

The Day Of The Lord,  
The Royal Appearing: Part 1

By

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## Introduction

In 2004, I wrote an article entitled *The Day of the Lord, The Return of the King*. Its main focus was on the Second Advent of Christ and the events associated with that Day (i.e. eschatology). I also considered the meaning of the biblical phrase 'the Day of the Lord' in its Old Testament context, showing that it was a period of divine judgment, and that there was to be an ultimate Day of the Lord for Jerusalem. At the time I originally wrote this article, I was still influenced by the system of interpretation known as Dispensationalism or Futurism, but as shown in a number of places on this site, I gradually came to see the errors of this system and I finally rejected it as a system of interpretation in about 2007. I then published a revised and expanded version of the article in 2007-2008, incorporating some adjustments in my thinking.

In the years since then, as I've continued to study these things, inevitably there have been further adjustments in how I understand the subject of biblical prophecy and eschatology, particularly as it relates to the New Testament doctrines of the Second Advent of Christ, and the resurrection and judgment program. This process of change has taken a number of years and has not happened overnight, and there have been some texts that have taken longer to adjust to in the new perspective because I was so conditioned to think of these texts previously in a more literalistic manner in accord with dispensational presuppositions (2 Peter 3 being a case in point). Due to these further adjustments, I thought it best to virtually re-write this article afresh rather than try and revise the original article again.

Even now, while I have been writing Part One during the first half of 2012, further revelation has come to me concerning the Second Advent and the resurrection. This further adjustment has been aided by reading two books. Firstly, I read the classic work *The Parousia* by James Stuart Russell, and this really challenged my 'preterist' thinking to its limit, forcing me to become much more consistent in my approach to these matters by acknowledging the 1<sup>st</sup> century context in which these things were written, more so than I was already doing.<sup>1</sup>

I've also been reading the two-volume series *The Antichrist and the Second Coming: A Preterist Examination* by Duncan W. MacKenzie, who holds a very similar view to J. S. Russell. I am indebted to both of these men for challenging my understanding of scripture, and helping me gain further enlightenment on the subject of the arrival of Christ's kingdom and the resurrection process. I will begin to reveal my own thoughts and conclusions in these matters in this study series, and I hope to deal with these things in a more piece-meal (i.e. shorter) fashion in future articles. (For further information about the recent changes to my viewpoint, see *A Further Introduction To Prophetic Studies!*)

We shall begin this series by considering some of the key Old Testament (OT) texts that talk about the Day of the Lord, and see how they relate to the New Testament (NT) texts that deal with this period of judgment. We shall also consider whether there is only one Day of the Lord, which is often viewed as being synonymous with the final Appearing of Jesus Christ, or more than one. We shall also briefly consider some of the prophecies of Daniel, which provides a chronological framework in which to place the prophecies relating to the Day of the Lord. We shall also see how these prophecies were related to the events of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, particularly 70 AD, this epoch climaxing in the ultimate Day of the Lord for Israel and

Jerusalem, along with the grand Appearing and Presence of the King himself, Christ Jesus, to establish his spiritual kingdom reign. We shall also be considering which prophetic texts in the NT still await fulfilment. In later instalments of this series (possibly up to four parts) we shall consider the subject of the Second Advent, and the resurrection & judgment process, in more detail.

This whole study may require the reader to re-think his or her present position, causing a shift in the perception of these things as they are revealed in Scripture. I think it will become evident that the common understanding of the Second Advent, as well as the true nature of Christ's kingdom, and the nature of the resurrection, will need to be reassessed. I don't claim to have all the answers, and this past year has been very humbling for me, as I've had to go back on some things that I'd previously written. Nevertheless, I hope you will join me on my continuing quest for truth.

All emphasis and underlining of texts is mine, unless stated otherwise.

## The Day of Yahweh

In the Hebrew Scriptures (the OT), the phrase '*the day of the Lord*' is more literally '*the day of Yahweh*.' In many translations though, the name *Yahweh* is replaced by the word LORD in capital letters, so that most bibles read '*the Day of the Lord*' throughout the OT. This is a common phrase that is particularly mentioned throughout the writings of the Hebrew prophets. In the NT, as we shall see, this phrase '*the day of the Lord*' is also spoken of throughout the writings of the apostles, though there is occasional variation on how it is written (for example, the day of the Lord Jesus, the day of God, the day of Christ). A correct understanding of this phrase is the key that opens up the door to accurately grasping what Jesus and the apostles prophesied and taught as recorded in the NT.

*The day of the Lord* in the OT was essentially describing a period of time when Yahweh, the God of Israel, would severely discipline and judge his people Israel with great wrath and power, and ultimately the surrounding nations would also be included in this judgment. For Israel, this judgment would always be in accord with the terms of the Law of Moses. It is evident that there have been many such judgment periods in biblical history, so the phrase 'the day of the Lord' cannot be limited to just one 'day' of judgment. Nevertheless, as I have tried to show in my article *Midrash and Prophetic Patterns*, biblical prophecy is full of succeeding patterns and cycles that lead to an ultimate fulfilment.

The NT reveals that the day of the Lord IS that ultimate Day of fulfilment. Not only is there to be an ultimate day of judgment for all mankind, it was prophesied that the Day of the Lord for Jerusalem and Judea would occur in that 1<sup>st</sup> century generation also. In fact, the NT texts link these themes together with 'the coming of the Son of Man' IN THAT GENERATION.

Two of the most notable 'days of the Lord' in the OT era were fulfilled during the Assyrian invasion and subsequent captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC, and also in the Babylonian invasion and captivity of Judah in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC. Yet later, after the restoration from Babylon, the ultimate day of the Lord for Jerusalem and Judea, and all of Palestine, came in the destruction of

Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans during the Jewish/Roman War of 66-70 AD.

It was *this* Day of the Lord that the NT prophets were most concerned with, because it was this 1<sup>st</sup> century era of wrath and vengeance that terminated the age of the 'old' covenant of biblical Judaism, after a period of over 1400 years (since the era of Moses), to be superseded by new covenant Christianity. In fact, Jesus himself showed that there was an even bigger connection in the mind of God between the generation of Jews in his own day and the ancient beginnings of the covenant people, even going back as far as Adam and his family, so that the Jewish generation of the 1<sup>st</sup> century would not only receive the just punishment of God for the murders they were about to commit, but they would receive the punishment for all the righteous blood shed on the earth (or land), as far back as the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. The temple (or house) in Jerusalem would also become desolate.

Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. **And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.**

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. **Look, your house is left to you desolate.** For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

(Matthew 23:34-39 NIV)

This was a judgment of huge proportions and holding great theological and covenantal implications, which many within the church have largely overlooked. When the vast majority of the NT texts about this Day are viewed in their 1<sup>st</sup> century context, it becomes clear that they are referring to this 1<sup>st</sup> century Day of the Lord, which was completed in 70 AD.

It could also be said that 'the day of the Lord' is an era when God judges certain kingdoms, nations and empires by using war, plague and calamity, usually by using other nations to accomplish this, as well as using the forces of nature. It is essentially God's control of, and judgment upon, the nations and empires of man, causing either their rise or their fall. As we have seen, it is also a time when God's covenant people are judged, particularly ancient Israel. As the aged Simeon told Mary, Jesus himself would cause the falling and rising of many in Israel (cf. Luke 2:34-35).

Whether the instrument of divine judgment is human or otherwise, God is the ultimate source of these displays of power, often using His angelic forces as tools of judgment. A basic reading of portions of the OT will make this evident. It has to be admitted that many of these 'historical' judgments on the surface of things appear to be natural occurrences brought about by man or nature. The real issue is whether one truly believes that these things are really divine or not, and that requires faith.

The predictions of the Hebrew prophets make it evident that these things were truly heaven-sent, but unbelief can still reign supreme in some people's hearts even in the face of such divine evidence. That being said, it is not the job of the historian or the scientist to analyse faith, therefore, they cannot prove or disprove the notion that what is observed in history and nature is sourced in, or controlled by, a divine being.

Be that as it may, Jesus confirmed the fact that the physical world is only half of the picture, and there is a whole other realm that is spiritual, and it requires faith to see it. He said to the unbelieving generation of his day,

'You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky (*concerning the weather*), yet you cannot interpret the signs of the present time.'

(Luke 12:56 & Matthew 16:3b NIV)

Even today, there are many within the Church who cannot see the spiritual 'signs' of the present time, and they see only the fleshly, worldly, physical things.

There is a battle raging between righteousness and wickedness, truth and error, love and hate, light and darkness, that goes beyond this planet alone - and the Father of all will eventually have the victory. It's where everything is heading!

Now let us consider some of the OT texts that speak of the Day of the Lord, beginning with the prophet Joel around the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC.

## The Prophet Joel

Even though it was the prophet Isaiah who was given the most details on the Day of the Lord, yet it was Joel and Amos who were most probably the first to specifically mention this era. They all ministered during the time of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. Let us consider some of these key texts beginning with Joel.

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, **for the day of the LORD is coming**. It is close at hand- a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come (*And after it, it shall not be again, unto years of generation after generation - CV*).

(Joel 2:1-2 NIV)

Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine...**The day of the LORD is great**; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?

(Joel 2:10-11 NIV)

"Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness!" Multitudes, multitudes

in the valley of decision! **For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.**

**The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine.** The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; **the earth and the sky will tremble.** But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.

(Joel 3:12-16 NIV)

And it comes afterward, I shall pour out My Spirit on all flesh...In those days I shall pour out My Spirit. And I will give miracles in the heavens above, and signs on the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, **before the coming of the Day of Yahweh, the great and fearful day.** And it comes that everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh shall escape. For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, deliverance shall come to be, just as Yahweh says; and among the survivors are those whom Yahweh is calling.'

(Joel 2:18-20, 28-32 CV)

These texts, which contain a lot of poetic hyperbole (that is, exaggerated figures of speech), were essentially prophesying the then-future invasions of the Assyrians and the Babylonians, and possibly even the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC invasion by the Seleucids under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. All of these armies successively invaded Israel from the north, causing immense destruction in the process. Not only were these days of judgment for Israel and Jerusalem, but they were also days of judgment for the nations in general. The rise of the Babylonian empire under Nebuchadnezzar in the late 7th century BC was unlike anything that had occurred before in the history of the world. It became the greatest and most powerful empire of the ancient world after it conquered the Assyrian empire. It's no wonder that God refers to this empire as a 'head of gold' in Daniel 2.

It wasn't until the days of the Roman Empire that such a mighty force ruled the whole world again, for even though Babylon was succeeded by the Medo-Persian and Greek empires respectively, Rome exceeded them all in power and extent. A number of these empires, and their subsequent rise to power to dominate the Middle East, and in particular Palestine and Judea, are being referred to in these prophecies of the Day of the Lord. Nevertheless, it becomes evident in some of the later prophets, such as Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah, that these prophecies of the great Day of the Lord were to have a greater fulfilment in relation to the days of the Messiah, which were to be the last days of the age.

One of the dominant themes in these texts is the poetic 'apocalyptic' description of the land trembling and the heavenly lights being darkened as a symbol of religious and political cataclysm, ultimately coming as destructive judgment from God. As we shall see, this has a particular relevance in relation to the events of the 1st century AD, that is, in the times of the Messiah, for it is evident from the NT that Jesus and the apostles expected the greater fulfilment of these prophecies to occur in their generation, and a number of these prophecies are quoted or alluded to in the NT, as we shall see shortly.

We must bear in mind when approaching these ancient texts that the 'cosmic destruction' language, or de-creation emphasis, was not to be understood in a wooden literalistic manner. All of these texts were using spiritual metaphors and apocalyptic motifs to describe the collapse of empires and kingdoms within history. When the empires of Assyria, Egypt, Babylon and Medo-Persia fell, the universe didn't literally collapse. And when the kingdoms of Israel, Judah and Edom were destroyed, the heavenly bodies didn't literally fall from the sky.

It is very important to grasp this concept as we read through these ancient prophecies on the Day of the Lord, because when we come to the NT, the same language is used to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and Judea, and the desolation of the temple, and the end of the Old Covenant age, which occurred in 70 AD. This also allows for the fact that there was more than one Day of the Lord spoken of in the OT, nevertheless, the NT appears to speak of a final Day, an ultimate Day of the Lord for Jerusalem and Israel, that involves the coming of the Son of Man.<sup>2</sup>

## The Prophet Isaiah and the Day of Fire

Now let us briefly turn to a few key passages on the Day of the Lord from the writings of the prophet Isaiah. He is the one who wrote the most about this awesome Day(s), and his writings also contain some of the greatest details about the Messiah. In fact, the book of Isaiah alone would give you enough information to get to grips with most of the words, phrases and images that are used in the NT in relation to the Day of the Lord and the Coming of Christ.

**Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.** Because of this, all hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt. Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame.

**See, the day of the LORD is coming**—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.

**The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.** I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.

I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. **Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger.**

(Isaiah 13:6-13 NIV)

Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world, and all that comes out of it! The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter. Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will send up a stench; the mountains will be soaked with their blood.

**All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree...**

...For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah  
and a great slaughter in Edom...

...For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause...

...there also the falcons (vultures) will gather...

(Isaiah 34:1-4, 6, 8, 15 NIV)

"I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. **For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come.**"

(Isaiah 63:3-4 NIV)

**See, the LORD is coming with fire**, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; he will bring down his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For with fire and with his sword the LORD will execute judgment upon all men, and many will be those slain by the LORD...

"As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD. "And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."

(Isaiah 66:15-16, 22-24 NIV)

There are many similarities here to that which we have considered in the writings of Joel. Some of these things have been fulfilled a number of times in Jewish history, as explained earlier. For instance, Isaiah chapters 34 and 63, in their original OT context, had to do with the judgment that would befall the land and nation of Edom (that is, Esau's descendants) in the subsequent centuries.

The name *Edom* comes from the Hebrew root for *Adam* meaning *red* or *ruddy*, and this is a figure for all mankind, particularly in the guise of being enemies of God. Esau, as opposed to his brother Jacob/Israel, is a type of the wicked, unbelieving world, including the religious hypocrites. Therefore, this speaks of a greater judgment than just literal Edom.

As we shall see shortly, Jesus used certain words and phrases from these texts, especially Isaiah 34 & 13, when he prophesied Jerusalem's' destruction in the Olivet Discourse. Any good Jew who studied the Scriptures and virtually knew them off by heart would've made the connection with these ancient prophecies. In the same way



as Isaiah 34 was originally prophesying Edom's downfall; Isaiah 13 was initially prophesying the fall of the Babylonian empire. So, in effect, Jesus was saying that Jerusalem would be judged as though she was Edom & Babylon! <sup>3</sup>

It is also worth mentioning here that in both Hebrew and Greek the word for *earth* can be translated as *land*, and in most contexts 'the land' is referring to the land of Israel or Palestine, and not the whole earth as we understand it today, that is, the globe. If this is borne in mind, then these ancient texts, along with the vision of Revelation in the NT, take on a much clearer, and more specific, meaning in relation to God's covenant people.

The main theme of these texts was that God, in His righteous wrath and fury and vengeance, would come to judge the whole land and nation of Israel, along with the surrounding nations, because of their evil, injustice, unbelief and wickedness, yet He would save a remnant as His faithful covenant people, the true Israel of God, as He contends for His heavenly Zion, the New Jerusalem. This becomes more evident in the NT. And take note of the 'fiery' description of this judgment and the carnage it would bring, along with the picture of grapes being trampled in the winepress. <sup>4</sup>

The prophet Jeremiah also had something to say about Jerusalem's ultimate Day of the Lord.

"Now prophesy all these words against them and say to them: " 'The LORD will roar from on high; he will thunder from his holy dwelling and roar mightily against his land. He will shout like those who tread the grapes, shout against all who live on the earth (or land).

The tumult will resound to the ends of the earth, for the LORD will bring charges against the nations; he will bring judgment on all mankind and put the wicked to the sword," declares the LORD...

...At that time those slain by the LORD will be everywhere—from one end of the earth (or land) to the other. They will not be mourned or gathered up or buried, but will be like refuse lying on the ground."

(Jeremiah 25:30-31, 33 NIV)

Jesus in his Olivet Discourse alluded to this last portion about the carnage of the dead when he said, '*wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather*' (Matthew 24:28-29 NIV). Concerning the carnage of this Day, see also Revelation 19:15-18; 14:19-20 & 6:3-4. <sup>5</sup>

Before we consider the NT texts on this subject, let us consider a few prophecies from the prophet Malachi, who was the last official prophet of the 'old covenant' era.

"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. **Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple;** the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

**But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.**

(Malachi 3:1-2 NIV)

"Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, **and the day that is coming will set them on fire,** " says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act," says the LORD Almighty...

**"See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.** He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction."

(Malachi 4:1-6 NIV)

Take careful note of the following details that these texts are describing in a poetic manner in relation to 'the great and dreadful day of the Lord'; a Day of the Lord's coming, & appearing, & presence;

- A fiery judgment that will burn like a furnace, destroying the arrogant evildoers of Israel like trees without fruit, so that no root or branch (priestly succession) is left to them;
- A sudden coming of the Lord to his temple to judge Israel and the land;
- The wicked evildoers will be destroyed, while the faithful righteous ones will survive to shine like the sun and to rule over the wicked;
- And all this will be preceded by a messenger, the prophet Elijah, who will prepare the way for the Lord, speaking a message of repentance to turn the hearts of the people back to God;
- And if the message is ignored or rejected, God will strike the land with a curse bringing total destruction in accordance with the Law of Moses.

## John the Baptist

At the beginning of the NT we are introduced to a prophet called John the Baptist. The main thrust of his message, which he addressed to the Jewish religious leaders and people of Israel, was concerning '*the coming wrath*' and the call to '*Repent, for*

*the kingdom of the heavens is near'* (Matthew 3:1-12). This message, in relation to the coming kingdom, was in full accord with the messages of the Hebrew prophets that came before John.

John himself fulfilled the role of the great prophet-messenger, spoken of by Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3-5) and Malachi (quoted above), who was to be sent in front of the Messiah to prepare the people of Israel for His arrival. It is evident from the prophecies in Malachi that this 'messenger' would also appear *before* the Day of the Lord so as to *prepare* the way for the Messiah, and give the people time to repent. This messenger was also equated with the prophecy of the coming of the prophet Elijah before the Day of the Lord, also from Malachi.

Jesus himself stated that John the Baptist fulfilled the role of this prophesied 'messenger and prophet,' and that he was the Elijah that was to come (cf. Matthew 11:7-15 and 17:10-13). This proves the point that not all prophecies were to be understood in a literal sense, for John was not literally Elijah. Jesus also stated that this 'Elijah' would have some part to play in a restoration or renewal of all things, which of course related to the coming messianic kingdom and the new creation.

Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

(Matthew 17:11-13 NIV)

During his ministry, John warned the Jewish leaders against the coming wrath and fiery judgment that would occur through a baptism of fire from the Messiah himself. He was prophesying the great and fearful Day of the Lord.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! **Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?** Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. **The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.**

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, **gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**"

(Matthew 3:7-12 NIV)

During his ministry, Jesus also taught about these things concerning the coming Day of the Lord for Israel and Jerusalem, a day that would bring fiery judgment upon those who had not entered the spiritual kingdom of the heavens.

"A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. **Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**"

(Matthew 7:18-19 NIV)

**"I have come to bring fire on the earth (or land), and how I wish it were already kindled!** But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!

(Luke 12:49-50 NIV)

It was this very judgment that Jesus was initially talking about in some of his parables, which he often described as the 'Gehenna of fire.' And he used the figure of a harvest to describe the end of the old covenant age and the judgment that would take place at that time as his spiritual kingdom was fully established in the earthly realm.

"The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. **As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.** The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. **They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear..."

"...This is how it will be at the end of the age. **The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**"

(Matthew 13:39-43, 49-50 NIV)

The parable of the tenant farmers gave much clarity to this aspect of Jesus' teaching concerning the coming day of the Lord and the fiery judgment, so that the chief priests and Pharisees knew that Jesus was talking about them. Again, notice the vineyard/grape/harvest motif.

"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted **a vineyard**. He put a wall around it, dug **a winepress** in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. **When the harvest time approached**, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

"The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

"But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' **So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.**

"Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

**"He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,"** they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop **at harvest time.**"

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

"The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

**"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.** Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed."

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them.

(Matthew 21:33-45 NIV)

This parable in particular revealed that these events were related to the 1<sup>st</sup> century judgment upon Jerusalem. This judgment upon the wicked tenants and the transference of the kingdom of God to new tenants was to occur at the harvest time, at the end of the age. And this very subject is the theme of Revelation 14.

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, **and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head** and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, **for the harvest of the earth (or land) is ripe.**" So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "**Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe.**" The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them **into the great winepress of God's wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city**, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

(Revelation 14:14-20 NIV)

By the time of 70 AD, when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, old covenant Judaism had lost the inheritance of the kingdom of God, and it was given to the true Israel of God, the New Covenant Church; the followers of Jesus. This occurred at the end of that age, when the harvest was ripe for judgment (against the Jewish nation), and there was also a harvest of salvation (for the true Israel of God). As we shall see shortly, these things are clearly based on the visions of Daniel. In a greater sense, the true Israel of God, the new nation who would produce the fruit of the kingdom, was composed of the whole remnant of God's covenant people from the 'old testament' era who would be raised from the dead to inherit the kingdom together with the disciples of Jesus at Christ's Parousia (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; Hebrews 11:39-40; 12:22-24.)

## The Olivet Discourse and the Parousia

During His final week of teaching in Jerusalem, Jesus prophesied that the temple in Jerusalem would be totally destroyed, along with the city itself, and that this destruction would be witnessed by the generation living at that time (i.e. within about 40 years). *This was to be a pivotal and climactic event in the history of the Jewish people, and a fulfilment of all biblical prophecy concerning them.* That is, after a period of over 1500 years, particularly since the time of Moses, Israel and the Old Covenant were to pass away, to be fully replaced by a New Covenant Israel in Jesus the Messiah (i.e. biblical Christianity and the Christian Church).

Take careful note of these texts.

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

(Luke 19:41-44 NIV)

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then

" 'they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!"

and to the hills, "Cover us!" ' For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

(Luke 23:27-31 NIV)

"The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city."

(Matthew 22:7 NIV)

"And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. **I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.**

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. **Look, your house is left to you desolate.**"

(Matthew 23:35-38 NIV)

The prophecies of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 & Luke 21 (and also portions of Luke 17 & 19) describe in some detail the events that were to take place within a generation of the ministry of Jesus and the apostles. I have written a

detailed study on this subject elsewhere entitled *The Prophecies of the Olivet Discourse*, so I will only highlight a few key points here.

The Olivet Discourse was essentially Jesus' explanation to his disciples about the then-future events of the 1st century AD, revealing to them what was to come during the next 40 years ('this generation'), particularly as it applied to Jews and Christians in the land of Palestine; by the end of which time Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed in the Jewish/Roman War of 66-70 AD.

Jesus made it very clear that these events would be the 'days of vengeance' and wrath and fiery judgment of the Day of the Lord to fulfil all that is written in the OT.<sup>6</sup>

"Now whenever you may be perceiving Jerusalem surrounded by encampments, then know that her desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee into the mountains, and let those in her midst be coming out into the country, and let not those in the country be entering into her, **for days of vengeance are these, to fulfill all that is written.** Yet woe to those who are pregnant, and to those suckling in those days; for there will be great necessity in the land **and indignation on this people.**"

And they shall be falling by the edge of the sword and shall be led into captivity into all nations. And Jerusalem shall be trodden by the nations, until the eras of the nations (or times of the nations) may be fulfilled."

(Luke 21:20-24 CV)

Yet he also declared that this Day of the Lord would be 'the coming of the Son of Man' in judgment upon Israel and Jerusalem. This coming was to embody the 'royal presence' of Christ that would also be a 'revealing' of his true nature and power as Head of the kingdom of God. That is, in the same way as Yahweh 'came down' to His ancient people in the past in what was described as His 'appearing' and 'presence,' so Christ would visit his new covenant people at his own 'coming' & 'appearing' & 'Parousia' (i.e. presence.) Again, as we shall see shortly, these things are based on the visions of Daniel.

So what *was* Jesus referring to when he talked about 'the coming of the Son of Man?' Let us find out.

"So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible (Gk. 'appearing') even in the west, so will be the coming (Gk. 'parousia') of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather."

(Matthew 24:26-28; see also Luke 17:24 NIV)

Firstly, in this text Jesus begins by declaring that His Presence or Coming (the Greek word used here is *parousia*) as the Son of Man will be just like the lightening flashing (or appearing) across the whole sky. Lightening was very much a symbol and sign of heavenly judgment, so this would be an event that involved sudden judgment in the heavens. Yet the event itself was not going to involve his visible bodily presence on earth, in the sense of being open to normal human sight, for if anyone said, "There he is" or "Here he is" they were told not to believe it! So as

much as it may appear that Jesus was saying that his coming would be visible to the whole world, he was actually saying the opposite! Many would witness this event, but not in the way most people thought it would occur; it was to be a spiritual, heavenly occurrence.<sup>7</sup>

So Jesus was again confirming that many false prophets would come declaring the deliverer was 'out in the desert' or 'here in the inner rooms', but the followers of Jesus, the true Messiah, were to ignore these false claims (cf. Matthew 24:23-26). His 'coming' to that generation would be very evident – yet not in a normal observable sense (cf. Luke 17:20-25). It was truly to be a heavenly occurrence.

And, of course, there were such false messiah figures declaring such things in the decades that followed! They proclaimed that God would deliver Jerusalem from the Romans, but they did not heed the words of Yahweh Himself spoken through His Son. There wasn't to be any deliverance for the city or the temple or the land. Judgment and wrath was coming, and it was firmly decided, as Daniel had foretold (*...desolations have been decided* - Daniel 9:26-27).

## The Greek Words

There are primarily four Greek words that are used throughout the New Testament to refer to the 'coming' of Christ in one sense or another. The words themselves do not automatically carry the meaning of 'the Second Advent' for that is a matter of context and interpretation; nevertheless, the overall picture presented throughout the NT is that these words are generally referring to the Day of the Lord, the coming of the Son of Man, the Return & Second Appearing of Christ.

The following word meanings are primarily taken either from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, or the Keyword Concordance of the Concordant Literal New Testament.

1. The first is the Greek word **epiphaneia**. This is usually translated as **Advent** or **Appearance**. In virtually every instance in the NT where this word is used, it is in the context of Christ's Second Advent. There is at least one instance where it is referring to his First Advent (2 Timothy 1:10). This word essentially means 'a visible appearance due to the shining of light' that is, a manifestation of some kind, whether physically, metaphorically or spiritually. Apparently in classical Greek it was sometimes used in a special sense to describe the appearances of the Greek Gods. This is where the English word 'epiphany' has its roots. It could also describe the appearance of an enemy to an army on the field of battle.

The root word *phan\_* signifies *shining*, and it is used in a number of Greek words, including variations of the Greek words for *manifest*, *appearing* and *revealing*.

2. The Greek word **erchomai** is the common word for **come** or **coming**, meaning 'to move nearer from another location.' It is used a number of times in the context of Christ's Coming at the end of the age, but it is also used of other 'comings of Christ' that were in spirit or in vision. There are three examples of this that stand out in the NT:



a) The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was a 'coming of Christ' because He promised the disciples that He and the Father would come to them and make their home in them (John 14:23).

b) Christ appeared to Paul a number of times, and the first appearance was in great glory that blinded him. These were personal post-resurrection 'comings of Christ' that occurred *after* the Ascension.

c) The Apostle John saw the Day of the Lord and the Coming of Christ in a spiritual vision recorded in the book of Revelation. Jesus had previously indicated that John would remain alive to see His coming, which must've occurred in the 1<sup>st</sup> century (cf. John 21:21-24). John was evidently one of the living believers who would remain alive till the coming of the Lord (cf. Matthew 16:27-28; 1 Thessalonians 4:15).

Therefore, even though there are other 'comings of Christ,' the NT clearly teaches that there was to be a Coming of the Son of Man (or Advent or Appearance) at the end of the old covenant age. We shall consider these texts later.

There are some who teach that the NT doesn't actually say anything about a Second Advent or Coming of Christ - but I would beg to differ on that one. For instance,

But now he has appeared (*phaneroo*) once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; **and he will appear (*opsomai*) a second time**, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

(Hebrews 9:26-28 NIV)

In this passage, the writer of Hebrews (writing in the 60's AD) was saying that Jesus the Messiah is the ultimate Chief Priest who has made atonement for the people by sacrificing Himself, and thereafter He has entered heaven itself, the Holy of Holies, to appear in the very presence of God. He will yet be seen a second time, by coming out of the Holy of Holies, to bring salvation to those who are faithfully waiting for Him. This text is clearly talking about Christ's First Advent *and* His Second Advent.<sup>8</sup> The Greek word *phaneroo* translated 'appeared' in this text is another word sometimes used in relation to Christ's Second Advent, and it carries the meaning of 'manifestation.'

3. The Greek word **parousia** is usually translated as the Coming or **Presence** of Christ. The word essentially means 'to be beside' or 'presence,' that is, it is the opposite of absence. It is used of Paul in this way in Philippians 1:26-27. The word **parousia** is used of Paul's presence with the believers upon his planned arrival, and it is contrasted with the word **apousia** which was describing his absence from them at that time.

The Parousia of Christ is essentially describing the royal presence of the King himself in establishing God's kingdom in the earthly realm with power and

judgment. Hence, it refers to the Day of the Lord, the Second Appearing, and the 'coming of the Son of Man.' It is especially describing Christ's manifestation in power, glory and might in relation to the spiritual messianic kingdom.

The word *parousia* was often used in the ancient world for describing a royal visit, where, for example, the emperor would go on a state visit to make an appearance to the people, often being met by an official 'welcoming committee' first to escort him to the city. This imagery is possibly being used by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, though with a little ironic twist to it.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the word itself can either be understood as describing a spiritual presence or a visible bodily presence, depending on the context; that is, it is not restricted to just the physical realm of flesh and blood.

There are many OT texts that speak of God's 'presence' or 'coming' in the form of historical judgments, even though He did not physically or bodily appear in a worldly, fleshly sense (e.g. Isaiah 19:1; Psalm 68:1-2, Micah 1:3-4; Nahum 1:5-6). In many of these texts, the Hebrew word often translated as 'presence' (*paniyim*) is literally 'the face of' - and yet they have nothing to do with the physical, bodily presence of God at all that is normally observable to the human senses! It is therefore biblically correct to apply this meaning to the 'royal presence' or *parousia* of Christ.

4. The Greek word **apokalupsis** is used a number of times to describe the **Unveiling** or **Revelation** of Christ in the Day of the Lord. It is often rendered as revelation or manifestation. It essentially means 'that which is uncovered or made known, having been previously hidden.' The English word 'apocalypse' comes from this word. It is used of things and people, and particularly the uncovering (or revelation) of spiritual things. It is ultimately used of Christ's unveiling or revealing or manifestation at the coming of the Son of Man, in the Day of the Lord.

It is also used in Romans 8:19 to describe 'the unveiling of the sons of God,' which was to coincide with the time of Christ's Unveiling at the full establishment of his kingdom. The book of Revelation is just that - the revealing or uncovering or unveiling of Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

All of these Greek words are used interchangeably in the New Testament to describe the Second Advent of Christ and the judgment-coming of the Son of Man in the Day of the Lord. And the primary Old Testament text that prophesies about this coming of the Son of Man is in the Vision of the Beasts in Daniel 7.

### The Key Visions of Daniel

Before we consider Daniel chapter 7 specifically, let me give a somewhat brief summary of the key visions in the book of Daniel that deal with the events of the Day of the Lord and the establishing of the messianic kingdom of God. I've written about these things extensively elsewhere, but this is an extremely important subject worth mentioning here, as it becomes the key to correctly understanding the New Testament texts and 1<sup>st</sup> century events.

There are four visions that directly deal with this subject, and together they form a chronological framework for understanding the key events surrounding the arrival of the Messiah as the Son of Man, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple & the end of the Old Covenant age, and the subsequent establishing of the kingdom of the heavens. They are found in Daniel chapters 2, 7, 9 & 12. Although the actual phrase 'the day of the Lord' doesn't appear in these visions, it is very evident that the culmination of the visions has to do with this very important Day.

In **Daniel 2**, in the vision of the Great Image, we are shown the rise of four earthly kingdoms that would have a great impact on God's covenant people, Israel. They were Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and Rome. It is implied that the ten toes of the image were ten kings of the fourth kingdom of Rome. This becomes more explicit in Daniel 7. The vision then reveals, "*In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed,*" and it would succeed the previous kingdoms after crushing them 'like chaff in the wind.' The kingdom of God, represented by a rock, would become a huge mountain and fill the whole earth.

In **Daniel 7**, in the vision of the Four Beasts, the same outline of these four kingdoms, followed by the kingdom of heaven, are revealed again with further details that are more specific. The ten horns of the fourth beast (Rome) are shown to be ten kings or rulers. Another horn, a little one, also rises up after three of the previous rulers had been subdued. This little horn/ruler was to wage war against the holy people of God for a period of three and a half years (a time, times and half a time) and would defeat them.

At the end of this period, the heavenly court would give the authority of the kingdoms of the world to the people of God, (the focus here ultimately being on the *spiritual* powers and authorities rather than just merely the human kingdoms). This universal kingdom was to be given to the Son of Man at the time of a great judgment of God in heaven where multitudes stood before the fiery throne.

Then in **Daniel 9**, in the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (or Sevens), a total of 490 years was given (if taken literally), towards the end of which time the Messiah would arrive, the Anointed Ruler or Prince, to establish a covenant with many and to cause the temple sacrifices and offerings to cease. As a result of the Messiah's death, the rebuilt city of Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed, accompanied by abominations, desolations and war. This would mark the end of the Old Covenant system.

Six conditions are given (in verse 24) in relation to the people of Israel and the holy city of Jerusalem that were to be fulfilled by the end of this prophesied period: to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy one (or place).

Finally, in **Daniel 12**, in the latter portion of the final vision begun in chapter 10, Daniel was told that, at the time of the end, Israel would experience an unprecedented time of distress or tribulation that would last three and a half years (time, times and half a time), which would result in the shattering or breaking of the Jewish nation, and the complete fulfilment of all these things. The promise was also given that the true people of God, written in the book of life, would be delivered, and Michael, the great prince, would arise to protect them.

In verses 2-3 & 13, in one of the only places in the OT where resurrection is explicitly mentioned, a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous is said to occur at the end of this prophesied period, and Daniel is promised that at the end of the days (that is, by the last day of this prophesied period) he would rise to receive his allotted inheritance. A judgment of the righteous and the unrighteous is implied in the description of the resulting rewards given: "everlasting (*age-abiding*) life" or "shame and everlasting (*age-abiding*) contempt."

Now if the reader is at all familiar with the NT writings, as well as with the Jewish and Roman history of that era, you may recognise many of these details as being related to Jesus of Nazareth and the events of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. And that is because (as I emphatically believe) these things *were* actually fulfilled in the events leading up to 70 AD. In fact, I am convinced that the details of Jesus' Olivet Discourse, and the vision of Revelation, were prophesying these very things, which were said to be near, at hand, and soon to occur, just as Jesus had declared: before '*this generation*' had passed away.

And the one thing that is evident from these visions in Daniel is that the messianic kingdom of God would begin at this time, along with a new creation, once the old covenant order had passed away. This was exactly what the vision of Revelation was prophesying also (especially if chapters 18-20 are to be understood as being in chronological order).

I believe the historical and biblical evidence is strong enough to accept the interpretation that '*the great tribulation*' upon Israel, which would last for three and a half years, was fulfilled in the Roman/Jewish war of February/March 67 to August/September 70 AD – a period of three and a half years. At the end of this war, the city of Jerusalem and the temple were completely destroyed, officially ending the Old Covenant era.

Amazingly, this occurred when the tenth ruler of Rome, Vespasian, was the new emperor (beginning the count with Julius Caesar). That would then make his son Titus the little horn/ruler, as he was the one who actually destroyed the temple, after laying siege to the city, and he was directly involved with the whole war.<sup>10</sup> The three of the ten horns/rulers who were previously subdued were Galba, Otho and Vitellius.

If this is the case, and I believe there is good reason to accept that it is, then the coming of the Son of Man, the Day of the Lord, and the second appearing of Christ – in fact, all the events prophesied in Daniel's visions - must've occurred at this time as well, somehow. Let us investigate by first considering the coming of the Son of Man in Daniel 7 in more detail.

## The Son of Man in Daniel 7

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

(Daniel 7:13-14 NIV)

Earlier in this chapter, in verses 9-10, Daniel was introduced to a heavenly courtroom scene where Yahweh, as the Ancient of Days, was seated on His chariot-throne of judgment, with fire issuing from before Him. On the face of it, it appears as though this scene is ultimately depicting the Judgment of the Great White Throne of Revelation 20, the ultimate judgment day for all mankind. In fact, I am now persuaded that this is indeed the case.<sup>11</sup> In accordance with the context of the coming of the Son of Man, it is declaring the judgment of God revealed in the momentous events of the 1st century AD. This is confirmed by what follows in verses 13-14.

The vision reveals the coming of a human, a son of man, the Messiah, being surrounded by the clouds of heaven, that is, the glory clouds of God, often called the Shekinah Glory. He is seen to be approaching the Father, the Ancient of Days, and is led into God's Presence in the heavenly court. He is then granted the authority and power and glory of God to rule over *all* nations, resulting in people from *all* nations worshipping (or serving) Him. This worship is not just confined to Israel, but it engulfs the whole world.

Unlike those kingdoms before Him, His kingdom will never be destroyed nor will it be passed on to another. This is the universal kingdom of God, the kingdom of the heavens, established by the Messiah as the Son of David, and the Son of Man. This event is described as 'the coming of the Son of Man' - and this particular 'coming' is not in the direction of earth but of heaven. Take a look at the text again and see - this particular 'coming' is the heavenly coronation of the King of kings before the throne of the Ancient of Days. At this time, His kingdom is fully established and the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, would be vindicated through the events of Jerusalem's judgment. This is, in fact, '*the sign of the Son of Man in heaven*' (cf. Matthew 24:30).

Now it is very evident from the writings of the New Testament that these things were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah. He received all authority and power after His resurrection when He ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Jesus Himself, when He was before the Sanhedrin, applied Daniel 7:13 to Himself, and He often spoke of 'the coming of the Son of Man' applying it to Himself. Here are some scriptures that testify to this.

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. **There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light...**

...While he was still speaking, **a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"**

When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, **until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.**"

(Matthew 17:1-2, 5-9 NIV)

This event of the Transfiguration of Christ highlights certain aspects of the Son of Man vision in Daniel, particularly in the description of Christ's appearance and the Glory cloud. The voice from the cloud, which was representing God the Father, alluded to at least two messianic texts - Psalm 2:7 and Deuteronomy 18:15. These things were identifying Jesus as the Son of Man, as well as the greater Son of David.

"For the Son of Man is going to (*Gk. about to*) come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. **Truly I tell you, 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)

The first sentence here appears to be referring to the Second Advent of Christ and the judgment associated with that Day (and that is, in fact, the case), yet Jesus goes on to emphasise to his disciples that *some* of them would not experience death before they would see the coming of the Son of Man in his kingdom! The parallel passage in Mark 9:1 says that they would see '...the kingdom of God come with power.' That means that the Second Advent of Christ and the judgment, along with the coming of Christ's kingdom in power, was to occur in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD! This is one of the strongest passages in the NT that forces the interpreter to this conclusion, especially in light of Daniel 7.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, Jesus was clearly telling his disciples that some of them (at least two), but not all of them, would witness the coming of the Son of Man and his kingdom in power and glory in their generation! That is, this 'Coming' was to occur in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD within the lifetime of the apostles. This was a clear allusion to the vision of Daniel - and the fulfilment must've occurred in 70 AD when the Old Covenant officially ended. There isn't any other event in the 1<sup>st</sup> century that satisfies the fulfilment of these words of Jesus in line with Daniel 7.

Jesus was also alluding to Isaiah 40:10, which speaks of the Lord coming with power to rule and to judge, bringing his reward with him to repay his covenant people for what they had done, whether those deeds be good or evil (cf. Isaiah 62:11; Revelation 22:12). Now if this coming of the Son of Man and his kingdom, spoken above, was one and the same as the arrival of the kingdom of God with power, then it follows that this is one and the same event as the Son of Man coming in his Father's glory with his angels, and then rewarding each person for their deeds. That is to say, this *is* describing the second appearing of Christ, followed by the resurrection and judgment of Israel and the nations. And some of the disciples of that generation were told that they would remain alive until that day came!

On that same theme, here is what Jesus said to the Jewish Sanhedrin while he was on trial before them.

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. **"But I say to all of you: In the future (lit. from now on) you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."**

(Matthew 26:63-64 NIV)

Jesus was alluding to two powerful messianic texts here: Psalm 110:1 & Daniel 7:13. This declaration was loaded with meaning, and obviously if it wasn't true it would be the height of blasphemy; and that is how the high priest understood it, as blasphemy. Jesus was also declaring to the Jewish leaders of his day that *they* themselves would see the fulfilment of Daniel's vision of the heavenly enthronement of the Son of Man – and *He* would be the one to fulfil it! Jesus' messianic mission would be vindicated for all to see.<sup>13</sup> The kingdom of God would be established, and the Jewish leaders couldn't prevent it.

Here are a few more texts that are proclaiming the same thing, *after* Christ's resurrection had occurred. And take careful note that the first text is recorded as having occurred *before* the Ascension.

Then Jesus came to them and said, **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.** Therefore go and make disciples **of all nations...**

(Matthew 28:18-19 NIV)

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, **"I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."**

(Acts 7:55-56 NIV)

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead **and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.** And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

(Ephesians 1:19-23 NIV)

THIS is what Jesus was talking about when he spoke of His coming as the Son of Man within 'this generation.' His kingdom would be established with great power and glory, and this power would be manifested in accordance with the curses of the covenant of the Law, dealing out vengeance to those who had rejected the covenant and who were filling the land with lawlessness and murder, wickedness and blasphemy. The Great Shepherd was going to begin His rule with 'a rod of iron' (cf. Psalm 2; Revelation 19:14-16) and those who were corrupting the land would be destroyed by the wrath of God, and the dead would be judged (Revelation 11:17-18).

As a stark reminder, here are some portions of the curses of the Law to show the reader that the Olivet prophecies of Jesus, as well as the vision of Revelation, were based on these covenantal curses – and hence the fulfilment of them in the events of the Jewish War with Rome in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you...

...The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth. **Your carcasses will be food for all the birds and the wild animals, and there will be no one to frighten them away...**

...All these curses will come on you. They will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the LORD your God and observe the commands and decrees he gave you. They will be a sign and a wonder to you and your descendants forever. Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the LORD sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you.

The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand, a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young. They will devour the young of your livestock and the crops of your land until you are destroyed. They will leave you no grain, new wine or olive oil, nor any calves of your herds or lambs of your flocks until you are ruined. They will lay siege to all the cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down. They will besiege all the cities throughout the land the LORD your God is giving you.

Because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege, you will eat the fruit of the womb, the flesh of the sons and daughters the LORD your God has given you. Even the most gentle and sensitive man among you will have no compassion on his own brother or the wife he loves or his surviving children, and he will not give to one of them any of the flesh of his children that he is eating. It will be all he has left because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of all your cities. The most gentle and sensitive woman among you—so sensitive and gentle that she would not venture to touch the ground with the sole of her foot—will begrudge the husband she loves and her own son or daughter the afterbirth from her womb and the children she bears. For in her dire need she intends to eat them secretly because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of your cities...

...Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods—gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known. Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life. In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning!"—because of the terror that will



fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see. The LORD will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.

(Deuteronomy 28:15, 25-26, 45-57, 64-68 NIV)

## To Be Continued in Part 2

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> J. Stuart Russell was a British Congregational minister in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and he is best known for his renowned book *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*, first published anonymously in 1878, and then with his name added in 1887. It has been re-published by Baker Books in 1983 & 1999. In the 1999 edition, the respected Bible teacher, R. C. Sproul, added a Foreword. Sproul had published a book in 1998 entitled *The Last Days According To Jesus* in which he assessed the conclusions of Russell's position. Here is an extract from Sproul's Foreword to *The Parousia*.

"I am persuaded that, in the main, Russell is essentially correct. I do not endorse his work entirely because I think he goes too far, as does "full preterism." As Russell himself acknowledges, there remains a blessed hope for the people of God... My views on these matters remain in transition, as I have spelled out in *The Last Days According To Jesus*. But for me one thing is certain: I can never read the New Testament again the same way I read it before reading *The Parousia*. I hope better scholars than I will continue to analyze and evaluate the content of J. Stuart Russell's important work."

When I first read Russell's book, like Sproul, I too thought that Russell's position went too far, into what appeared to be a full preterist position (though in actuality it is still technically a partial preterist position). But now, after a lot of thought, meditation and some re-reading of the book, I too have 'gone too far' for I am now convinced that Russell's position is essentially correct. There is one particular interpretation of a text where I strongly disagree with Russell, and that is his view of 1 Corinthians 15:22-28 where he understood 'the end' as referring to the end of the old covenant age in 70 AD. In this particular instance, I believe he was in error. I see the End or Consummation that Paul is talking about here as being the end of Christ's reign and the 'order's' of the resurrection. This is still future.

I find it very interesting, though, that Sproul stated openly that his views remain in transition. Therefore, he must still be open to go further!

Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. has also been greatly influenced by Russell's book. The 1999 edition of *The Parousia* contains the following entry by Gentry on the back cover.

"Although I do not agree with all the conclusions of *The Parousia*, I highly recommend this well-organized, carefully argued, and compelling written

volume. It is one of the most persuasive and challenging books I have read on the subject, and has had great impact on my thinking."

<sup>2</sup> Jesus himself had indicated that the writings of the Hebrew prophets (OT) would be fulfilled by, and in, the events of 70 AD (cf. Luke 21:22; "*These are days of vengeance to fulfil all that is written.*") This was based in particular on Daniel 9:24 ("*to seal up vision and prophecy*") and 12:7 ("*When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.*") The apostle Paul also spoke of 'the ends of the ages' as having already arrived on the Christians of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11; see also Hebrews 9:26-28).

<sup>3</sup> This has great significance when interpreting the vision of Revelation. In chapter 11:8, there is mention of '*the great city, which is figuratively (or spiritually) called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.*' This is a clear reference to old covenant Jerusalem as 'the great city' that was likened to Sodom and Egypt. In chapters 17-18 this 'great city' is symbolically referred to as 'mystery Babylon,' the great prostitute that was about to be judged for her adulteries and murders.

Cf. Ezekiel 30 & 32:1-10 for details of a Day of the Lord against ancient Egypt, which contains similar apocalyptic language to the above texts; and cf. Ezekiel 16 concerning the allegory of Jerusalem as an adulterous wife, and her connection with Sodom, Egypt and Babylon in particular.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Revelation 14:17-20; 6:12-17; Luke 3:16-17; 12:49.

<sup>5</sup> For further OT references to the various Day's of the Lord, see the following: concerning Israel & Judah & Jerusalem – Micah 1, Amos 8, Zephaniah 1, Zechariah 14, & Isaiah 2-4; Egypt – Ezekiel 30, 32; Assyria – Isaiah 30-31.

<sup>6</sup> See note 2 above

<sup>7</sup> It has to be admitted that the few texts that talk of Christ's Parousia being seen by humans do have their difficulties when attempting to expound these things from a preterist perspective (e.g. Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Revelation 1:7.) I plan to consider this topic later in this series. As far as the lightening motif is concerned, though, every other instance in the NT that refers to 'lightening' is referring to spiritual, heavenly occurrences. Note especially Luke 10:18 and Matthew 28:2-4; the first refers to the fall of Satan due to Christ's victory, and the second has to do with an angel (or heavenly messenger) that appears at the tomb of Jesus at His resurrection. The book of Revelation also contains many references to lightening, usually referring to heavenly judgment.

<sup>8</sup> I used to understand this text as saying that in the same way as Jesus was *manifest* in His first advent, so shall he be *seen* a second time; that is, a future public appearing in a worldly sense. I have since had to seriously re-think this common understanding of the nature of Christ's 'second advent.' In fact, this text in Hebrews is the only place in the NT that explicitly refers to a 'second appearing' of Christ, though others clearly imply a 'return'. Yet the one thing that dawned on me recently when examining this text afresh was that the only people who could see Jesus a second time were those who had seen him the first time! Only the 1<sup>st</sup> century generation that witnessed Christ's first advent would truly see him a second time, as he'd promised to come back for them (cf. John 14:3).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of The Son of God*, (SPCK, 2003), pp. 217-218; & *Surprised By Hope* (SPCK, 2007), pp. 141-145. N. T. (Tom) Wright suggests quite strongly that Paul was using the 'visiting emperor' metaphor in 1 Thess. 4:16-17. He thus interprets the 'meeting' of God's people with Christ at his *parousia* as the first stage of a process that involves the people escorting Christ back to earth from whence they came. I disagree with

Wright here, as I do not see this whole scenario clearly expressed in the biblical text; and I therefore think that he is pushing this particular metaphor too far. The irony here is that Christ is actually being viewed as visiting and rescuing his people so as to 'escort' *them* back to *his* 'place' via an 'ascension' of their own (hence, 'the clouds' motif)! (Cf. John 14:3; Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 11:12).

<sup>10</sup> In previous articles, I had put forward the belief that Vespasian was the little horn/ruler, but I've since made some adjustments after reading the two-volume series *The Antichrist and the Second Coming: A Preterist Examination* by Duncan W. MacKenzie. I very much agree with a large percentage of Mackenzie's position, and I hope to expound further on these things in the future. Some biblical scholars like J. S. Russell and Ken Gentry interpret these prophecies as being fulfilled in Nero. Nevertheless, I think Vespasian or Titus fulfils the details of these prophecies more than Nero does; and after re-examination of these things, Titus even more so.

<sup>11</sup> I hope to deal with this issue later in this series. J. Stuart Russell, in his book *The Parousia*, made a good case for connecting the reign of 'the first resurrection' saints in Revelation 20:4-6 with the judgment scene in 20:11-15 (pp. 519-525). I didn't accept this view at first, but after further re-examination, I now believe Russell was correct. Duncan W. MacKenzie, along the same lines, makes a strong case for interpreting the judgment scene of Revelation 20 as being one and the same as the judgment scene in Daniel 7 (*The Antichrist and the Second Coming: A Preterist Examination - Volume II: The Book of Revelation*, pp. 362-380, Xulon Press, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> In the quote from Matthew 16, the Greek word *mello* is used in verse 27. The word *mello* refers to an action or event that is 'about to be;' 'on the verge of' occurring. Even though the word is essentially describing an intention or purpose, in virtually every place in the NT it is referring to something on the verge of happening, which generally did occur at some point in time, whether almost immediately or sometime later (I've personally checked all these occurrences). There are many places in the NT where *mello* is used, but some translations have obscured its true meaning in certain instances.

Matthew 16 is a perfect example. The NIV, quoted above, reads 'going to' come, which doesn't signify a time limit, whereas the Interlinear Greek-English New Testament by George Ricker Berry reads correctly 'about to come' (as do some literal versions). This indicates that this event was on the verge of happening, though no one knew the day or the hour. This translation & interpretation is confirmed by what follows when Jesus indicated that some of the disciples would remain alive to witness the event. There are other similar instances to this in the NT that I may refer to later in these studies.

<sup>13</sup> The heavenly enthronement of Jesus occurred almost immediately after His resurrection, which was confirmed in a more visible sense at His Ascension before the Apostles (cf. John 20:17; Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:6-12; 2:31-36; Revelation 12:5). The following years saw a transition from the old covenant age to the new covenant age. This was completed by 70 AD in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, just as the prophecies of Daniel had indicated (cf. Daniel 9:26; 12:7). This transitional era leading up to 70 AD was also the time when Satan had been dethroned and 'hurled to the earth' to eventually cause 'the great tribulation' (cf. Revelation 12:7-13; 20:1-3). Many of the NT epistles refer to this initial defeat of the spiritual powers of darkness, which had been caused by the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, while a few texts refer to the then-approaching 70 AD victory (e.g. Romans 16:20; Hebrews 12:27-29).

This coming of Christ in judgment on His enemies in 70 AD was the official public declaration on earth of the verdict of the heavenly court, which vindicated Jesus' ministry and spiritual position. The kingdom was then given into the hands of the saints (lit. *holy ones*), establishing the Christians as the new Israel of God. It was also at this time that Satan, the

spiritual adversary, was 'bound' and the 'millennial' reign of Christ officially began (Revelation 20:1-6; 11:15-18). This marked the official beginning of the messianic kingdom reign in the earthly sphere, and the new creation order of the resurrection and judgment.

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