# The Nature of Jesus' Return

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Given the clear Scriptural statements relating to the time of Jesus' return, how can we account for the fact that the Christian Church over the centuries has taught (and continues to teach) a yet future return?
In answer, we can only say that the Church missed Jesus' coming because of a fundamental misunderstanding concerning its nature.
So, what follows is an attempt to understand, from Scripture, the nature of Jesus' coming.
We will begin by examining some Old Testament (OT) background.

## The Day of the Lord

The day of the LORD is a prominent theme in the OT prophets.
Many such days are foretold. These would involve a "visitation" from Yahweh.
Yahweh would, as it were, come down from heaven and intervene in world affairs; he would act decisively against one or more nations, often against his own people.

The day of Jesus' return is called "the day of Christ" in Philippians 1:10 and 2:16.
Equally, it is "the day of the Lord" (1Cor 5:5; 1Thes 5:2; 2Thes 2:2; 2Pet 3:10) and "the day of God" (2Pet 3:12).
"The Lord" here may refer to either God the Father or to the *Lord* Jesus or to both together.[1]

Given this terminology, one should examine the various OT days of the LORD to see if they can help us better understanding the nature and purpose of Jesus' return.

In the Old Testament:

1. Yahweh is sometimes said to **ride on the clouds** when he comes down to judge.
   One notable example is Isaiah 19:1:
   > *An oracle concerning Egypt.*
   > *Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt; and the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.*

[1] When encountering "Lord" in the New Testament, it is not always clear exactly which person of the Godhead is intended.

Note that God was not literally seen by the Egyptians — all they saw was an invading army.[2]

When he comes down, Yahweh rides on the storm clouds:
Ezekiel 30:3: *For … the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.*
Nahum 1:3: … *His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.*

Hence, the day of the LORD is one of thick darkness and gloom (Eze 34:12; Joel 2:2; Am 5:20; Zeph 1:15).
The thunder is said to be God's voice, and the lightening the arrows that rout his foes (Ps 18:9-14; 29:3-9).

2. The OT prophets sometimes employ **exaggerated "cosmic" language** for divine judgment.
   The extinguishing of the sun, moon and stars is <u>figurative language</u> for the demise of a nation and its rulers.
   That this is so is evident from Ezekiel 32:7-8, where God declares to Pharaoh:

   > [7] *<u>When I blot you out</u>, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark;*
   > *I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light.*
   > [8] *All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness*
   > *on your land, declares the Lord GOD.*

   Similar language can be found in Isaiah 13:10 (depicting judgment on Babylon); Isaiah 34:4 (on the nations); Jeremiah 4:23-26 (on Judah and Jerusalem); Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15 (on Israel and the nations).
   An important point here: Every one of these prophecies was fulfilled via the agency of an invading army.[3]

3. One of the main purposes of divine judgment is to reveal the Judge.
   **To make known his name** — his person, character, sovereignty, justice, etc.:
   "Then you [*or* they] will know that I am the LORD …"
   See Ezekiel 6:10; 7:9; 11:10; 12:15; 25:7, 11, 17; 28:22-23; 30:19; 35:9; 38:23.

We can now apply these principles to the New Testament promises concerning Jesus' return:

- Jesus' return *on* or *with the clouds* (Mt 24:30; 26:64; Ac 1:11; Rev 1:7) is an affirmation of his deity:
  He would return with divine authority, power, and glory. Like Father, like Son!
- Judgment expressed in "cosmic" terms is figurative, not literal:
  See Matthew 24:29, Acts 2:20, and Revelation 6:12-14; 8:12.
  Likewise, some aspects of 2 Peter 3 should be regarded as figurative.
- The purpose of Jesus' Parousia is to <u>reveal</u> his glory and majesty — indeed, his deity.
  Paul states this purpose explicitly in Titus 2:13 (literal translation):

  > [13] *awaiting the blessed hope and [the] appearing of the glory of the great God and*
  > *Savior of us, Christ Jesus*.

  Accordingly, we encounter the following phrases in the New Testament:
  *when Christ appears; his appearing;*
  *when the Son of Man is revealed; the revelation of Jesus Christ*.

[2] Isaiah 19 – 20 is anticipating one or other of the Assyrian campaigns against Egypt: Esarhaddon conquered Egypt in 671 BC. Then, following an Egyptian revolt, his successor Ashurbanipal reinvaded in 667 BC, and again in 663. Isaiah 20:3-4 is likely foretelling the brutal 663 BC sacking of Thebes: the city was thoroughly plundered and its inhabitants deported. So memorable was this sacking that Nahum later (ironically) references it in his prophecy against Nineveh (Nah 3:8-10).
[3] The army in Joel 2 is an invading locust army, which God calls "my great army, which I sent among you" (2:25). All other references in this section are to human invaders.

We shall now examine the various Greek terms used to describe Jesus' return:

- The primary noun used is *parousia,* meaning "presence", but always translated as "coming".
- The primary verb used is *erchomai,* meaning "to come".
- Secondary nouns are: *epiphaneia* and *apokalypsis*.
- Secondary verbs are: *phaneroō, apokalyptō, hēkō,* and *horaō.*

## *Parousia*

The noun *parousia* has become the technical term for Jesus' return:
*The Parousia* denotes Jesus' coming on the clouds in glory, as King and Judge.
Used in connection with Jesus' return, *parousia* is found in the following verses:
Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8; James 5:7-8; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4; 1 John 2:28.

*Parousia* (Strong's G3952) is properly translated as "arrival" or "presence".
It means "arrival" in 1 Corinthians 16:17 and 2 Corinthians 7:6-7.
It means "presence" in 2 Corinthians 10:10 and Philippians 2:12.
Therefore, early Christians looked forward to Jesus' "personal arrival and ongoing presence" with them.
But not necessarily a physical arrival or presence.
William Barclay notes that *parousia* was "the regular [Greek] word for the arrival of a governor into his province or for the coming of a king to his subjects. It regularly describes a coming in authority and in power."[4]
So, in AD 70 Jesus returned as both King and Judge (Mt 16:27-28; 25:31).

## The *coming* of the Lord

The verb *erchomai* (Strong's G2064) is the most common term employed to describe Jesus' return.
It is translated (in the ESV) as "coming" (15 times), "comes" (6 times), and "come" (5 times).
Used in connection with Jesus' return, *erchomai* (in its various forms) is found in the following verses:
Matthew 10:23; 16:28; 24:30, 42, 44; 25:31; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62; Luke 9:26; 12:40; 21:27; John 21:22-23; 1 Corinthians 11:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Hebrews 10:37; Revelation 2:5, 16; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20 (twice).

Another (similar) verb is *hēkō* (Strong's 2240): "to arrive".
*To arrive* necessarily involves a *coming* and a resultant *presence*.
English translation: "[he] will come, I come, I will come".
Used in connection with Jesus' return, the verb is employed only in Hebrews 10:37; Revelation 2:25; 3:3 (twice).

Hebrews 10:37 (literal translation):
"For yet a very little while, *ho erchomenos* [= the One coming] *hēxei* [= will come, from *hēkō*), and will not delay."

[4] William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1957). Via the Bible Portal website: https://bibleportal.com/commentary/section/william-barclay/the-vision-of-things-to-come-matthew-241-31.

## The *appearing* or *revelation* of Jesus Christ

In addition to *parousia, erchomai,* and *hēkō,* the following terms are used in connection with Jesus' return:

1. The verb *phaneroō* (Strong's G5319): "to make visible, make clear, make known".
   English translation: [when Christ] *appears*.
   Employed in Colossians 3:4; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 John 2:28; 3:2.
2. The noun *epiphaneia* (Strong's G2015): "appearance, manifestation".[5]
   English translation: [Christ's] *appearing*.
   Employed in 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13.
3. The verb *apokalyptō* (Strong's G601): "to uncover, unveil, reveal what is hidden, bring to light, make plain".
   Employed in Luke 17:30.
   Literal translation: "in that day the Son of Man *is revealed*."
4. The related noun *apokalypsis* (Strong's G602): "an uncovering, unveiling; a revealing, revelation".
   English translation: *the revelation* [of Jesus Christ, or of his glory].
   Employed in 1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 4:13.[6]
5. The verb *horaō* (Strong's G3708): "to see, perceive".
   Often used metaphorically: "to see with the mind."
   Employed in Hebrews 9:28:
   Literal translation: "a second time, apart from sin, [Christ] *will appear* to those awaiting him for salvation."
   (Note that this is the only time in the New Testament that "second" is applied to Jesus' coming.)

All the New Testament references (for these 5 terms) have in view the disclosing of Jesus' heavenly glory — of his deity. The implication is that before this great event, his glory was, to a considerable degree, concealed.

## The sign of the Son of Man

**Matthew 24:30** (KJV):

> *"And then shall appear <u>the sign of the Son of man in heaven</u>: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn …"*

The KJV, closely following the Greek text, implies that the Son of Man is located in heaven, and that his sign is something visible that points to him being in heaven.
Yet according to most Bible versions it's not the Son, but rather his sign, that's located in the sky or heaven.[7]

In calling himself "the Son of Man" Jesus is identifying himself as Daniel's *son of man* figure who ascends on the clouds into Yahweh's presence to be invested with universal authority (Dan 7:13-14). A human being who rules alongside Yahweh, whom all nations serve and worship!
Jesus often refers to himself thus, no more so than when speaking of his return:
He would return as the King and Judge who has all authority and power — see Matthew 13:41; 16:27-28; 19:28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44, 25:31; 26:64.

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[5] *Epiphaneia*, from Strong's G1909, *epi* = "on, upon," which intensifies G5316, *phainō* = "to show forth, appear". The term might be better translated as "conspicuous manifestation/appearance". *Epiphaneia* is the root of our English word "epiphany".
[6] The phrase also occurs in Revelation 1:1, where the intended meaning is probably, "The revelation *given by* Jesus Christ."
[7] The following versions agree with the KJV's rendering: ASV, Darby, Douay-Rheims (1899), Geneva Bible (1599), NIV2011, NMB, RSV, and YLT.

So, what might the Son of Man's sign be, that points to him being in heaven?
Answer: The dramatic destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army in 70 AD.
That public event was the signal proof that Jesus was enthroned in heaven. As the divine Judge, he had taken vengeance on the city that had rejected and crucified him and persecuted his followers.
The result: All the Jewish tribes mourned the loss of their beloved city and temple.[8]

## Every eye will see him

**Revelation 1:7**:

> *Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.*

This verse serves to summarize the entire prophecy of Revelation:
Jesus was about to come "with the clouds" in judgment upon his and the Church's enemies.
Everyone would see him, including those who had "pierced him" — the first-century Jews.
He was Daniel's "son of man" (Rev 1:13) — head of his Church and the lord of the nations (Rev 1:5).

How would people "see" him?
Answer: In the unfolding of the events that are symbolically portrayed in John's visions.
Jesus was coming to judge the persecutors — Nero and the Jews (aka the Beast and the Harlot).
Revelation was given to help people interpret these events as judgments from the One enthroned in heaven.
Through these judgments Jesus' heavenly glory would be revealed.

## From now on you will see

**Matthew 26:64**:

> *Jesus said to [the high priest], "You have said so. But I tell you [plural], <u>from now on</u> you [plural] will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

Jesus is here harking back to two OT messianic passages:
First, to Daniel's *son of man* figure who will ascend "with the clouds of heaven" into Yahweh's presence to be invested with all authority (Dan 7:13-14).
Second, to the man (the Davidic king) who will co-rule and judge alongside Yahweh and will exert his power to take possession of the Gentile nations, crushing all opposition (Psalm 110).
Jesus would fulfill both prophecies!
He is essentially claiming equality with God — and the high priest took his declaration to be just that (Mt 26:65).

But how would the Jewish leaders "from now on" see Jesus seated in heaven and coming on the clouds?
Answer:
In events soon to transpire, they would begin to perceive that Jesus was truly the One he had claimed to be — that he was now ruling alongside Yahweh and actually judging them!

[8] Luke 17:30-32: Jesus' identity as the exalted Son of Man would be "revealed" through Jerusalem's downfall. The Greek word here is *apokalyptetai* — "uncovered", "unveiled", "made plain". Note the warning for people to flee the city lest they be caught up in its judgment.

The following would provide indisputable proof:
Miraculous signs at Pentecost (Ac 2:3-4); the apostles' boldness (Ac 4:13); further signs and wonders (Ac 5:12; 6:8); Stephen's vision (Ac 7:56); the mass-turning of the Gentiles to Israel's God; finally, the calamities to befall their own nation, culminating in the fall of Jerusalem and loss of their temple.
But in all of these events Jesus himself would not literally be seen by the Jewish leaders.[9]

## In the glory of his Father

**Matthew 16:27-28**:

> 27 *"For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels <u>in the glory of his Father</u>, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.*
> 28 *Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."*

As noted above, to come on/with the "clouds" is an affirmation of deity.
Here, Jesus promises to come in the "glory of his Father".
The two concepts are equivalent — see Matthew 24:30; Luke 21:27.

## In transfiguration glory

The apostle Peter connects the certainty of Jesus' return with the Transfiguration (2Pet 1:16-18).
On the mountain, Peter, James, and John were granted a preview of Jesus' heavenly glory (Lk 9:32).
The glory that (from eternity past) belonged to Jesus was soon to be restored to him in his ascension (Jn 17:5).
That heavenly glory would be further revealed at his coming (1Pet 4:13).
So for Peter, witnessing Jesus' heavenly glory on that mountain guaranteed his final return in glory.[10]

## In the same way as you saw him go

**Acts 1:9-11**:

> 9 *And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and <u>a cloud</u> took him out of their sight.*
> 10 *And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,* 11 *and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come <u>in the same way</u> as you saw him go into heaven."*

This passage is commonly taken to mean that Jesus will come back exactly as he left — in his physical, resurrection body. As he ascended bodily, so also will he descend bodily.
He will "appear" and be seen by all (Mt 24:30; 1Tim 6:14; Heb 9:28; 1Pet 5:4; 1Jn 2:28; 3:2; Rev 1:7).

But it's doubtful whether that was what the angels intended.

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[9] Not all of these events were witnessed by Caiaphas personally, since he died ca. 46 AD. However, several other rabbis who were present at Jesus' trial did live to witness them all, including the Jewish War of 66-70 AD.
[10] Peter's emphasis here on the certainty of Jesus' coming anticipates his later rebuttal (in 2 Peter 3) of the claims of Jewish scoffers who would soon assert the non-fulfillment of Jesus' promises to return to judge their generation (2Pet 3:3-4; cf. Mt 23:36; 24:34).

Their meaning is rather that Jesus would return in the way the apostles saw him enter heaven (1:11).
The focus should be on the manner of his entry and return: IN A CLOUD (1:9).
Just as Jesus was seen to enter heaven in "a cloud", so will he return in a cloud.[11]

That this is indeed what the angels intended may be garnered from Luke's version of the Olivet Discourse.
Luke authored both Acts and the gospel named for him.
So, the way Luke paraphrases Jesus' words in Luke 21:27 probably reflects his own understanding of what the angels intended. Luke reports Jesus as saying:
*"And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."*

Of course, no ordinary cloud is intended — either by Jesus or the angels or Luke.
What is intended is the Shekinah, the Cloud of God's presence and glory.
Jesus ascended in the Shekinah, entering the very presence of God in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 9:24).
He was "taken up in glory" (1Tim 3:16; cf. Lk 24:26; Jn 17:5), and with that same glory he would soon return (Mt 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; Tit 2:13; 1Pet 4:13).

As aforementioned, Jesus was Daniel's *son of man* figure who ascended "with the clouds of heaven" into Yahweh's presence to be invested with all authority (Dan 7:13-14).
And that's also how Jesus would return:
On or with the clouds, with divine authority, as the Judge (Mt 26:64; Rev 1:7).

An important principle is not to let Acts 1:9-11 trump whatever else the New Testament teaches concerning Jesus' return. We must seek to harmonize this passage with the overall New Testament teaching.

## The book of Revelation: No physical return

In the book of Revelation, one looks in vain for any physical/bodily return of Jesus:

- Jesus' coming was imminent (22:7, 12, 20).
- He was about to come to discipline or reward the seven churches (2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 11).
  He would come (spiritually) to commune with individual believers (3:20).
- John saw Jesus seated on a white cloud harvesting the Jewish martyrs into Paradise (14:14-16), but there is no further descent to *terra firma*.
- John also saw Jesus riding a white horse, judging and waging war (19:11-21).
  Many regard this as a reference to Jesus' return at the end of history to judge his enemies.
  But Jesus here is clearly in heaven, not on earth (19:11).
  He rules the nations with his "rod of iron" (Rev 19:15; cf. Ps 2:9), and he does so from the heavenly Zion (Ps 2:6; 110:1-2; Rev 12:5).
- John's visions graphically portrayed events that were soon to transpire (1:1, 3).
  But they further revealed the One enthroned in heaven who was orchestrating these events.
  Precisely because Jesus would not be literally seen, these momentous events needed to be correctly interpreted through the lens of John's visions.

[11] "In the same way" (Ac 1:11) translates the Greek *houtōs … hon tropon* — literally, "in this way [he will come] in that way [you saw him going into heaven]." *Hon tropon* does not mean "identical in every respect"; it rather means "similar in some way". This may be seen from its usage in Luke 13:34: "that way a hen [gathers] her brood" (Greek text); "as a hen gathers her brood" (ESV).

Jesus' "coming" in Revelation is of a providential nature.
His coming would be "seen" in the dramatic events and judgments soon to take place (1:7).[12]
In publicly judging his enemies, Jesus would demonstrate to everyone that he was the "Son of Man" enthroned in heaven alongside the Father (Rev 1:13; cf. Dan 7:13-14; Ps 110:1-2, 5-6).
He would be "seen" in the sense that Jesus also intended in Matthew 24:30 and 26:64 — perceived, seen with the understanding or with the "eyes of the heart" (cf. Eph 1:18).

Furthermore, we should probably view Jesus' coming as fulfilling certain OT promises that Yahweh himself had made. Specifically, his promise to dwell with his restored people.
Isn't that what Revelation 21 intends by the descent of the New Jerusalem to earth: God himself comes down to dwell with his people (Rev 21:3; cf. Lev 26:11-12; Eze 37:27; 48:35; Zec 2:10)?
Indeed, Father and Son are together enthroned within the city, and his people "see his face" (Rev 22:3-4).
We saw earlier how the promises Jesus made to return on the clouds represented a claim to deity.
So, it would seem quite appropriate to link Jesus' *Parousia* — the promise of his "presence" — with the coming of Yahweh to dwell with his people.

## Were people aware of the Judge?

Did people of the 1st century have any awareness/perception of Jesus coming against them in judgment?
Answer: Revelation twice relates responses from people who sense that they are under divine judgment:
First, people will call out to the mountains and rocks to fall upon and hide them from "him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev 6:16).[13]
Second, the citizens of "Babylon" (i.e., Jerusalem) who experience the plague of "hailstones" will curse God because of its severity (Rev 16:21).[14]

## The nature of Jesus' glorified body

What is the nature of Jesus' heavenly body? Does he retain any physicality in heaven?
Our own resurrection bodies will be patterned after Jesus' glorified body: these will be "spiritual" bodies suited to the heavenly realm (1Cor 15:44-50; Php 3:21).
Note that when John, who was quite familiar and pally with Jesus at the Last Supper, saw the glorified Lord Jesus, he fell prostrate as if dead (Rev 1:17) — so awesome was his appearance!
God himself dwells in unapproachable light; no one can see him and live (Ex 33:20; 1Tim 6:16).
Perhaps the same applies to the glorified Lord Jesus as well — can he even be seen with mortal eyes?[15]

[12] Campegius Vitringa (1659-1722) made the following interesting comment: "Christ is said to come in the clouds of heaven as often as he shows forth his glory and majesty in the particular operations of his grace, severity, and power, and exhibits himself to the church as if present." Quoted by Israel P. Warren in *The Parousia* (Portland, Maine: Hoyt, Fogg and Donham, 1879), p. 79.
[13] The reference here is to the final days of the Tribulation: Jerusalem's inhabitants will call for the mountains to fall on and cover them during the Roman siege of the city in AD 70 (see Luke 23:28-30).
[14] The reference is to the massive rocks hurled by the Roman catapults during the city's siege.
[15] Yet Stephen, before his martyrdom, saw and recognized the glorified Lord Jesus in heaven standing at God's right hand and ready to receive him (Ac 7:55-56).

## Conclusion

- Jesus was to come back in the same way he entered heaven (Ac 1:11).
- Coming on/with the clouds represents a claim to deity.
- Jesus would return as the divine judge who co-rules with Yahweh (Mt 26:64; Psalm 110; Dan 7:13-14).
- Every eye would "see him" (Rev 1:7) only in the sense of perceiving his heavenly rule.
- He would return to spiritually dwell with his people, in fulfillment of OT prophecy.

**Recommended Resource**:

Online articles/videos by Dan Dery of The Institute Of Fulfilled Eschatology: https://reformedeschatology.com/.

See especially his article: *The Second Coming in Acts 1:9-11 Part 2*:

https://reformedeschatology.com/1944-2/.

## Appendix 1: The significance of Daniel 7:13-14

The visions in Daniel of the statue (2:31ff.) and of the beasts (7:1ff.) depict the period of Gentile dominion over (and oppression of) God's people that would end with the coming of the Messiah.
The four successive Gentile kingdoms were Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.
During the time of the 4th kingdom (Rome) God's own kingdom would be established.
God's kingdom will shatter and put an end to these Gentile kingdoms, but will itself endure forever and expand to fill the whole world (Dan 2:34-35, 44).
Dominion will then be granted to "one like a son of man", and to God's people (Dan 7:13-14, 18, 22, 27).

Note that Daniel's *son of man* ascends with the clouds of heaven and is presented before Yahweh.
He is invested with authority over all nations; over these he will rule forever.
He rules from heaven, alongside Yahweh.
With all this to transpire in the time of the 4th empire — that of Rome.

Daniel's prophecy should be related to OT promises concerning the ultimate Davidic king.
Some examples:

- Psalm 2: Messiah, enthroned in Zion, will rule all nations as his inheritance; he will punish their rebellion with his rod of iron.
- Psalm 72: Messiah will forever rule with justice over God's people and over the nations.
- Psalm 110: Messiah will rule at Yahweh's right hand and will exert his power to take possession of the Gentile nations, crushing all opposition.
- Isaiah 9:1-7: Messiah will crush the oppressor, bringing peace and security to God's people forever.
- Isaiah 11:1-10: Messiah will rule with justice and peace, even over the Gentiles (11:10).

The New Testament makes it clear that David's throne was restored with Jesus' ascension into heaven:
Peter says as much in Acts 2:30-36.
So too does the author of Hebrews, who cites from 2 Samuel 7:14 and from Psalms 2, 45 and 110, affirming that all these were fulfilled with Jesus having ascended to the Father's right hand (Heb 1:3-13).
Jesus in his ascension was granted all authority. He farewelled his apostles by declaring (in Matthew 28:18):
*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations …"*
As David's heir he rules from the heavenly Zion (Ps 2:6; 110:1-2) — he rules over the world from heaven.
And he rules with his "rod of iron" (Ps 2:9; Rev 12:5), implying that the nations continue to rebel against him.

Thus, Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus' ascension.
But what about Jesus' coming back — his return and descent — on the clouds?
Daniel, after all, only spoke of his ascending on the clouds.
Answer: By claiming to be Daniel's *son of man*, Jesus was declaring that he would soon be granted all authority.
And with that same authority he would ultimately return.
He would come back as the divine Judge — as God!

## Appendix 2: The divine throne-chariot

The following is from Kurt Simmons' *Adumbrations: The Kingdom & Coming of Christ in the Book of Daniel*. Carlsbad, NM: Biblical Publishing Company, 2009.

Here are Kurt's comments relating to Daniel 7:9: "and his wheels as burning fire" (pages 157-158):

> This refers to the throne chariot of God in visiting men and nations in the day of judgment. Ezekiel, in his vision of God coming against Jerusalem in the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, saw the throne chariot of God as if it were a great fire enfolding itself, borne by the cherubim, with great wheels upon the earth, above which sat the Lord God: "And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came, out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire enfolding itself, … Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures … and above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne" (Ezek. 1:4, 15, 25). Ezekiel's vision shows that God is present in the events of earth, controlling the issue of battle and the rise and fall of earthly powers. If God's throne is the source of the judgments, the wheels seem to represent the earthly visitation by which they are carried into effect: the famines, pestilences, wars, and armies that execute God's wrath upon the wicked and disobedient men. In like manner, [Daniel's] present vision points to the sovereignty of God over earth's people, and anticipates his eschatological judgment upon the beast and little horn.
>
> It should be borne in mind, however, that while Ezekiel saw God enthroned above the cherubim, man saw only the armies of Nebuchadnezzar; the activity of God remained concealed from eyes of flesh. This becomes the pattern for the coming of Christ. Just as God was invisible to man in his coming against Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, so Christ's coming in judgment upon the beast and little horn would be invisible, perceived only by the eye of understanding. This is confirmed by St. Paul when he said: "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the *appearing* of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times *shall shew*, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; *whom no man hath seen nor can see*: to whom be honour and power everlasting, Amen" (1 Tim. 6:14-16; *emphasis added*. Cf. 1 Tim. 1:17). What must be *shown* cannot be seen. Paul affirms that Jesus cannot be seen by eye of man (apart from special revelation), and that Christ would therefore show (demonstrate) that he is earth's only Potentate at his *appearing* (revelation) by the out-pouring of his wrath.

[End of quote.]

## Appendix 3: Coming on the clouds of heaven

**Matthew 24:30**:

*"… they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."*

First-century Jews familiar with the OT would have understood *clouds* as connoting deity:

1. To ride on the clouds is uniquely God's prerogative (Dt 33:26; Ps 104:3; also Psalm 68:4, 33, NET, NIV).
   God rides on the clouds as he personally descends in his mobile throne-chariot on his way to visiting men and nations in judgment (Ps 18:9-12; Isa 19:1; Nah 1:3).
   The thunder is said to be God's voice and the lightening the arrows that rout his foes (Ps 18:9-14; 29:3-9).
   Accordingly, the Day of the Lord, when he comes in judgment, is a day of clouds and thick darkness and gloom (Eze 30:3; 34:12; Joel 2:2; Am 5:20; Zeph 1:15).
   In Ezekiel 1 and 10, cherubim are the bearers of God's throne-chariot (cf. 1Chr 28:18; Ps 18:10).[16]
   And in Daniel's vision "[God's] throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire" (Dan 7:9).
2. They would also have recalled the Shekinah, the Cloud associated with the presence and glory of God.[17]
   The Cloud served to veil the glory of God within, for no one can see God and live (Ex 33:20; 1Tim 6:16).
   God himself was present in the Cloud in the desert, and his glory within was evident (Ex 16:10; 24:15-17).
   God descended in the Cloud to speak with Moses (Ex 34:5; Num 11:25).
   God also descended in the Cloud when the people misbehaved (Num 12:5; 14:10; 16:19, 42).
   God's glory in the Cloud filled the tabernacle and temple (Ex 40:34-35; 1Kgs 8:10-12; cf. Eze 10:4).
   In all these instances, no visible form was observed, for God cannot be seen.
3. "The Son of Man coming of the clouds of heaven" harks back to the prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14.

Clearly, Jesus' return on/with the clouds (Mt 24:30; 26:64; Ac 1:11; Rev 1:7) is an affirmation of his deity: He would return with divine power and glory. Like Father, like Son!

[16] In Ezekiel's visions, four "living creatures" (chap. 1) or "cherubim" (chap. 10) serve as God's throne-attenders. God's throne sits atop an "expanse" (or "firmament", "dome", "platform") that is itself above the heads of the cherubim (1:22, 26; 10:1).
Each cherub is associated with one wheel (1:15; 10:9). The four identical wheels intersect perpendicularly and can transport the throne in any direction (1:16-17; 10:10-11). The cherubim and their wheels are full of eyes (1:18; 10:12). Ezekiel to a very limited extent saw the glory of God (1:27-28).
Ezekiel's inaugural vision (1:1 – 3:27) is God's call to him to preach and prophesy to his fellow exiles in Babylon.
It is significant that he sees God's throne-chariot while in Babylon — the cherubim had apparently left the temple and carried God's throne to the land of exile. Clearly, God is not tied to Jerusalem — he is omnipresent, and sovereign over all nations!
(For more on God's throne-chariot in relation to Jesus' return, see Appendix 2.)

[17] From R.C. Sproul: "According to the Old Testament, the shekinah was the visible manifestation of the invisible God. The shekinah was a radiant cloud or brilliant light within a cloud that signaled the immediate presence of God."
See: https://www.ligonier.org/blog/witnessing-christs-glory/.