

Revelation Chapter One, Verse Seven

I don't believe this verse supports a future, physical coming of Jesus because...

1. The original term for **behold** (*idou*) means to "consider by looking at &/or listening to." It's used 218 times in the New Testament and **always** refers to something that the one addressed has, can, or will experience &/or be affected by within his lifetime; if more than one is addressed, then the statement is understood to refer to the generation of those addressed. Check 'em out—all 218 of them; even the ten or so that are quotes from the Old Testament were being applied to the audience as being fulfilled in their lifetimes. Now, if I'm not pulling your leg, then consider these passages:

~ To the city of Jerusalem in AD 30, Jesus said, **Behold!** (*idou*) **Your house is left to you desolate** (Mat. 23:38).

~ To some Jewish ladies, Jesus said, **Daughters of Jerusalem, don't weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and your children. For indeed** (*idou*) **the days are coming** (pres. tense, days of their generation when their children will be living) in which they will say, "Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore, and the breasts which never nursed" (Luke 23:29)!

~ After James wrote to some Christians, saying that **the coming of the Lord is at hand** (5:8), he then said, **Behold** (*idou*), **the Judge is standing at the door** (5:9b)!

~ Jesus said in Revelation 22:7a & 12a, **Behold** (*idou*), **I am coming quickly**. By the way, most folks don't want to accept that the statement **I am coming quickly** refers to imminence; they say it rather refers to quickness of speed when He does come. However, the problem with this is that if such was what Jesus actually had in mind, He would've said, "I will come quickly," not **I am coming quickly**. Besides, in verse 12 Jesus quoted nearly verbatim His statement decades before in Matthew 16:27-28 that He'll come in the lifetime of those He was speaking to.

~ Jesus said in Revelation 16:15a, **Behold** (*idou*), **I am coming as a thief**; again, not I will come, but **I am coming**. Then, of course, there's our text:

~ After John made two very imminent statements in 1:1 & 3 (**events that will happen soon** [NIV & NLT] and **the time is almost here** [CEV]), he then said of Jesus in verse 7, **Behold** (*idou*), **He is coming** (pres. tense, as if He's on His way), not He will come. (Cf. v. 8b → lit. **is coming**.)

This explains why it actually was so important for the recipients of his letter to behold—to listen up and heed the things he wrote about (v. 3). By the way, there are at least 14 imminent time-statements throughout Revelation. Before leaving this point, consider this:

If this book concerned events that were to occur within just a few years of John's writing, within the lifetime of the recipients of this book, within that generation (cf. Mat. 24:30 & 34), then (unless we're going to claim that Jesus returned in a physical fashion in the first century) we must conclude that 1:7 wasn't meant to be understood to teach that Jesus would come in a literal-physical manner.

2. Besides the fact that (as is normally the case when studying end-time passages) the *timing* of the event of this passage defines the nature of it as not being literal-physical, this is also obviously a judgment passage; and when Deity is spoken of as coming by means of clouds in judgment passages, the clouds represented the army or armies through which God was exercising His judgment.

~ Against Egypt, Isaiah 19:1 reads, **The Lord rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt** (via the Assyrian army, 20:4).

~ Against Nineveh in the book of Nahum, 1:3 tells us that **The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.** What army or who created this cloud of dust? The Babylonians. And...

~ Against Jerusalem, Zephaniah foretold of her ultimate demise at the hands of the Romans in 1: 14-18, v. 15 alluding to the day of her demise as a **day of clouds.**

3. The original term (*opsetai* from *optomai*) for the word "see" in the clause **every eye shall see Him** doesn't necessarily mean to look at something in a literal-physical manner.

Strong's (as well as Vine's) says that *optomai* (#3700) is an alternate of *horao* (#3708); and (in agreement with Thayer's) he defined *horao* as "to discern clearly (physically or mentally)," throwing the word "perceive" in there.

Vine's, under the English word "appear," agrees, of course, that it can refer to literally looking upon something, but also says that it can mean and is used to refer to mental perception: he wrote, "subjectively, with reference to an inward impression or a spiritual experience or a mental occupation."

This term is used in just such a fashion in the following passages:

In Acts 18:15a Gallio told the Jews who wanted Paul judged, **If it's a question of ... your own law, see to it yourselves** (RSV). Surely we can "see" that this is a figure of speech. (Cf. Mat. 27:4 & 24.)

In John 3:36a John the Baptist said that **He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; but he who does not believe the Son shall not see life.** Surely to **see life** here means to "experience" it.

In Luke 3:6 John the Baptist said of Jesus that **all flesh shall see the salvation of God.**

Especially since salvation is inextricably linked to Christ's coming (Rom. 13:11, Heb. 9:28, & 1 Pet. 1:1-12, esp. v. 5; cf. Heb. 1:14 w/ 1 Pet. 1:4-5), Luke himself even recorded Jesus as saying in the context of Jerusalem's demise that **When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near** (this is kingdom-redemption, v. 31), certainly John meant that his generation would perceive that the promised salvation has been fulfilled at last. Also, personally...

I can't seem to help but see a close connection between Luke 3:6 and Revelation 1:7: just compare **every eye shall see Him** [who comes with salvation] with **all flesh shall see the salvation of God.** How 'bout you? Well...

Now that we've touched on imminent time-indicators and the term for **see** here, let's put these two ideas together by consulting one statement in particular that John himself may have witnessed Jesus saying: to the High Priest Caiaphas and his cohorts in Matthew 26:64 Jesus affirmed, **Hereafter you (plural) will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power and coming on the clouds...** There are at least two important things to notice in this verse:

- A. The original term for **hereafter** is *arti* about which Thayer's says, "properly marking time closely connected to the present"; i.e., it means "soon." So this is, no doubt, why the Contemporary English Version translates Jesus as saying, **Soon you will see...** In fact, the NKJV translates *arti* as **now** 25 out of 36 times; at other times it's translated as **present hour, this hour, and this day.** And...

B. The original term for **see** is from *optomai* that we just studied; and since Jesus modified this "seeing" by the time-limiting term *arti* (meaning that it was not impossible for these very men to still be living 40 years later [High Priests could be as young as 30]), and since Jesus didn't literally-physically show up in AD 70, then this "seeing" was of a spiritual nature. By the way...

It even seems clear that Caiaphas understood Jesus to be speaking apocalyptically, not literally, for verses 65-66 have him throwing a fit concerning Jesus identifying Himself with Yahweh. How? By His reference to having the authority and ability to orchestrate divine judgment via the nations as God had done so many times in the Old Testament. See...

Caiaphas and everyone else there would know these cases well, so they knew that God never literally-physically came against cities such as Nineveh or Jerusalem, but had the capability to manipulate nation against nation. Besides that...

They would also recognize that Jesus was identifying Himself with the specific Messianic prophecies of such passages as Isaiah 40:5 and Daniel 7:13, passages that would, of course, also apply to Revelation 1:7. So, let's get back to Revelation 1:7:

4. Similar to a thought we gleaned from Matthew 26:64 (as well as having established the timing of this event), the next phrase, **even they who pierced Him**, is just another indicator that John was referring to Jesus' AD 70 coming, for those (notice the plural here & in Rev. 1:7, i.e. the Jews who caused it) who pierced Jesus could've still been alive at the time. And there's something else that just must be considered here, but we have to add in the next & last clause to get the full impact:
5. John said, **all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him**.

These two declarations make it abundantly clear that John was quoting from a well-known prophecy, the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10; and this wasn't the first time John had referenced that prophecy: at the crucifixion of Christ in John 19:37 he quoted it after he recorded the spearing of Jesus' side (v. 34). In John 19 there was a deductive or the retrospective fulfillment of this prophecy, while in Revelation 1:7 John applied this prophecy to its actual fulfillment. Now, in keeping with the theme of allowing the Bible to explain the Bible, let's read verses 10-12a and comment.

Firstly, this prophecy is clearly specifically about Jerusalem's demise (cf. also Zec. 14). And...

Secondly, John connected both the death and the coming of the Messiah to end of the city of Jerusalem and the people of the house of David. Furthermore...

In Luke 23:28-30 Jesus seemed to have this prophecy in mind when He addressed the **daughters of Jerusalem** concerning who they would actually be mourning for—their children, those who would live long enough to experience the demise of Jerusalem and her temple. Also...

In both Zechariah 12:12 and Revelation 1:7, the original term *ges* is found; however, though the NKJV as well as the Septuagint render it "land" in Zechariah, for some reason (even though David's people and the word "tribes" is used in these contexts) it was translated as "earth" in Revelation. And this isn't the only time the translators demonstrated their bias:

In Jesus' discourse about Jerusalem's demise in Luke 21:23-25 it can be clearly seen again: while they translated *ges* as "land" in verse 23, they translated it as "earth" in verse 25 (cf. v. 26).

That's the sort of thing that has caused so much end-times confusion over the last few centuries: if, for example, translators had never clearly erroneously translated *aión* as "world" instead of "age" in nearly every case (e.g. Mat. 24:3), I seriously doubt that we'd have near the problems over this subject that we currently have; people just ate it up, creating all sorts of doctrines.

And lastly, but related to #5...

6. It seems that every reference Bible and scholar refer to Daniel 7:13 in connection with Revelation 1:7. Besides the fact that I agree, two things are interesting about this:
 - A. In His Olivet Discourse, Jesus clearly referred 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, like Zechariah 12:10...
 - B. Daniel 7:13-14 is in the context of when the saints would come into possession of the kingdom in the first century; notice that Daniel said, **I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a 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 just prior to the Pentecost of Acts 2)? (Cf. also vv. 23-27.)

Therefore, I believe one can "see" why I don't believe Revelation 1:7 is anymore of a support for a yet future coming of Christ than any other passage. Where is there a passage which, without doubt, teaches a "third" coming of the Son of God?

[Tony E. Denton, 2/09.]