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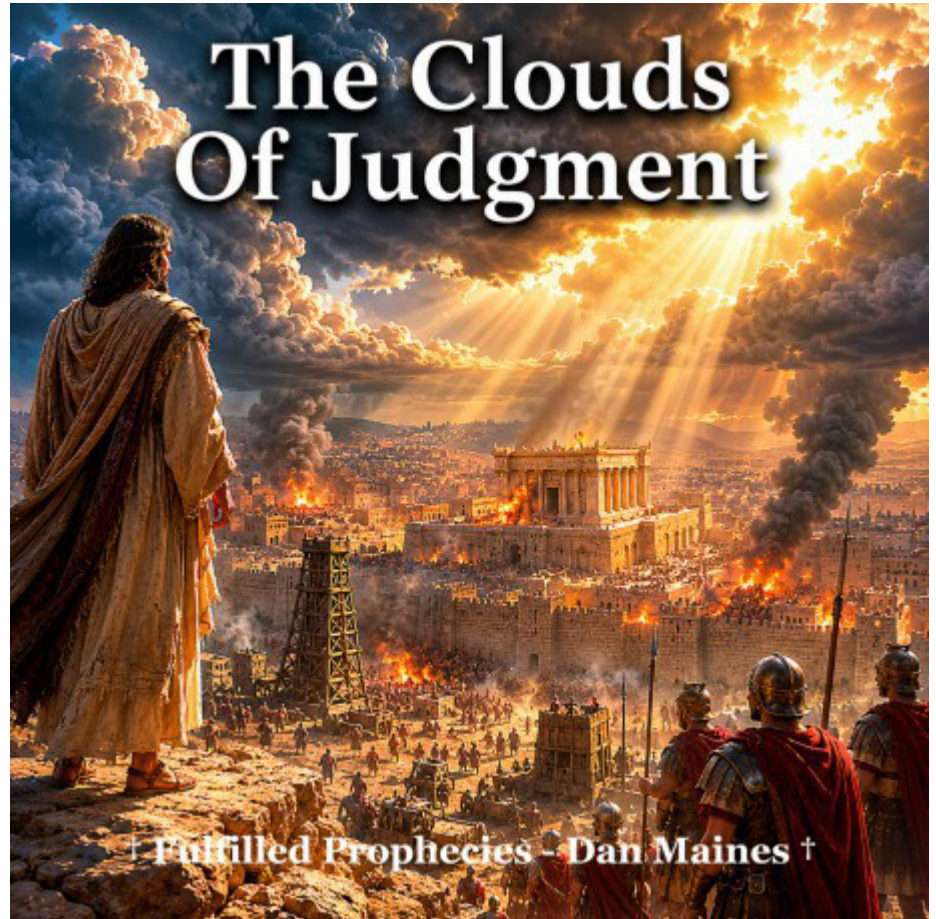
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The Clouds Of Judgment



By Dan Maines

The Clouds Of Judgment

Introduction

† Many people read the phrase coming on the clouds and automatically imagine a visible physical descent from the sky. But throughout the Old Testament, cloud coming language was consistently used as symbolic judgment language against nations, cities, and covenant breakers. (Isaiah 19:1)

† God was said to come on clouds against Egypt, Babylon, Edom, Assyria, and Israel, yet nobody saw a literal giant figure physically riding through the sky. The language described divine judgment, power, destruction, and covenant intervention. (Nahum 1:3)

† When Jesus used the same language in Matthew 24 and Revelation 1, the Jewish audience already understood this prophetic imagery from the Old Testament scriptures. (Daniel 7:13-14)

Isaiah 19:1

The pronouncement concerning Egypt:

Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and is about to come to Egypt;

The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence,
And the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.

† Isaiah was not describing a visible bodily appearance of God floating through the sky over Egypt. This was prophetic judgment language against Egypt. (Isaiah 19:1)

† God judged Egypt through armies, warfare, fear, and national collapse, yet scripture described it as Jehovah coming on a cloud. (Isaiah 19:1-4)

† This is one of the clearest proofs that cloud coming language was symbolic covenant judgment terminology already established long before the New Testament. (Psalm 104:3)

Nahum 1:3

The LORD is slow to anger and great in power,
And the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.
In the gale and the storm is His way,

And clouds are the dust beneath His feet.

† Nahum spoke against Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire using storm and cloud imagery. God's judgment was pictured through apocalyptic language. (Nahum 1:1)

† The clouds being the dust of his feet does not describe a literal giant walking through the atmosphere. It's prophetic imagery showing God's sovereign power over nations. (Nahum 1:3)

† The Old Testament prophets constantly used cosmic and heavenly imagery to describe earthly judgments. (Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7-8)

Psalm 104:3

He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters;
He makes the clouds His chariot;
He walks on the wings of the wind;

† God riding upon clouds was already an established biblical metaphor centuries before Christ came in judgment against Jerusalem. (Psalm 104:3)

† The language communicated majesty, authority, judgment, and heavenly rule, not a visible physical descent to earth. (Deuteronomy 33:26)

† Ancient Israel understood cloud imagery as divine action in history. That's exactly why Caiaphas reacted so strongly when Jesus applied this language to Himself. (Matthew 26:64-66)

Psalm 18:7-12

Then the earth shook and quaked;
And the foundations of the mountains were trembling
And were shaken, because He was angry.
Smoke went up out of His nostrils,
And fire from His mouth was devouring;
Coals burned from it.
He also bowed the heavens down low, and came down
With thick darkness under His feet.
He rode on a cherub and flew;
And He sped on the wings of the wind.
He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him,
Darkness of waters, thick clouds.
From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds,
Hailstones and coals of fire.

† David used dramatic heavenly imagery to describe God's intervention and judgment in history. (Psalm 18:7-12)

† Nobody believed God literally bent the sky downward and visibly flew through the atmosphere on a cherub. This was prophetic judgment language. (Psalm 18:10)

† The prophets regularly described covenant judgment with heavenly collapse imagery, earthquakes, fire, clouds, and darkness. (Isaiah 13:10)

Daniel 7:13-14

I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a son of man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.

And to Him was given dominion,
Honor, and a kingdom,
So that all the peoples, nations, and populations of all
languages
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.

† Notice carefully that the Son of Man came with the clouds to the Ancient of Days, not from heaven down to earth. (Daniel 7:13)

† This was an ascension scene showing Christ receiving kingdom authority after His resurrection and ascension. (Acts 1:9-11)

† Jesus later used this exact language before the high priest and connected it directly to the coming judgment upon that generation. (Matthew 26:64)

Matthew 24:30

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

† Jesus was quoting directly from Daniel 7 and applying established Old Testament judgment language to Jerusalem's coming destruction. (Daniel 7:13-14)

† The tribes of the land mourning points back to Israel and the land of Judea, not every individual on the planet. (Zechariah 12:10-14)

† The Greek word often translated earth can also mean land, referring specifically to the land of Israel within the covenant judgment context. (Matthew 24:30)

† Christ came in covenant judgment against apostate Israel through the Roman armies in AD 70, exactly as He warned that generation. (Matthew 23:36-38)

† Just as God came on clouds against Egypt without a visible bodily descent, Christ came in judgment against Jerusalem using the same prophetic language. (Isaiah 19:1)

Matthew 26:64-65

Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? See, you have now heard the blasphemy;

† The high priest understood exactly what Jesus was claiming. He recognized the cloud-coming language of Daniel 7 as divine authority and judgment language. (Daniel 7:13-14)

† Caiaphas tore his garments because Jesus claimed the heavenly authority of the Son of Man who would judge that covenant system. (Matthew 26:65)

† Jesus told the very men standing before Him that they would see this judgment authority manifested. (Matthew 23:36)

Revelation 1:7

BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

† John connected this prophecy directly to those who pierced Christ, which was the first century generation responsible for His death. (Matthew 23:35-36)

† The phrase tribes of the land again points to Israel and echoes Zechariah's judgment prophecy against Jerusalem. (Zechariah 12:10-14)

† Revelation was not introducing a brand new meaning for cloud coming language. It was continuing the Old Testament prophetic pattern of covenant judgment imagery. (Isaiah 19:1)

Historical References

† Josephus recorded terrifying signs, armies, chariots in the clouds, and catastrophic judgment surrounding Jerusalem before AD 70, showing how apocalyptic imagery surrounded the destruction of the city. (Matthew 24:29-34)

† Eusebius connected Christ's warnings in Matthew 24 directly to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. (Matthew 24:1-3)

† Early Christians understood the judgment against Jerusalem as the fulfillment of Christ's covenant warnings upon that generation. (Matthew 23:36)

How It Applies To Us Today

† We must stop forcing modern literalism into ancient prophetic language. (Isaiah 19:1)

† Understanding Old Testament cloud imagery unlocks many misunderstood New Testament passages. (Daniel 7:13-14)

† Jesus fulfilled exactly what He promised concerning the judgment coming upon that generation. (Matthew 24:34)

† The consistency of scripture proves the Bible interprets itself when we allow Old Testament language to define New Testament prophecy. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

Q & A Appendix

Q: Does coming on clouds always mean judgment in scripture?

A: In prophetic language, cloud coming consistently represented divine authority, judgment, power, and covenant intervention against nations. Isaiah 19:1 shows God coming on clouds against Egypt without a visible bodily appearance.

Q: Did the Jews understand cloud language symbolically?

A: Yes. The prophets had used this imagery for centuries. That's why the high priest accused Jesus of blasphemy when He claimed the Son of Man cloud-coming authority of Daniel 7:13-14.

Q: Why does Matthew 24 say all tribes would mourn?

A: Jesus was echoing Zechariah 12 concerning the tribes of Israel mourning during covenant judgment upon Jerusalem. The context was Judea and the temple, not the modern globe.

Q: Was Jesus physically visible in AD 70?

A: The judgment was visible through the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, just as God's judgments were visible against Egypt and Babylon in the Old Testament. The cloud-coming language represented divine judgment and authority.

Q: If Jesus did not physically appear in the sky in AD 70, how was His coming fulfilled?

A: His coming was fulfilled the same way Yahweh came against Egypt in Isaiah 19:1, through visible covenant judgment carried out in history. Jerusalem's destruction proved Christ was reigning in authority exactly as Daniel 7 declared.

Q: Why do many people believe Christ's coming had to be physically visible to the entire world?

A: Many people read modern ideas into ancient prophetic language without comparing scripture with scripture. Throughout the Old Testament, God was said to come on clouds in judgment against nations, yet those events were fulfilled through historical judgments, not by a visible bodily appearance in the sky. Jesus used that same established covenant judgment language in Matthew 24 and Revelation 1. (Isaiah 19:1; Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 24:30)

Q: If cloud-coming language was symbolic in the Old Testament, why do many interpret it literally in the New Testament?

A: Because many approach New Testament prophecy without first understanding how the Old Testament prophets used apocalyptic imagery. The Bible consistently uses heavenly signs, clouds, darkness, earthquakes, and falling stars as symbolic language for covenant judgment and the collapse of nations. Jesus and John continued using the same prophetic language already established in scripture. (Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel

32:7-8; Revelation 1:7)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Isaiah 19:1; Nahum 1:3; Psalm 104:3; Psalm 18:7-12; Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 24:30; Matthew 26:64-65; Revelation 1:7

† Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 6; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3

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