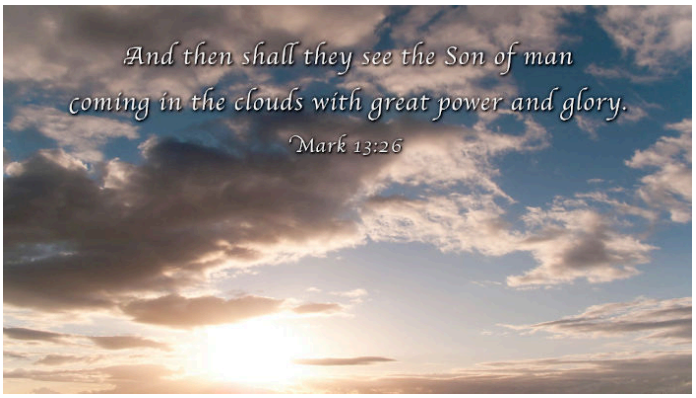
A Brief Dialog About End Time Prophecy And The Expression "Coming In The Clouds Of Heaven"



BIBLIANO and AMIGO: Discussions on Eschatology (Lesson #1, Coming In The Clouds)

by Charles S. Meek

"they shall see the Son of man **coming in the clouds of heaven** with power and great glory. . . . Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." (Matthew 24:30,34)

AMIGO: The Second Coming! Now that will be a glorious day.

BIBLIANO: What if I told you that the "Second Coming" already happened?

AMIGO: I'd say you were completely nuts. (Under his breath: And I would unfriend you on Facebook.)

BIBLIANO: Well, let me ask you a question. This text certainly seems to say that Jesus taught that He would return in his own generation. Right?

AMIGO: Well, "generation" must mean "race." So, that could mean thousands of years later.

BIBLIANO: My good friend, "race" is a different word in the Greek. The word genea (generation) is used in this passage, while genos (race) is not. The New Testament is perfectly clear. Every time the phrase "this generation" (genea) is found it means the generation of people living in the first century. Just look up these passages: Matthew 11:16; Matthew 12:38-45; Matthew 23:29-39; Luke 17:25 as examples. You can't miss it.

AMIGO: That's not what the TV rapture preachers teach.

BIBLIANO: Maybe we should stick with Jesus over those modern false prophets.

AMIGO: Oh, don't tell me that John Hagee, Perry Stone, and Hal Lindsey could all be wrong!

BIBLIANO: Either Jesus was wrong—or people have misunderstood what our Lord meant by his "Parousia," i.e. his Second Coming. I believe it is the latter. Jesus was saying that He would come IN JUDGMENT against Old Covenant Israel, just like YHWH came numerous times in the Old Testament.

AMIGO: I know Jesus was not a false prophet, so I better figure this out. Tell me more.

BIBLIANO: Let's just consider some other passages. When do you think that Matthew 10:23 was fulfilled? ("But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.")

AMIGO: Well, to tell you the truth, I have pretty much ignored that passage because it seems to say that Jesus would return while some of his disciples were still alive. I just don't know how to deal with that.

BIBLIANO: When do you think that Matthew 16:27-28 was fulfilled? ("For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.")

AMIGO: Wow, I admit that it sounds a lot like Matthew 10:23 — Jesus returning while some of those living in the first century were still alive. But perhaps it was talking about the Transfiguration or about Pentecost.

BIBLIANO: My friend, there are several reasons why it could not be either of those. For example, Matthew 16:27-28 is about judgment, and there was no judgment at either the Transfiguration or Pentecost. This text is consistent with Matthew 10:23, where the context is also about judgment as mentioned in Matthew 10:15 ("Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.").

AMIGO: What judgment could have occurred while some of those living in the first century were still alive?

BIBLIANO: Well, Jesus told the Jews of his day that He would judge THEM for their apostate condition and refusal to accept Him as the Messiah. Just consider Matthew 21:33-46; Matthew 22:1-14; Matthew 23:29-36 and Matthew 24:1-8, where Jesus warned the Jews that He would take the

kingdom away from them, burn their city, destroy their temple, and give the kingdom to another group. This all happened in AD 70, when the Lord used the Roman army to destroy Jerusalem and the temple.

AMIGO: But what about the clouds?

BIBLIANO: In the Old Testament, CLOUDS are used symbolically to portray God's presence, judgment, or proclamation. People did not see God literally, but saw what He did or perceived his presence in other ways. Consider the following passage excerpts, where clouds FIGURATIVELY represent God's judgment on groups of people:

"He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick CLOUDS of the skies.. . . . and the foundations of the world were laid bare. [Psa 18:11]" (Psalm 18:4-15 is a passage showing God's judgment against David's enemies)

"Behold, he shall come up as CLOUDS, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled. [Jer 4:13] . . ." (Jeremiah 4:5-31 shows God's judgment against Judah)

"Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift CLOUD, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.[Isa 19:1] . . ." (Isaiah 19:1-15 speaks of God's judgment against Egypt)

AMIGO: I've been a Christian all my life and NOBODY ever pointed out these passages to me.

BIBLIANO: There are lots more passages in the Old Testament we could consider. But, let me just ask you about another New Testament passage: When do you think Matthew 26:64 was fulfilled?

AMIGO: I honestly never noticed this before either, or at least I refused to see it. Jesus was telling the Jews that THEY THEMSELVES would see Him coming on clouds of heaven.

BIBLIANO: I have good news for you. Jesus was not a false prophet. He came in the manner and time that He predicted.

Please note: some minor editing of this dialog has been done including the replacement of the Bible verses, which are now KJV. Some verses were added where there had only been verse references and links to Bible verses at biblegateway.com were also added.

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man **coming in**

the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” – Matthew 24:30

“Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and **coming in the clouds of heaven**.” – Matthew 26:64

“And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and **coming in the clouds of heaven**.” – Mark 14:62
