

Dominion And Glory And A Kingdom

by David C. Grabbe

Forerunner, "Prophecy Watch,"

As the illegal trial of Jesus of Nazareth dragged on, the prosecution struggled to make its case that the humble Carpenter and Teacher deserved death. It even sought false testimony, and many witnesses came forward, but the chief priests, the elders, and the council could not make any charges stick (Matthew 26:59-62). Finally, in a desperate bid, they demanded that Jesus tell them whether He was the Christ, the Son of God (verse 63).

Jesus could have remained silent, as He had before. Instead, He gave the prosecutors what they were seeking. He helped the prosecution by speaking the evidence that would condemn Him:

Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?" They answered and said, "He is deserving of death." (Matthew 26:64-66)

Christ's testimony of "the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" draws on two Old Testament passages that identify the Messiah. Before examining them, we must consider the fulfillment of what Jesus said, especially the timing.

His Second Coming?

His words sound like He speaks of His return because of His reference to "coming on the clouds." Scripture contains abundant references to Christ's return on or with clouds (Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; I Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 1:7), and Christ's words at His trial seem to match them.

If so, it would mean that *these specific leaders* [“you”] would see Christ coming on the clouds of heaven. His words would pose a significant challenge if He were prophesying of His return because they indicate that these same Jewish leaders will be resurrected at His second coming. Scripturally, that is a rather difficult case to make. God will resurrect only those who are Christ’s at His return, but the leaders to whom He was speaking were resisting Him with everything they had! So, either Christ’s audience on that fateful night will be resurrected at His return, or this interpretation is wanting. We will see that we can understand Christ’s words another way.

Verse 64 contains a few words to note. First, “hereafter” is a reasonable translation, but several Bible versions instead use the phrase, “from now on.” This latter translation suggests an event or condition that begins shortly, almost immediately.

Second, Christ says that His audience would “see” the Son of Man. The Greek word *optomai* typically means “to perceive with the eyes,” indicating physical sight. However, Greek contains an exception to this meaning: When the word depicts seeing something in the future, the meaning is “to comprehend” (see *The Companion Bible*, Ap. 133. I. 8. a).

For example, Luke 3:6 says, “. . . all flesh shall *see* the salvation of God” (emphasis ours throughout). Salvation is not seen with the eyes but comprehended with the mind. Similarly, Romans 15:21 uses *optomai* for a future event in which it is paralleled with understanding: “. . . but as it is written: ‘To whom He was not announced, they shall *see*; and those who have not heard *shall understand*.’” Jesus says in Matthew 26:64 that, “from now on,” His audience would *comprehend* or understand or know “the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power.”

Third, in verse 64 is the word “coming,” which means “arriving at a location.” Notice, though, that no location is specified. It is logical to assume this refers to His return to earth, as other verses do, but the Bible also shows another arrival, which we will see. For now, remember that this verse specifies no location (nor do the parallel verses, Mark 14:62 and Luke 22:69).

Coming Where?

As mentioned above, Christ's declaration to the Jewish leadership comes from two passages. The first is Psalm 110:1, in which David writes, "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" By referring to Himself as sitting at the right hand of the Eternal, Christ claimed this Messianic psalm. Understandably, this made the blood of the chief priests, the elders, and the council boil!

Moreover, applying Psalm 110:1 to Himself implies that His present adversaries were the enemies the psalm mentions. So, not only were the Jewish leaders the Messiah's enemies, but they also would become His footstool! In response, the high priest tore his clothes—which God had forbidden him to do in Leviticus 21:10.

Christ's legitimate boldness does not end there. He also drew upon Daniel 7, which contains Daniel's dream of the four great beasts rising from the sea. Within his dream is an inset that is not part of the general flow of the prophecy but clarifies a portion of it. The dream focuses on the four beasts and their judgments, but it contains an inset of another vision that provides the backstory to explain the dream's end:

I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

The opening phrase, "I was watching in the night visions," indicates a separate vision and marks the inset's beginning. Then, the prophet exactly describes what Christ says about the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven. Notice, though, that this vision is not about Christ coming to earth but to the Ancient of Days!

This vision, then, answers the question of location in Matthew 26:64. During His trial, Jesus was not talking about coming back to earth but arriving

before the Father. Once He came to the Ancient of Days, He would receive dominion, glory, and a Kingdom. When Jesus told the Jewish leadership that, from now on, they would comprehend Him sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds, they caught His reference to this prophecy and His claim to be the Messiah, the Heir of the Kingdom.

When does this inset take place? Within the flow of the chapter, this inset appears after the fourth beast is killed (Daniel 7:11), yet the events within the inset happen long before, providing the backstory for understanding the origin of the divine Kingdom that will replace all other governments at the end of the age. The clouds of heaven had already brought the Son of Man to the Ancient of Days—when Jesus ascended to the Father for acceptance. At that time, Christ received dominion, glory, and a Kingdom. Overall, Daniel’s prophecies describe the Kingdom’s future establishment on earth, but here we see a flashback to Christ’s ascension.

In I Peter, the apostle draws on Daniel’s vision twice, repeating that to Christ belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever (I Peter 4:11; 5:11). John uses the same phrase in the introduction to the book of Revelation, writing, “to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever” (Revelation 1:6). Clearly, the inset has already come to pass.

Peter’s Sermons

What Christ declared to the chief priests, the elders, and the council began to be fulfilled shortly after He spoke it. Their eyes could not literally see what took place in heaven, but the events following His crucifixion pressed in on their minds, and they realized something supernatural was happening. The leaders heard the reports of His resurrection. Christ’s guarded and sealed tomb stood empty, three days and three nights after His body had been placed in it, just as He had said (Matthew 12:40).

Then came the events of Pentecost and Peter’s explanation of them:

This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to *the right hand of God*, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into

the heavens, but he says himself: “The LORD said to my Lord, “*Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.*”” Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:32-36)

After his explanation for all the miracles that day, Peter draws on the same psalm Jesus used about sitting at God’s right hand. In response, the crowd was cut to the heart. The people could glimpse the heavenly reality in their minds. They felt it and wanted to know what to do about it.

We do not know whether the religious leadership was present for Peter’s sermon. Still, they certainly heard about it, for it was accompanied by displays of power, the miracle of languages, and the mass baptism of 3,000 people. To paraphrase what was said later, those events did not happen in a corner (Acts 26:26). The chief priests and elders knew something was happening. They did not accept it, but evidence that the Man they had crucified had been resurrected, had ascended to the Ancient of Days, and had received power that was fueling a movement was overwhelming their minds.

Reminders of Christ’s Exaltation

We can trace this theme of the resurrected Jesus having received power through the early chapters of Acts. Peter heals a well-known lame man (Acts 3:6-10), after which he preaches a sermon by way of explanation:

So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.” (Acts 3:12-16)

Thus, Peter proclaims that God had raised and glorified Jesus Christ, and through His power, the man walked. In this way, Peter reiterates the heavenly vision Christ gave at His trial.

In Acts 4, Peter and John are arrested and brought before the elders, the rulers, the chief priests—undoubtedly many of the same men whom Jesus told that, from now on, they would comprehend the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power. They demand to know by what power or name the apostles had healed the man (Acts 4:7):

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.” (Acts 4:8-10)

The leaders saw the healed man, and they could not answer. They saw the effects of divine power, and their comprehension was growing. They still would not accept it, but neither could they deny it (verse 14). All they could do was threaten the messengers to keep quiet (verses 16-18).

After performing more miracles, the apostles are arrested again, but an angel frees them from prison. He tells them to go stand in the Temple and speak the words of this life (Acts 5:17-20). Prison is no obstacle when the exalted Son of Man has other plans.

The apostles suffer arrest a third time the next day and appear before the chief priests and the council. In Acts 5:30-31, Peter testifies, saying, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him *God has exalted to His right hand* to be Prince and Savior.” Christ’s claim has come to pass. The council members, furious with the reminder, command the apostles to be beaten.

In Acts 6, Stephen is dragged before the council for doing great works in Jesus' name. In Acts 7, he gives his testimony, and like the Pentecost crowd, his audience is also cut to the heart (verse 54). But, instead of repenting like the believers on Pentecost, they gnash at Stephen with their teeth.

In verse 56, he tells the defiant council, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing *at the right hand of God!*" Why Jesus was standing instead of sitting, we do not fully know. He may have stood to honor this loyal follower who was willing to testify of the spiritual reality even though it would cost him his life. But this vision, this comprehension of the very thing Christ had told the leaders, was more than they could bear. They stopped their ears and silenced the messenger. The same heavenly vision that sealed Christ's fate also condemned Stephen to death.

However, mere men could not stop the message. All they could do was persecute and sometimes silence the messengers, not believing that this was a work of the Almighty. But just as death could not hold the Son of Man (Acts 2:24), so the gates of hell cannot prevail against His spiritual Body (Matthew 16:18) because all the dominion and authority are His (Matthew 28:18).

Seated at the Father's Right Hand

Stephen's testimony was the final witness against the Jewish leadership. After this, the church's evangelistic efforts moved to other peoples and nations (mentioned in Daniel's inset) through the new gift of languages. Later, as Jesus had prophesied in a parable, a King sent out His armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city (Matthew 22:7). As He had also told the chief priests and the elders, the Kingdom of God was taken from them and given to a nation—a spiritual nation—bearing its fruits (Matthew 21:43).

The church of God is that spiritual nation, and the heavenly vision involves us:

. . . the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the

glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and *seated Him at His right hand* in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:18-23)

As Daniel saw, Jesus Christ already sits at the right hand of the Power, already invested with glory and dominion. Here, though, Paul draws the church into this very privileged position because its members comprise Christ's Body. Notice how he builds on this:

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus . . . (Ephesians 2:4-6)

The apostle writes that God made *us* alive together *with* Christ and raised *us* up and made *us* sit together in the heavenly places *in* Christ Jesus. God considers *us* to be sitting at His right hand! It is part of the same heavenly vision the Jewish leaders could not stomach. We are physically on the earth, but we are also part of a far greater spiritual reality that we cannot fully grasp.

Paul's words should encourage us, bolster us, knowing that we are at the right hand of the Power. More, He accepts us because of Christ's work and because He put us in Christ and into His Son's everlasting Kingdom. To Him be the glory and dominion, forever and ever.