

*Worldview, Theology,  
& Culture*



*First Baptist Church, McLoud*

## Recap:

### 1. Every worldview answers the questions of Creation, Fall, and Redemption.

In other words, every worldview asks the questions:

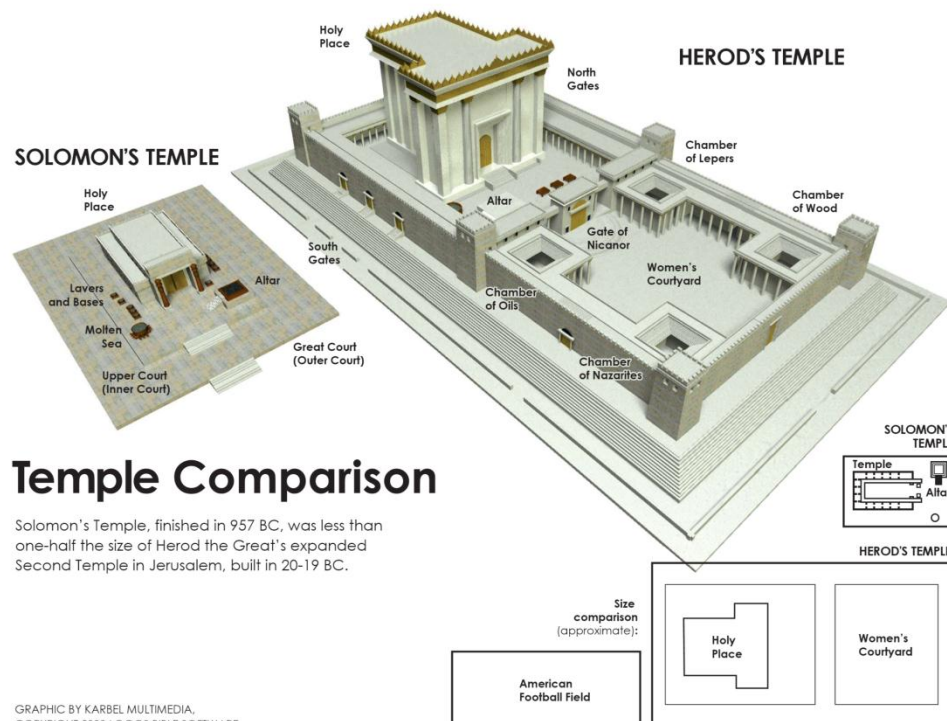
- Where did we come from?
- What is wrong in the world?
- What is the solution?

### 2. Worldviews are expressed.

- A person's worldview is expressed in their actions, words, etc.
- A culture's worldview is expressed in its movies, books, songs, etc.
- A religion's worldview is expressed in its religious ceremonies, symbols.

## Therefore, we can conclude three things...

- To understand a person's worldview, examine their actions and words.
- To understand a culture's worldview, examine its movies, books, songs, etc.
- To understand a religion's worldview, examine its ceremonies and symbols.



## *The Role of Worldview in Reading Scripture*

### **I. To Understand the Text of Scripture You Must Consider the World of Scripture.**

- Scripture did not fall down from the sky in printed form.
- God used real people to write real stories over a period of hundreds of years.
- Each writer of Scripture was unique.
  - Amos writes differently than, say, Isaiah.
  - Amos was much simpler in his writing, whereas Isaiah was much more “sophisticated.”
    - *Why do you think this was the case?*
- ***The point being:*** Scripture, being *completely* inspired by the Holy Spirit, was written by real people, who themselves lived and wrote in certain cultures, time periods, even during much political upheaval and uncertainty.
  - Though Scripture was written by fallible man does not take away from the fact that Scripture itself is *infallible*, being completely true in what it says. The Spirit, who cannot lie, worked through the writers.
- It would be unthinkable to read *Gone With The Wind* without having at least a basic grasp of the world in which the novel is based, namely the era of the American Civil War.

***Therefore, if you want to understand the full, intended meaning of the words of Scripture, get familiar with the world of Scripture.***

### **II. A Few Examples...**

- We’ve noted that if you want to examine a worldview (whether that be a person’s, culture’s, or religion’s), then get familiar with their T.V. shows, movies, artwork, and not least their words and literature!
- If there was ever a culture that emphasized the use of “words”—that is, oral tradition—it was the Jewish culture.

**a. “The Lamb of God”**

- This phrase appears twice in the New Testament (John 1:29, 36)

Let’s pretend...

*Suppose you were a Jew. And as anyone born into a good Jewish family, you grew up hearing the Jewish stories from your elders and parents. You certainly remember (and could probably recite from memory) the great stories of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and the promises Yahweh gave to them. These stories helped shape and form your identity as a Jew.*

- In light of the story above, there is little doubt why John used the phrase “Lamb of God.” He knew it would harken their ears back to previous stories.
- There is a reason he used the metaphor “lamb of God” and not, say, “the bear of God” or “the lion of God” (these animals existed at the time of ancient Israel).
  - Lambs, in the stories of ancient Israel, were used in reference to sacrifice and the cleansing from sin.
  - See Gen 22:7-8 or Gen 12:1-6

**b. “The Bread From Heaven”**

- Matt 6:11 – “Give us this day our daily bread.”
  - To be sure, Jesus is alluding to an older story where God provided daily bread.
  - The application in Matt 6:11 is to trust in God for daily sustenance, much like the ancient Israelites had to trust in God for their daily sustenance.
    - The call to pray for “our daily bread” no doubt builds upon an earlier story that ought to be considered if the Lord’s Prayer itself is to be seen for the richness it was intended!
- In John 6:31-35, we see Jesus make explicit that He Himself is what the Mannah story in Exodus 16 was, mysteriously, all along pointing toward.

c. “Coming on the Clouds”

**Note:** Just like Jesus was not *literally* “the lamb of God” in that he was a real lamb, and just like Jesus was not *literally* “the bread from heaven” in that he was a real piece of bread falling from the skies, so also Jesus “coming on the clouds” is best understood as it was understood by those in the first-century.

Just like the phrases “bread from heaven” and “lamb of God” were metaphorical and as such were meant to convey certain truths (i.e., “God will provide” and “God will save & forgive”), so also would metaphorical phrases and stories be used to convey other truths as well.

Part of the Jewish worldview was that God, despite all evidence to the contrary (such as instances of exile and judgment on disobedient Israel), would vindicate Himself and be found faithful to His people Israel for all to see. After all, it was the God of Israel—Yahweh—who was the true Sovereign Lord of both heaven and earth. The way in which the early Jewish prophets conveyed this was through apocalyptic language. That is, through word pictures.

This is sort of like us saying the events of 9/11 were “earth-shaking.” Or an older phrase: “That was the shot heard ‘round the world.” These are metaphors, not to be taken literally. But to be sure, these metaphors of ours are purposively meant to convey truth—namely, that the events of 9/11 were horrific, etc.

## So What About Luke 21:25–28?

What is meant by the phrase “*they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud*” in Luke 21:27?

### 1. Consider the World of This Text.

- This is a phrase steeped in Jewish tradition
- For example, it is used in Daniel 7:13-14

### 2. Apocalyptic Language is Used Elsewhere.

- Jer 4:23,28 and Zeph 1:15 speak of the earth “mourning” and that the heavens go “dark.” (Compare Luke 21:25)

## Luke 21:25–28

“And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

- But this has nothing to do with the “rapture,” rather it has to do with the Babylonians coming in and taking Judah into exile.

### 3. What Does “Coming On The Clouds” Mean?

- To answer this question, we must first ask, “What *did* this phrase mean to its original hearers?” That is, what would this phrase have evoked to those listening?
- The most likely answer is that it was not meant to rapture (as we know it) for the following reasons:
  - First, the same apocalyptic phrase is used in Dan 7:13-14.
    - Ironically, in Dan 7, the phrase doesn’t imply “Jesus coming down to the earth,” but rather that He is, in some sense, *going up* to God!
  - Second, the context of Dan 7 suggests that the point of this whole vision is to show that the God of Israel is the true Lord, Ruler of all things.
    - See v. 14, where it speaks of “dominion and glory and a kingdom” was handed over to the Son of Man.
    - And vv. 9-10, where God’s throne is seen in all its glory.
  - Third, this all makes sense when we compare it to the entirety of Luke 21:27:
    - “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud ***with power and great glory.***”

Therefore, the point of the apocalyptic language of “coming on the clouds” is that Jesus is Lord of all.

Whatever we make of Luke 21:25-28, it must be interpreted in light of the way this phrase had been used before in Jewish culture:

- To refer to the vindication of God as Lord—that is, vindication of who He said He was.
- This makes sense, especially when take into account the greater context of Luke 21:5-28.
- This passage is about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple at the hands of Rome.
- See Luke 21:5-9

This destruction was to show that Jesus was right all along—namely, that all worship from here on out was not to take place at a Temple, but be centered around Himself.

Consider John 4:19-25:

The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem

will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

And John 2:19-21:

Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days and I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

- Therefore, the point of Luke 21:25-28 (in light of “coming on the clouds” and context) is that Jesus will soon enough be gloriously vindicated when the temple is destroyed, thus symbolically bring Judaism to its end and make Jesus the central point of all worship.

## **Final Thoughts**

- It’s probably best to understand Jewish phrases as the Jewish people would have understood them.
- When you and I interpret Scripture, it’s always good to remember the worldview in which it was originally written, read, and taught.
- It’s a life-long task, but if you want to learn the teaching of Scripture, then take in the *whole* of Scripture, not just pieces. Strive for the *whole counsel* of God. It’s a fascinating adventure!
- Read, read, read!