

Law & Order, XI

Ascending in a Cloud

July 10, 2016

Are you ashamed of the Gospel?

God did not give us a spirit of **timidity**, but a spirit of **power**, of **love** and of **self-discipline**. [That's yours] So **do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord** [do not be powerless, unloving, or undisciplined] ... This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been **revealed** through the **appearing of our Savior**, Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has **brought life and immortality to light** through the gospel. ... **I am not ashamed**, [i.e. powerless, unloving, or undisciplined] because **I know whom I have believed** ... – 2 Timothy 1:7-12a NIV



We naturally share what we know and love. Movies. Restaurants. Beaches. Hotels. Cars. Recipes. *You name it; we share it!* But, **we won't share what we don't know and therefore can't love.** "But, I'm just not into reading and learning and studying." *I get it. I'm not into maps or math or scuba diving; but, if I knew where there was an incredible treasure I'd sure be into 'em!* Not as an end, but as a means. **Maybe you don't treasure it, yet;** you see it as an end in itself (reading, digging, diving); but, if and when you realize it's not an *it* but a *Whom*, and He's the only Treasure you've ever sought, *you'll be into it!*



We're weaving together Jesus' ascension. Oh boy, *where to begin?! It's late at night, not day;*¹ **His disciples are mostly teenagers,** not octogenarians. And, **He's disfigured beyond recognition.** And, despite every harmonizer jamming it at the end, **we're keeping it where scripture puts it: on the night of His resurrection.**² This is a *huge key* for harmonizing the whole.

Let's start with what the critics like to call *contradictions*.

If anyone is **ashamed of me and my words**, the Son of Man will be **ashamed** of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. I tell you [His disciples] the truth, **some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.** – Luke 9:26-27 NIV

[Matthew adds] For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then **he will reward each person** [as in, "every person"] **according to what he has done.** I tell you the truth, **some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.** – Matthew 16:27-28 NIV

¹ He leaves the Emmaus couple at 6:00 pm. (Luke 24:29) They run back seven miles, report, and eat. Jesus appears around 9:00, (John 20:19) eats, explains the scriptures, (Luke 24:45) and leads them out. Puts it 'round midnight.

² Two more appearances are recorded (John 21:14) over 40 days. (Acts 1:3)

Many say this is at the Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John; (Mat 17:1) but, it's missing the reward, the angels ... *and Nate*.

Nathanael declared, [when Jesus called him to follow] "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. [He said He saw him under the fig tree] You [Nathanael] shall see [with your own eyes] greater things than that ... you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." – John 1:49-51 NIV

Some say He's referring to a "spiritual kingdom". *Lame*. Some say it's the destruction of Jerusalem in 70^{AD}. *Blind*. Some say it was a conditional promise based on Israel embracing Him. *Deaf*. Can we just say what He says? "He will reward each person according to what he has done. [lit. *his works*]" But, according to what WHO has done: each person or the Son of Man, who now offers *life* to all according to *His works*. And, when He says: "Some who are standing here will not taste death before they see (these things)," it sounds like: "*Some of you will live long enough to see it.*" But, His point is actually that all of 'em *won't*. *Judas*. He hangs himself a couple days before the ascension. (Mat 27:3-5)

Let's read **Mark 16:19 (BLUE)**, **Luke 24:50-52 (GREEN)**, and Acts 1:9-12 (**Dark Green** because **Luke also wrote Acts**). No verse is left out or out of its order. **It's about midnight, resurrection day**. He's opened their minds to understand the scriptures. Now, they get a surprise field trip.

After he said **this**, [commanding them not to leave Jerusalem until they receive the Spirit; and saying, "*you will receive power*" and "*you will be My witnesses*" (Acts 1:4-8)] **After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them**, [rebuking them for their lack of faith and refusal to believe He had risen that day; and, calling them to be His witnesses (Mark 16:14-18)] **When he had led them out** [of Jerusalem (24:33)] **to the vicinity of Bethany**, [about 1.5 miles east of Jerusalem, on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives] he lifted up his hands and blessed them. **While he was blessing them, he left them** [lit. *He was separated from them. By who or what?*] and he was **taken up** [*epairō: lifted up; raised up; hoisted*. Luke just used this word to say: "*He lifted up His hands*"] **he was taken up into heaven** [*analambanō: to pick up, or receive up, in order to carry*. NAS & NKJ: "*received up*". The guy lifting a bale of hay raises it to the guy in the loft who receives it] **and was taken up into heaven**. [*anapherō: to offer up, bear, or bring to the altar*] before their very eyes, [Nathaniel, and the others, saw the angels ascending on Him to raise Him (like most cultures do with a hero), and descending on Him to receive Him (with a Hero's welcome)] and **he sat at the right hand of God**. [They saw that too ... *until*] a cloud hid [NKJ & NAS: *received*] him from their sight. [Sounds like the crowd encircling His throne in Revelation 5, which is made up of angels and the redeemed] They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly **two men** [*not angels*] dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? [*"We're watching Jesus come into His glory, and the Father's glory, and Heaven opening, and the angels ascending and descending on Him, and taking Him to the throne, and ... who are you?!"*]



Know what was on the southeast side? A big cemetery. Remember what else happens that day?

The tombs were opened, and **many bodies** [*polys: a great number*] of the saints who had fallen asleep **were raised**; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection **they entered the holy city** [*which holy city?*] and **appeared to many**. [*polys*] – Matthew 27:52-53 NAS

... your dead will live; **their bodies will rise**. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy
... **the earth will give birth to her dead**. [And the tomb is her womb] – Isaiah 26:18b-19 NIV



Remember Nicodemus, at night: “How can a man be born when he is old?” And said, “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” (John 3:4)



[Isaiah loves his riddles] Before she goes into labor, she gives birth; before the pains come upon her, she delivers a son. [It’s a boy! Wait. Make that: a Man! It’s “a son” of Man!] Who has ever heard of such a thing? [Those with ears to hear] Who has ever seen such things? [Those with eyes to see; who love the Lord/Word and seek Him as Treasure] Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? [Yes! Because He’s the firstborn of many (Col 1:18)] Yet no sooner is Zion in labor [with her firstborn son] than she gives birth to her children. [She’s full’o babies!] Do I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery?” says the Lord. [The Lord loves His riddles, too] – Isaiah 66:7-9 NIV



[I think the Holy City they entered was their heavenly home. At His trial] Jesus said, [to the High Priest and the council] “... you will see the **Son of Man** sitting at the right hand of the Power, and **coming with the clouds of heaven**.” – Mark 14:61-62 NKJ

The critics see this as another contradiction of the facts. But **they fail to see where He’s coming, and who He’s quoting**.



... I [Daniel] looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, **coming with the clouds of heaven**. [But, He wasn’t coming here; He was coming Home] **He approached the Ancient of Days** and was **led into his presence**. ... – Daniel 7:13b NIV



[I think everyone in Jerusalem witnessed it] Look, **he is coming with the clouds**, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. – Revelation 1:7a NIV

So, that’s how Sunday school taught us to picture it. But, it would’ve looked more like this. That’s the spot viewed from Jerusalem. **Ezekiel had a vision of God’s glory leaving His Temple in a cloud (Ezek 10:3-4) and stopping above the Mount of Olives to the east!** (Ezek 11:23)

Whenever the **cloud [of the Lord’s appearing (Lev 16:2)]** lifted from above the **Tent**, [including David’s restored Tent in Jesus’ tomb (Acts 15:16)] the Israelites set out; wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped. [Jesus is firing up the ol’ pillar of cloud! If it was visible, word would’ve spread as to what it was, and it’d sure explain why thousands were ready to repent at Pentecost!] – Numbers 9:17 NIV

This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, **will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven**.” [Why don’t we picture Him going the way we picture Him returning: with His Heavenly Host?] **Then they worshiped him [as God]** and Then they returned to Jerusalem (returned to Jerusalem) with great joy. **from the [dead, cemetery side of the] hill [Up and over to the living, olive grove side] called the Mount of Olives**, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city.

It's not a Sabbath *day*. But, on a Sabbath *walk* up to the Temple, **they sang from the 15 "Songs of Ascension,"** (Ps 120-134) including: **"We have escaped like a bird out of the fowler's snare; the snare has been broken, and we have escaped."** (Psalm 124:7) What would a great flock of escaping birds look like? Well, if they were white, like doves, they'd look like a cloud.

Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. ... Lift up your eyes all around, and see: **they all gather together**, they come to you ... **They shall ascend** ... and I will glorify the house of My glory. **Who are these who fly like a cloud**, and **like doves to their roosts?** [each person He rewards according to what He has done] ... the **work of My hands**, that I may be **glorified**. – Isaiah 60:1-8, 21 NKJ

The first mention of a cloud in scripture is tied to God's glory.



God said [to Noah, after the flood]: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, **when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant** ... The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant ..." – Genesis 9:12-16a NKJ

[Ezekiel, saw God's glory] Like the appearance of **a rainbow in a cloud** [sound familiar?] **on a rainy day**, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of **the likeness of the glory of the Lord**. [RGB. Full spectrum. Pure white light revealing its three primary components] – Ezekiel 1:28 NKJ

So, when he [Judas] had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, [meaning that He has proclaimed and declared and revealed all that He came to teach] and God is glorified in Him. [Especially, what He's heading out to do at that moment] If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately." – John 13:31-32 NKJ

Something's missing. We've got "the rainbow" "seen in the cloud" as a "sign of the covenant," but, where's Ezekiel's "rainy day"?

[Here it is! Hosea was hiding it!] After two days he will revive us; **on the third day he will restore us**, that we may live in his presence. ... As surely as the sun rises, **he will appear**; he will come to us like the [end of the] **winter rains**, like the [early] **spring rains** that water the earth. – Hosea 6:2-3 NIV

It's not a *gloomy* rain – **it's a spring rain of regeneration!** God recalls His promise to Noah, and brings a *flood* of *Living Water*. **Are you ashamed of the Gospel? Are you a bit powerless, unloving, or undisciplined? Do you need a spring rain of regeneration? Do you need to see Him more as the Treasure that He is?** Well ...

... since we are surrounded by such a **great cloud of witnesses**, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance ... Let us fix our eyes on Jesus ... who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. – Hebrews 11:16, 39-12:2 NIV