

# Acts Chapter One, Verses Nine through Eleven

## Two Initial Essentials:

1. *The following considerations on Acts 1:9-11 are founded upon the assumption of a consensus that this passage must refer either to Christ's AD 70 coming or to a yet future coming; otherwise weighing these thoughts will likely be just a waste of time. And...*
2. *Since the study of biblical end-times (eschatology) revolves around nature and timing, it's vital for Bible students to agree (as hermeneutical principles teach) that that which is the clearest &/or most simplistic (in this case "time-statements") must dictate the interpretation of the obscure &/or more complex (in this case "physical or spiritual nature"), remembering at the same time that we must place and keep ourselves in the shoes of those in biblical times and that a passage can never truly mean what it was never meant to mean. Now...*

If these things are agreed upon, we may continue with less confusion than we would otherwise. So...

Firstly, since Acts 1:9-11 don't provide any information concerning the timing of the coming of Jesus that the angels had in mind, and since there are numerous passages which do include time-indicators, then, instead of debating the meaning &/or nature of this passage, let's consult some of those references. (I'm going to allude to quite a few, splitting them into two lists: generic & *mellonic*.)

### Generic Passages {Confer only with ones in bold print initially; others later if needed.}

1. Matthew 10:22-23
2. **Matthew 13:39-43** (esp. v. 40 ["this age"] & v. 43 [fr. Dan. 12:3]).
3. Matthew 24:14-15 (cf. Dan. 9:23)
4. Matthew 24:30-31 (cf. Dan. 7:13 & 22), & 34
5. **Matthew 26:64** (*arti* = "prop. marking time closely connected to the present" [Thayer]; Soon you will see the Son of Man ... coming on the clouds of heaven [CEV].)
6. **John 21:22**: If I want John to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? (NIV)  
(Surely Jesus wasn't talking about a miraculous existence of 2000 years!)
7. Romans 13:11-12
8. **\*Philippians 4:5**: The Lord is at hand (cf. Mat. 4:17). {**\*First ask about their use of Mat. 3:2, et al.**}
9. First Timothy 6:13-14 (not until death, but till appearing; cf. Titus 2:13 & 1 Cor. 1:7-8) Related...
10. Hebrews 10:25 (due to signs, they could actually see the day approaching)
11. **Hebrews 10:37**: yet a little while, and He who is coming will come (lit. "a little—ever so little —while [*micron*]").
12. **James 5:1-9** (emp. "you," "your," "bodies," not until death, but until appearing, & "at hand")
13. First Peter 1:5, 9, 11b-12a, & 13 ("being brought")
14. **First Peter 4:7a**: the end of all things is at hand.
15. **First Peter 4:12 & 17** (v. 12 → "is testing"; v. 17 "has come")
16. Second Peter 1:19

17. Second Peter 2:3
18. **First John 2:18** (it is the last hour; cf. Mat. 24:23-34 & John's subject of "love" w/ Mat. 24:12)
19. First John 2:28
20. First John 4:3b (cf. 2 The. 2:1-3 & 7)
21. **Revelation 1:1**: events that will happen soon (NIV & NLT)
22. **Revelation 1:3**: the time is almost here (CEV)
23. **Revelation 2:25**: hold fast what you have till I come (not until death, but until He came)
24. **Revelation 3:11 & 22:7, 12, & 20**: I am coming soon (NIV, ESV, RSV, CEV, & NCV)
25. **Revelation 11:18**: the time has come (CEV)
26. **Revelation 14:7**: the time has come for God to judge (NCV; cf. 1 Pet. 4:17)
27. **Revelation 22:6**: must happen right away (CEV)
28. **Revelation 22:10**: these things will happen soon (CEV; cf. Dan. 12:4a → 500 yrs. VS 2000 yrs.)

**Mellonic Passages** (*Mello* means "to be about to do something ... the certainty of what is about to take place" (Vine) and "to be about to do anything; on the point [or the verge] of" (Thayer). The McReynolds' Interlinear translates *mello* as "about to" all 109 times in the New Testament!)

29. **Matthew 16:27-28**: the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of His Father with His angels... In fact I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. (So the imminence conveyed in the Greek term *mello* in v. 27 corresponds perfectly with the generation idea in v. 28.)
30. Acts 17:31: He is about to judge the world in righteousness.
31. Acts 24:15 & 25: there is about to be a resurrection of the dead & the judgment about to come.
32. **Romans 4:23-24**: righteousness is about to be imputed to us who believe in God
33. Colossians 2:16-17: a shadow of things about to come.
34. First Timothy 4:8: having promise of the life that ... is about to come.
35. First Timothy 6:19: storing up ... a good foundation for the time about to come.
36. Second Timothy 4:1: the Lord ... is about to judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.
37. **Hebrews 1:14**: They were those who were about to inherit salvation.
38. Hebrews 2:5: the world (*oikoumene*) about to come.
39. Hebrews 9:11 & 10:1: good things about to come.
40. **Hebrews 13:14**: the city ... about to come.
41. **First Peter 5:1**: a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed.
42. Revelation 12:5: who is about to rule (pres. tense). **So...**

It staggers my imagination for someone to array Acts 1:11 against so many clear passages. If there's still to be another (third) coming, then is there not a clear time-statement passage to indicate such?

Secondly, if the angels in Acts 1:11 really had in mind that Jesus would return bodily, and if that's really what the apostles saw occur in this scenario, then why did one of those who witnessed this event write the following: **It has not yet been revealed what we shall be (1 John 3:2a)?** (Cf. 1 John 1:1-2 to see how well John knew Jesus. BTW, beginning with 1 John 2:28, one can see the context is about be made in the likeness of Jesus' righteousness; Psalms 17:15 reads, "I will see your face in righteousness; ... I will awake in Your likeness.")

Thirdly, since Acts 1:9-11 provide us with no information about the body of Jesus at this occasion, then, if the phrase **in like manner** in verse 11 that futurists emphasize really "proves" that Jesus would return bodily, the maxim that "What proves too much, actually proves nothing at all" comes to mind. Why? Because, not only does this passage say nothing to describe Jesus' body, but it also says nothing about...

- ~ His leaving in view of every eye in the world as futurists say will occur when He returns, or about...
- ~ His leaving with a host of angels as futurists say will occur when He returns, or about...
- ~ His leaving with flaming fire as futurists say will occur when He returns, or about...
- ~ His leaving with the shout of the archangel as futurists say will occur when He returns, or about...
- ~ His leaving with a global trumpet blast as futurists say will occur when He returns. So...

Whereas Jesus would come with pomp and circumstance, He left with little or no such pomp & circumstance, which just doesn't seem to fit the in-like-manner hypothesis of futurists; besides, the Greek term (*tropos*) for the phrase **in like manner** is used in other passages in such a way to demonstrate that it actually does not necessitate "exact equivalence."

In Second Timothy 3:8 Paul wrote about those who resisted the truth as the magicians of Pharaoh. Surely we don't believe that these men were expressing resistance to truth by creating serpents from sticks or turning water into blood; so *tropos* can be used figuratively.

In Matthew 23:37 Jesus said to Jerusalem, **How often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings!** Surely we don't believe that Jesus wanted to place the Israelites under a set of literal wings that are attached to Him; so again *tropos* can be used metaphorically to tangibly depict something abstract. Very closely related to this, and...

Fourthly, the original term for "so," in the phrase **will so come**, is from *houtos* which, like the phrase **in like manner**, does not necessitate an "exact equivalence."

In Matthew 6:9 Jesus said to pray **in this manner**: **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.** However, not only do we very seldom ever hear someone begin a prayer that way today, but even out of the numerous prayers recorded in the Bible there isn't one which begins that way, leading me to believe that this model prayer of Jesus wasn't meant to be recited word-for-word-or-else-one-would-sin; rather, it was provided as a mere guide, meaning that *houtos* doesn't demand exactness.

In Matthew 18:35, after He talked about a man being delivered to torturers until he paid his debt, Jesus said, **So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you ... does not forgive his brother.** Surely we don't believe that, in the judgment, the Father would turn folks over to torturers until his debt is paid, especially since man's debt to God can not be paid, leading me to believe that this tangible/physical illustration was used to teach an abstract/spiritual lesson. Now...

Related to how the phrases **will so come** and **in like manner** can/are often used in the context of a physical illustration of a spiritual fact or event, it seems to me (especially when other similar passages are taken into consideration) that what the angels meant for the disciples to understand by this event, or rather what they meant for them to remember by this event, were the prophecies of the prophets and Jesus Himself in Matthew 24 concerning His consummation-of-the-OT-age coming.

Think about this: When God finalized the separation of His people from the Egyptians in Exodus chapters 13 & 14, the Bible says that God involved Himself in this separation by means of a cloud. His coming against the Egyptians by means of a cloud became a picture of God's coming against other nations (including Egypt again later) by means of clouds. Likewise...

The Acts 1:11 event was a picture of what Jesus had previously told them about in what we usually refer to as *The Olivet Discourse* in Luke 21, viz. that they would see Him coming in/on a cloud with power and great glory (v. 27), a statement that we agree is an allusion to Jesus' coming in AD 70 against Jerusalem; for, immediately after He said this, He went on to state that that event would occur within the lifetime of those present (v. 32, cf. Mat. 16:27-28). Besides...

The antecedent for the phrase "in like manner as" He left in Acts 1:11 is properly His leaving "out of their sight"; i.e., as He left in an invisible fashion, His return would be in an invisible fashion (corresponding well to Luke 17:20-24. Furthermore, speaking of OT type/anti-type...

As Yahweh (deity) represented His Shekinah (i.e. Hebrew for "presence") on the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place by a cloud (Lev. 16:2), so Yeshua (deity) ascended to His Father's Right Hand and to the Mercy Seat in Heaven to offer His blood for mankind (Heb. 9:24) in order that He may then reappear with salvation completed (Heb. 9:28, cf. Lev. 16:15ff & Luke 21:28). Besides all of this, and...

Lastly, speaking of the prophets, it seems that every scholar and Reference-Bible refers to Daniel 7:13 in connection with Acts 1:11. Aside from the fact that I agree, two things are interesting about this:

1. In His Olivet discourse, Jesus seems to clearly refer to Daniel 7:13 in Matthew 24:30, which, incidentally, wasn't the only time He brought up the prophet Daniel: earlier in this very context of end-of-the-age matters, He specifically mentioned Daniel by name (v. 15). And...
2. Daniel 7:13-14 is in the context of when the saints would come into possession of the kingdom: I was watching in the night visions, and behold One like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed. Then, notice more about this in verses 21-22 in which we find something about its timing: I was watching, and the same horn was making war against the saints and prevailing against them until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom. And when else would that be except around the time of AD 70 (i.e. after the war against the saints which didn't occur prior to the Pentecost of Acts 2)? (Cf. also vv. 23-27.) Not only Dan. 7, but...

I'm sure that the prophet Zechariah also came to the minds of these first century Jews: Zechariah 12:10-14 is a reference which comes up in regard to Acts 1:11 (as well as Rev. 1:7) nearly as often as Daniel 7; interestingly, both prophecies clearly point toward the events surrounding the demise of Judaism and the rise of Christianity in the first century (cf. Zec. 14:1-5, as well as ALL of Zech., for context). So...

Since Acts 1:11 is believed to be the definitive passage for a bodily return, then surely the thoughts presented in this study should at the very least provoke futurists to seriously reconsider the unspiritual interpretation of other such passages as well.

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[Acts 1:11 almost must be studied in conjunction with 1 The. 4:17 & Rev. 1:7 to get the whole truth of the entire scenario.]