tribulation*

- *Coming to rescue*

- *Coming to remove unfaithful churches*

- *Finally coming visibly in complete vindication and triumph*

- *The approaching day*

pagan world will be horrified to discover they are to be judged by him. It will certainly happen; we want it to happen ('Yes! Amen!', says John). Jesus has been present throughout history. He is 'the Alpha' – the first letter of the Greek alphabet. He will be supervising what happens at the end. He is 'the Omega' – the last letter of the Greek alphabet.

This is the central theme of the book of Revelation. Our Lord Jesus Christ is walking among his churches, inviting them to be ready for his coming to them. He has already come to the Father and received his position as the ruler and head of all of the churches. He is now leading his churches through days of tribulation and persecution and opposition of every kind. He is to be victorious again and again. He had already conquered sin and Satan upon the cross, and reached his position as head of the church. Now he will conquer sin and Satan in the history of the world. We live upon the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ 'until he comes'¹. Soon and very soon, in one way or another, Jesus 'comes' to us. He comes when he rescues us. He comes when he removes churches from being light-bearers in his worldwide church. Although scarcely ever visible his angels are present all the time with his church, guiding them, helping them.

But the climax of everything will be when Jesus comes and every eye will see him. That will be the day of complete vindication and complete triumph. John has spiritual eyesight. With the eye of faith, he knows without question that Jesus' visible triumph is sure and certain. As the days get nearer to Jesus' coming, the book of Revelation will perhaps become ever more real to us. False teaching will arise and threaten to mislead the church. Circumstances on planet earth are likely to get increasingly difficult. The Christians do not know everything, but we know God's plans and purposes are moving forward steadily on course. War and rumours of wars come as no surprise to God. Persecutions ought not to come as any surprise to us. But the Lamb is seated upon his throne. Soon everyone will see it, visibly. John wants us to see it, with the eye of faith, even now.

¹ 1
Corinthians
11:26

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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