

Christ's Cloud Coming

[Mark 13:26-27](#)



All Christians believe in the Second Coming of Christ. To deny the **fact** of the second coming is to deny the inspiration of Scripture. All Christians believe in the Second Coming but they do not all agree on the timing or nature of the Second Coming. The majority opinion of the **nature** of the second coming is that it will be a physical, visible, bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth that every eye will see. There is no question that this is the view held the majority of Christians today, but is it what the Bible teaches? Where does the Bible teach that Jesus Christ will return to earth in a physical, bodily manner? Some would say that Acts 1:11 teaches a physical bodily second coming. Let's look at it:

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.¹⁰ And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them;¹¹ and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:9-11 NASB)

His ascension was physical and visible, so won't His return be also? It says He will come in "[just the same way](#)." The words, "just the same way" are the Greek phrase, "*hon tropon*." By examining the usage of "*hon tropon*" in the New Testament, it is clear that this phrase does not mean: "exactly the same in every detail," but has the idea of: "similar in some fashion." For example look at how this phrase is used in:

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a (*hon tropon*) hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! (Luke 13:34 NASB)*

Did Jesus want to gather Jerusalem in exactly the same manner as (*hon tropon*) a hen gathers her chicks? I don't think so. So in "just the same way" doesn't mean: "in exactly the [same manner](#)." That His coming was not to be "exactly" as He left in Acts 1:11 is made clear by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Notice what Matthew says about His coming:

"For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matthew 24:27 NASB)

This is obviously different than what Acts 1:11 describes. So which way is it, visibly in a cloud or like lightning? But Paul describes Christ's coming this way:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. (1 Thessalonians 4:16 NASB)

This is not “*just the same way*” as Luke describes in Acts. And what about:

and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸ dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 NASB)

This is also different than Acts 1:11. Here we have angels and flaming fire dealing out retribution we don't see this in Acts. Notice what John says in:

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. (Revelation 19:11 NASB)

John's got Jesus coming on a horse not a cloud. So how can anyone say that Jesus is going to come **exactly** how He left in Acts 1:11? When you compare Scripture with Scripture it just doesn't add up.

The emphasis of Acts 1:11 is that Christ's coming would be a **cloud coming**, just as He left in a cloud, so He would come in the clouds. This is an apocalyptic symbol for coming in judgment. Now that fits all the other Scriptures that we looked at about His coming. When Luke says that Jesus was taken up and “*a cloud received Him out of their sight.*” He was not telling us what the weather was like that day but rather the part that the Father played in the ascension of Jesus. We will examine the idea of cloud comings later in more detail.

There is no Scripture that explicitly teaches that Jesus would return in a physical, bodily fashion. An understanding of the language of Scripture will help us see that His coming was not to be physical.

The study of [Mark 13](#) could change your eschatological paradigm if you let it. I believe that this is one of the most significant chapters in the Bible on the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Understanding this chapter will change your view of the **nature** of the second coming.

In verses 21-23 of Mark 13, Jesus seems to stress that His coming will not be a physical bodily coming. If someone says, “*Here is Christ, or there,*” they were not to believe them. Why? If His coming was to be physical and bodily, why would someone not be able to say, “He is over there?” They were not to believe that because His coming would not be physical and bodily and yet it would be plainly seen. How would they see His coming? They would see it in the judgment that was to fall upon Jerusalem.

"But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, ²⁵ AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. (Mark 13:24-25 NASB)

If you are not familiar with the **apocalyptic language** of Scripture, you will not understand what Christ is saying here. This language is common among the prophets. In apocalyptic language, great commotions and judgments upon earth are often represented by commotions and changes in the heavens. **This language is not to be taken literally.**

As we continue our study of Mark 13, we come to verse 26 and 27 which tell us what the second

coming will be like:

"And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. (Mark 13:26 NASB)

When is "then?" "Then" refers to "those days" of verse 19. After the [fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70](#), which was the great tribulation. Then they will see the **Son of Man** coming in clouds. The wording of this passage refers us back to the expression, "The Son of Man," found in Daniel 7:13:

"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. ¹⁴ "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14 NASB)

Here we see Jesus, the Son of Man, coming to the Ancient of days and receiving His everlasting kingdom. This prophecy was fulfilled at the Ascension:

"And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS UPON HIS THRONE, ³¹ he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. ³² "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. ³³ "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. ³⁴ "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, ³⁵ UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR THY FEET.'" ³⁶ "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified.'" (Acts 2:30-36 NASB)

The kingdom received from the Ancient of days is no other than the kingdom symbolized by the stone cut out of the mountain:

"You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them. ³⁵ "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Daniel 2:34-35 NASB)

The kingdom was given to Christ at His ascension, and this was made manifest to all Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Jerusalem's destruction was a sign that Jesus Christ was the Messiah of God.

But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see THE SON OF MAN

SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." (Matthew 26:63-64 NASB)

Here Caiaphas, the high priest, asks Jesus if he is the Son of God, the Messiah. Notice the similarities between Jesus' answer to Caiaphas and what he said in our text:

"And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. (Mark 13:26 NASB)

Jesus told Caiaphas, *"You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven."* He told His disciples, *"They will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory."* It is obviously the same event in both passages. Notice Caiaphas' response to Jesus' statement:

Then the high priest tore his robes, saying, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; (Matthew 26:65 NASB)

What did Jesus say that was blasphemy? Caiaphas understood that Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah. In order to understand what Jesus is saying, we need to understand the idea that is behind "coming in the clouds."

God's **"coming on the clouds of heaven"** is a symbolic way of speaking of His **presence, judgment and salvation**. All through the Scriptures God was coming "on clouds," in salvation of His people and judgment of His enemies.

Coming on the clouds indicates His **Presence**:

And it came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. (Exodus 16:10 NASB)

And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I shall come to you in a thick cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe in you forever." Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD. (Exodus 19:9 NASB)

And the LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. (Exodus 34:5 NASB)

And the LORD said to Moses, "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. (Leviticus 16:2 NASB)

Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the seventy elders. And it came about that when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do it again. (Numbers 11:25 NASB)

Coming on the clouds also indicates **Salvation**: In Psalm 18, David speaks of his deliverance from Saul using apocalyptic language:

He bowed the heavens also, and came down with thick darkness under His feet.¹⁰ And He rode upon a cherub and flew; And He sped upon the wings of the wind.¹¹ He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him, Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.¹² From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds, Hailstones and coals of fire. (Psalms 18:9-12 NASB)

Coming on the clouds also indicates **Judgment**: The idea of God's coming in the clouds is associated with His judgment of His enemies:

The oracle 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 19:1 NASB)

We know from chapter 20 that God used the Assyrians as instruments of His wrath on Egypt, yet it says, "The LORD is riding on a swift cloud..., Egypt will tremble at His **presence**." God came to Egypt in judgment. His presence was made known in judgment. But it was the Assyrians who were literally present. Similar language is used of Nineveh's fall:

The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, And the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet. (Nahum 1:3 NASB)

Mountains quake because of Him, And the hills dissolve; Indeed the earth is upheaved by His presence, The world and all the inhabitants in it.⁶ Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, And the rocks are broken up by Him. (Nahum 1:5-6 NASB)

We know that Nineveh was destroyed, not by a literal coming of God out of heaven on the clouds, but by the invading armies of the [Chaldeans](#) and Medes in 612 BC.

When Jesus said He would come on the clouds, He was using the apocalyptic language of the prophets to identify himself as the Messiah, the Judge. [Caiaphas](#) reacted the way he did because he knew that only God came on clouds, that was a claim to deity. He knew that Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah of Daniel 7. Notice what Jesus says to Caiaphas in:

And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." (Mark 14:62 NASB)

Here it says that Caiaphas will see Him "*coming with the clouds of heaven*" while He is "*sitting at the right hand of the Power.*" If this is literal and bodily, how could He do both at the same time? This is clearly apocalyptic language. His coming with the clouds is proof of His sitting on the right hand of power.

"And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. (Mark 13:26 NASB)

We must see that this is not a physical, bodily coming of Christ, but a coming in judgment. The idea of “seeing” here is not physically seeing but “to recognize, to be aware, to perceive.” The destruction of Jerusalem would cause Israel to recognize that Jesus was indeed the Son of man and the Messiah.

John Gill (1809) a premillennialist said, *“He shall appear, **not in person, but in the power of his wrath and vengeance, on the Jewish nation which will be a full sign and proof of his being come.**”*

The prophetic language of Scripture clearly shows that the Lord coming on a cloud speaks of His coming in judgment. And that is exactly what it means in the New Testament when it speaks of Christ coming on clouds. People saw Him come in judgment, but it was not a visible appearance of Christ in person. Jesus predicted both the destruction of Jerusalem and His [parousia](#) in the same context. Since Jerusalem was destroyed, just as He said it would be, why would it be hard to believe that He came, just as He said he would? The destruction of Jerusalem was as substantial a manifestation of Christ's power and glory, as if He was himself to come visibly in the clouds of heaven.

“And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven. (Mark 13:27 NASB)

Does the Lord, all of a sudden, drop the apocalyptic language and begin to speak literally? I think not. This also is apocalyptic language. The most important thing that I want you to see here is that whatever this means, it happened 2,000 years ago. We know this is true because Jesus said:

“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. (Mark 13:30 NASB)

The generation that He was speaking to was to experience all that He had spoken of, including the gathering together of the elect. In Matthew's parallel account he adds that this gathering was called by a great trumpet:

“And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and **THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER** His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. (Matthew 24:31 NASB)

“And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven. (Mark 13:27 NASB)

The trumpet was used to gather or call the people of Israel together:

“Make yourself two trumpets of silver, of hammered work you shall make them; and you shall use them for summoning the congregation and for having the camps set out. (Numbers 10:2 NASB)

The trumpet was to be blown on the [Day of Atonement](#) in the jubilee year to signal the release of slaves and debt. I can't prove it but there is some indication that A.D. 70 was a jubilee year.

'You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land. (Leviticus 25:9 NASB)

We can get some background on the trumpet and gathering from Isaiah:

And it will come about in that day, that the LORD will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel. ¹³ it will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown; and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem. (Isaiah 27:12-13 NASB)

Isaiah says that when the trumpet of God sounds, the outcasts of Israel would be gathered. This is a reiteration of an earlier Messianic promise of the regathering of the [remnant](#):

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. ² And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³ And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; ⁴ But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. ⁵ Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist. (Isaiah 11:1-5 NASB)

Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea. ¹² And He will lift up a standard for the nations, And will assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:11-12 NASB)

Here we see the idea of gathering from the four corners of the earth. So a time was to come when God would gather His people together.

John Gill said, *"The Jews say, that 'in the after-redemption (i.e., by Messiah) all Israel shall be gathered together by the sound of a trumpet, from the four parts of the world. Zohar in Lev. 47:1."*

Jesus' disciples would be familiar with the language of Scripture and would no doubt remember Isaiah's promise when they heard Jesus speak of the gathering at the sounding of the trumpet. We get a little more insight on trumpets and gathering from other passages where this same language is used:

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:51-52 NASB)

Notice what happens here, the trumpet sounds and the dead are raised. This is a reference to the dead in Christ. The dead are raised into the presence of God—they are gathered into His presence. The living put on immortality. Is this a different trumpet than the one Isaiah spoke of? No! The trumpet was sounded to gather God’s people. This is a spiritual gathering into the presence of God, this is the resurrection! This is the same idea found in Mark 13:27 and Matthew 24:31, [the trumpet](#) is sounded and the elect are gathered, or resurrected. So when Christ comes in the clouds and destroys Jerusalem He also resurrects or gathers His elect.

Daniel connects the resurrection and the destruction of Jerusalem:

"Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.² "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:1-2 NASB)

When will [this resurrection](#) take place? Daniel tells us it happen as the time of Jerusalem’s destruction:

And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed. (Daniel 12:7 NASB)

“All these events” includes the resurrection of verse 2. Daniel is told that the resurrection will be when the power of the holy people (the Jews) has been completely shattered.

We also see this same idea of gathering at a trumpet in:

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 NASB)

Notice that Paul does not say, *“THOSE WHO ARE ALIVE when Christ comes”* ; he said, *“WE WHO ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN UNTIL THE COMING OF THE LORD.”*

Again, we see the same idea, the trumpet sounds and the elect are gathered. *“The Lord Himself will descend from heaven,”* the word “descend” was commonly used with priest’s decent out of the temple to announce that atonement had been completed. The idea of, *“being caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,”* could be referring to the idea we looked at earlier of clouds representing God’s presence. This is a picture of God’s elect being brought into His presence in the Holy of Holies. Is Paul talking about a literal [rapture](#) here? I don’t think so!

The parallel text in Luke helps us to see that this gathering is a time of redemption:

"And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. ²⁸ "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Luke 21:27-28 NASB)

The word "redemption" here is [apolutrosis](#), (ap-ol-oo'-tro-sis) which means: "a releasing effected by payment of ransom." These New Testament believers were saved by the blood of Christ:

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, (Ephesians 1:7 NASB)

The payment had been made at Calvary, but until their high priest returned, their redemption was not complete:

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30 NASB)

They were sealed awaiting the day of redemption, which happened at the second coming when the Lord gathered His elect into His presence.

When Israel gathered each year for the Passover, the culmination event was the Day of Atonement. The High Priest entered the temple's Holy of Holies to offer the atoning sacrifice on behalf of the people. And while the priest was in the Holy of Holies, the people anxiously awaited his return. No return, no atonement.

The new covenant parallel to this is Jesus. He is our atoning sacrifice and our High Priest. The generation to whom Jesus spoke was the congregation waiting for His return. [No return, no atonement, no redemption.](#)

For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; ²⁵ nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷ And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Hebrews 9:24-28 NASB)

Jesus ascended out of the heavenly Holy of Holies signifying that our salvation was complete and bringing us into the presence of God. This could not be accomplished until the earthly Jewish temple had been destroyed.

The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing, (Hebrews 9:8 NASB)

The Jews were continually reminded, by the physical presence of the tabernacle, that they were not allowed to enter into the presence of God.

The words *“while the outer tabernacle is still standing”* might better be translated, “while the first tabernacle still has any standing” - while the Old Covenant was still in force. **As long as the Old Covenant was still in effect men did not have access to the presence of God.** Prior to Jesus' second coming, at which He destroyed the temple and the Old Covenant, no one went to Heaven. Jesus said:

“And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man. (John 3:13 NASB)

Prior to Jesus' second coming in A.D. 70, all who died went to a holding place of the dead and waited for the atoning work of Christ and the resurrection from the dead. Until Christ paid for man's sin, he could not go into God's presence.

The destruction of the Jerusalem and the temple was Christ's coming in power and glory. Mark 13 makes it clear that the great gathering of God's people took place when the earthly temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. No longer would the dead be confined to the waiting place called Hades. No longer would sin death separate us from God. This is what [the resurrection](#) was all about; the dead in Christ were resurrected into the presence of God. Those alive at that time were given immortality:

For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:53 NASB)

To have immortality is to be gathered into His presence. In His presence is life!

This all happened in A.D. 70. Believers today don't need a resurrection because Jesus said, *“Whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”* We have immortality, and when we physically die, the only change that takes place is that we loose the body.

This message was preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on June 24, 2007. Media #371.

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