

# He Came In Like Manner

A Study of Acts 1:11

By William H. Bell, Jr.

To some, several passages have been more difficult to interpret within the A.D. 70 framework of time than others. One such passage is Acts 1:9-11. *“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, he was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.*

*And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into Heaven.”*

Briefly, we want to study three major points in this passage. (1) the cloud coming, (2) the same Jesus, and (3) in like manner. Our purpose is to honor the very words of Christ while also showing the inconsistency and contradictions in the literalistic, futuristic/ammillennial view of this text. Acts 1:9-11 fits perfectly within the A.D. 70 framework for Christ’s return.

First, the Old Covenant usage of the cloud coming of God symbolized divine presence in judgment. “The burden against Egypt. Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt; the idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst. (Isaiah 19:1).

Quite clearly, this is a spiritual, yet actual coming of the Lord. God was coming on a cloud to judge Egypt but he was not coming in a physically visible body or cloud. See Psalms 18:8ff; 97:2; 104:3; Joel 2:1, 2; Nahum 1:2ff; Zephaniah 1:14,15.

Secondly, Christ’s coming in A.D. 70 is neither upon a physical cloud nor in a physical body. It too was a spiritual coming, yet real, and actual. *“Then the sign of the Son of man will*

*appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Matthew 24:30).*

Most all Bible students agree that Christ’s coming in this text was literal, (actual) but not physical, and that it occurred before that first century generation passed, (Matthew 24:34). They must also agree that this was the SAME Jesus who was crucified and who ascended in the cloud per the Acts 1:11 passage. These things being true, then we must agree that we can have a spiritual, actual and real coming of the SAME Jesus, **in a cloud**, without either that coming or cloud being physical. Of no lesser importance is the fact that this non-physical coming was **seen** by all the tribes of Israel. It is time that we open the “eyes of our understanding,” (Ephesians 1:18). In fact, Paul exhorted the Ephesians to use their eyes of understanding in order to “know what the hope of their calling was all about. “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” (Ephesians 1:18) In so doing, we will begin to see more than what is visible to the physical eye!

Third, does one have to retain the same bodily form to be the same person? This is what is argued for a fleshly, physically, visible return of Christ. However, such would make the Bible a multitude of contradictions. In the beginning, Jesus existed spiritually with God as the Word. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God,” (John 1:1-2). In the KJV, verse 2 reads, “The Same” meaning “this one,” i.e., Christ. Verse 14 tells us, “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...**” Therefore, when Jesus changed from his pre-earthly spiritual form to his incarnate fleshly form, he was yet the same Jesus.

If then, upon his ascension, he changed from the incarnate fleshly form back to his former spiritual state as the Word, (Revelation 19:13), he would also yet be the same Jesus. This

is why what we said under point two above is correct. It clearly shows that Jesus does not have to be physical to be the same Jesus. “Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh, Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer, “2 Corinthians 5:16).

This fact can also be observed for with men. When the rich man and Lazarus died and entered Hades, they were not in the physical body, yet they were the same persons in a different form or state, (Luke 16:19-23). They were recognizable and had the ability to communicate. They could experience pain or pleasure depending on whether or not they were saved and had memory of life and experiences on earth. They could also recognize and converse with each other, were cognizant of their own personalities, yet were in some manner restricted in mobility to pass from one state to the other.

Fourth, “in like manner” is an adverbial phrase which does not modify or describes the noun Jesus as in appearance. “In like manner” modifies the verb phrase “shall so come.” Therefore, it is an abuse of the laws of grammar to use “in like manner” to refer to the appearance of Christ. Grammatically and contextually speaking, it only refers to his ascending in a cloud. Hence, a return in like manner means that he would return in a cloud. And, to repeat, there is no mandate for a physical cloud at the return of Christ.

Fifth, in further support of the above, to make the phrase “in like manner” refer to the bodily appearance of Christ would make the Bible contradict, and the inspired writers liars. John was present when Jesus ascended. He along with the other apostles saw the bodily appearance of Christ when he ascended back to heaven. However, some thirty plus years later he writes, “Beloved, now we are the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, (1 John 3:2). Since John was present at the ascension and had both saw and handled Jesus in bodily form

(1:1-2), how could he a few verses later say that it had not yet been revealed? Further, if Jesus' bodily form at the ascension was physically visible was not John and all the apostles already like him?

Sixth, if one tries to skirt around this issue by saying, "Yes but we are speaking of a glorified, immortal spiritual body," then does it not follow that for "in like manner" to refer to the appearance, Jesus would already have to be in that glorified, immortal spiritual body at the ascension? And, either way one slices the cake, the apostles would already have seen it, and Jesus would have to return in the same body. That, my friends, is a dilemma which forces John into inspired falsehood! Such cannot be.

Seventh, the phrase "in like manner" (*hon tropon*) means "...a manner, way, fashion...as, even as, like as..." Thayer's Lexicon, p.631. This phrase is used to express something in identical form, action or results. Peter so uses it to refer to the identical process in which both the Jew and Gentile would be saved, i.e., by the gospel, (Acts 15:11). Another example shows a similarity yet not one of exacting identity. "*Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith:*" (2 - Timothy 3:8). These men are generally believed to be those who by their magic withstood Moses in the palace of Pharaoh, (Exodus 7:11, 12). When Paul said "in like manner" (*hon tropon*) some resisted Timothy's preaching as Egyptian magicians resisted Moses and Aaron, it is clear that they were not performing magic as were the former.

Therefore, "in like manner" refers to the rejection of God's spokesman, Timothy as in the case of Moses. It does not demand a literalistic identical display of magic and wizardry.

Eighth, and in view of all the above, this seems to be the more consistent application of this term, "in like manner" in Acts 1:11. It neither demands a physical cloud or body of Jesus. It also eliminates making the apostles see Jesus' body, yet later deny it.

Ninth, to press the point of being identical from the phrase “in like manner” would be a scriptural disaster. For example, the ascension was private, to a group of eleven men, locally confined to Mount Olivet near the city of Jerusalem, (Acts 1:12. To literally be “in like manner” would demand a private, locally confined return of Christ to the same eleven men. (See *J. Stuart Russell’s, The Parousia*). This would place the coming within their lifetime, in that first century generation. To do so contradicts the future, physical-visible bodily return of Christ.

Tenth, the background of Acts 1:11 where Christ comes in glory, is Daniel 7:13 where One like the Son of Man, comes on the clouds of heaven. This text forms the backdrop of both Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:7 both of which mention Christ’s return in the clouds. The time frame for the fulfillment of this prophecy is clearly during the days of the 10-horned beast of Daniel (7:22-24). It is no mistake that the ten-horned beast mentioned by Daniel appears in Revelation 13:1-2, the chapter which precedes the cloud coming of the “One like the Son of Man” (Revelation 14:14) the exact wording of Daniel 7:13! Hence, the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of Acts 1:11 is fulfilled in the days of the Roman empire, the 4<sup>th</sup> beast of Daniel.

Further proof is the fact that the harlot, Mystery Babylon sits upon this 10-horned beast. Mystery Babylon is Jerusalem, for she is drunken with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (Revelation 17:6, 18:20, 24). She would experience the vengeance of God for murdering the saints and the prophets, the identical charge Jesus made against Jerusalem, Matthew 23:33-37. This judgment is undeniably that which happens before the first century generation passes away and demonstrates that the term “this generation” means the same and applies equally to both, Matthew 23:36 & 24:34. Jerusalem was destroyed by Rome in the first century (A.D.70) Luke 21:20-22 thus fulfilling Matthew 24:30 and Daniel 7:13. This forcefully meets all the demands of Acts 1:11.

Finally, Acts 1:11 must be governed by the time statements which are applicable to all “coming again” passages. It was promised for that first century generation, (Matthew 16:27-28; 24:3, 27, 30, 34). It was near or at hand, (Romans 13:11,12; Philippians 4:5; James 5:8; 1 Peter 4:7; Revelation 1:3; 22:6,10,12). It was the SAME Jesus who was crucified and who also ascended, who was coming in the clouds, (Revelation 1:7), in like manner, yet not seen physically, but spiritually discerned, in complete harmony with the word of God.