

## Exploring the Prophetic Meaning of Coming

by Michael, Whitney

Date: Oct 25,2007

File: Coming.pdf

Version: 1.0

Topic: Coming of the Lord, and related phrases and words

There exists many reasons to see the word or concept of *coming* as having a significant prophetic connotation. The foremost reason lies in the fact that so many Christians have expected the Lord to return under the concept of "second coming"

The basics of scriptures must be explored to see how critical ideas, such as the idea of the *coming*, originated. The current article tries to examine the prophetic sense of the word *coming* to offer a ground-up approach to understanding the topic.

Even if the current effort fails, further research is required to get to the heart of the scriptures and to see from where Christians have developed the models of eschatology.

Maybe most significant is the idea whether the popular idea of a coming matches with the prophetic meanings. The investigation of this matter also becomes critical in light of the other article exploring the Old Testament references relating to Matthew 24:28-31. [Matt 24 Analysis](#)

Now the article will look at "What is the *coming* as described in scriptures?"

### **A Useful Inquiry**

An interesting inquiry can be made whether it was from Old Testament prophecy that Jesus spoke. It seems like the look at Matt 24:28-31 especially reveals many likely origins of the words of Jesus from the Old Testament. And the verses of Matt 24 that preceded verse 28 also show many likely connections to the Old Testament prophecies.

The defense of such Old Testament origins would easily be made, but such defense is not part of the current effort.

## **Definition and Origin**

Now several passages will be reviewed that contain words translated into the English as *coming*

### **1. Malachi**

The *coming* is presented in a most interesting fashion in Malachi.

Mal 3:2 "who may abide the day of his coming"

Mal 4:5 "...before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord"

The *coming* isn't shown as a friendly visit nor as a physical appearance. The focus in these verses of Malachi are purely on a judgment which no people would desire, though there may be some desire to have the benefits obtained through the completion of the judgment seen in Mal 3:4.

The judgment was described in Malachi as being an event that came upon the people and then was completed in a short time. It is the Lord who is described as doing the coming, yet it seems that there is no mention of the Lord coming in a physical body though Mal 3 discusses the circumstances that would be seen as a second coming, due to the judgments described.

The timing also is shown to be soon after the time of the messenger, which was seen to be John the Baptist.

[Mal 3:4 may likely describe the Church as being the pleasant place.]

### **2. Matthew**

Matt 6:10 "Thy kingdom come"

Shows the word *come* in connection with the kingdom. It seems that the word "begin" would be more appropriate to popular conceptions about the kingdom. Many people that pray the words of Matt 6:10 actually think toward the goal of seeing the kingdom begin.

So the word *come* is a bit unnatural and in that unnatural state, with further consideration of the mention of *coming* in the Book of Malachi, ends up promoting a greater prophetic relevancy to such word. Then also if the connotation is a connotation of judgment, the kingdom therefore begins in judgment, or at least in consequence of judgment.

Jesus emphasized a word that would not normally be emphasized. And the stranger aspect would be that of people having spoken of the physical coming of Jesus while also speaking of a spiritual start of the kingdom. Yet the evidence is that the coming of Jesus was spiritual while the kingdom had a physical coming (physical in the sense of saying "Thy will be done on earth").

The ideas expressed so far on Matthew were made with some anticipation of the next verse to be reviewed, Matt 16:28

Matt 16:28 "Some standing here ... see the Son of man

This connects Jesus with the kingdom and also establishes a time frame. Some of those alive at that moment were also going to see the Son of Man coming in the kingdom. Other passages, such as Luke 21:30 -33, also show immediacy of the kingdom.

A point should be considered really quickly about the wording "coming in His kingdom." How does someone come in a kingdom? Maybe by having an entourage arrive with him or by bringing a walled empire down to earth all of a sudden. Yet these answers are rather contrived and unsatisfying.

The true answer appears with the idea of judgment as introduced in Mal 3:2. But also the messenger of Mal 3:1, namely, John the Baptist said something similar saying "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand" which also combines judgment with the kingdom.

Hence, most sense of the passage occurs where Jesus' coming is seen as an action of judgment. The coming of Jesus then cannot reasonably be interpreted as a physical coming just as the kingdom could not logically be seen as coming to earth as a physical, intact fortress falling from the sky.

Some work will be required later to fix some misconceptions forming now. It should be noted that the kingdom itself isn't an act of judgment but rather is the circumstance that comes subsequent to the judgments. This was also shown in the words of John the Baptist which indicated that the people had an opportunity to repent only until the time the kingdom came.

Furthermore, the Jesus spoke of the idea of *seeing* the Son of Man -- which is similar to perceiving or knowing. In the culture today, this almost fits in naturally with the ability to see someone on the television. But in reality the wording is unusual. In the verse two levels of detachment occurred: Jesus spoke of the perception and Jesus spoke in third person( saying "the Son of Man come" instead of saying "I will come"). The approach is clinical and detached rather than personal and close. Jesus simply wasn't saying here, "I'll be back and we'll have a nice reunion."

[Jesus said essentially that some disciples would see the coming. This wasn't all of them, as if they would see this wherever they existed as eternal beings.]

The verse explored here contains fundamental problems against interpretation as a future physical arrival of Jesus. And the word *arrival* would be a better sort of word or the word *return* if distinct Greek words would lend toward the English

words mentioned here. Yet the idea of Jesus coming to us physically in our time of need brings forth such imagery that our minds in all generations have sought to utilize the definition of *coming* that is most personal and most physical. [Such analysis is speculative bearing a need to for further investigation. ]

THEN a few more verses occur (and others of Matthew of the same vein that may not be mentioned herein):

Matt 23:39 "until you say "blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord"

It seems that Matt 23:39 is somewhat prophetic and may have been the thought that triggered the disciples' question in Matt 24:3. This verse most strongly lends itself to the natural idea of coming. Psalm 118:26 is quoted and lends some more meaning to be investigated elsewhere. Yet a prophetic use is developed both by the earlier developed context and by the offering of the future ability to see Jesus to those who bless Him, as being the one who did come in the name of the Lord.

Matt 24:3 "when shall be the sign of your coming"

Why did they expect a sign instead of a physical view of Jesus?

1. Did they expect the judgment to be proceeded by a sign?
  - a) Was this cause they didn't expect a physical return of Jesus?, or
  - b) Was this cause they expected a judgment to come without obvious attribution to Jesus?
2. Did they expect Jesus to give them a signal that He was doing this next week?
3. Was there any reasons why the disciples would think Jesus was going anywhere? No!

So neither Jesus nor the disciples spoke of a physical return of Jesus.

Restating what was just said it should be noted that the disciples had no expectation that Jesus was leaving them. Yet in some manner these disciples had a detached view (apparently disconnected from their other knowledge about Jesus) that He would come in judgment. It could be said with some speculation that the disciples were connecting the judgment material of Matthew 37 and of Malachi chapters 3 and 4 but at the same time the disciples didn't know quite what they were saying (since Jesus often led them to ask questions beyond their means of understanding). [ Also, it becomes obvious by many verses that the Apostles and all disciples truly did not understand much or most of what Jesus taught. Such ideas of Jesus extended beyond their cultural framework of familiar teachings and the ideas of Jesus were also spiritual in nature with the requirement that such ideas be spiritually appraised by the Spirit of God. Such analysis is backed by the verses saying that the Spirit would bring them to remembrance of all things. And there's several verses in the Gospels that showed

that the writers didn't understand an idea until after the resurrection. See Mark 8:31-33]

Matt 24:27 as lightning comes (Erchomai) so shall coming(Parousia) of Son of Man

Matt 24:30 "appearing the sign in the clouds of the Son of Man"

Matt 24:30 "coming in the clouds"

These verses represent the heart of Jesus' prophetic warning to the disciples. Many times the Matt 24:27-31 passage is read in isolation from other scripture and then the imagination of the reader can interpret the words in all sorts of ways. The first useful correction to such error is to correlate the phrases to the Old Testament prophecies. This task is done in [Matt24Table](#). An emphasis of judgment occurs in the Old Testament verses. Three separate types of judgments were highlighted. Such judgments were seen in the formerly mentioned passages on the coming and hence are fully in line with the image previously formed about the *coming*.

Many people have just focused on the idea of the coming of the Son of Man and neglect the variations of wording used in the above listed phrases. A very narrow image of the prophecies is obtained in this manner, and wholly inadequate.

Even from a superficial reading of the passage, it can be observed that almost all the wording describes events in the air or the clouds. The *coming* never makes it to the ground according to such verbiage. As mentioned earlier the only reason that people seem to have come to other conclusions about the *coming* is due to the desire to meet Jesus in the physical world. There is the "knight in shining armor" fantasy here.

Yet if the words of Jesus truly spoke of a physical coming, it would seem that such physical coming would be more apparent by this point in scripture.

### 3. Daniel

Another important point as shown in the Matt 24 Table is the idea of the coronation of the king as shown in connection with Dan 7:13-14.

Dan 7:13-14 ...Son of Man came with the clouds ... was given dominion

So Dan 7:13-14 speaks of a coronation in the presence of the Ancient of Days and not of a physically visible throne with the pomp and circumstance. If it is not a coronation there is an indication of approval of the Son of Man with God leading into the Son of Man's dominion.

#### 4. Luke

For a wider view on the words of Jesus, Luke 21 will receive a little attention.

Luke 21:27 ...Son of man coming in a cloud

Luke reduces the mention of the word *coming* yet conveys many of the same ideas as seen in the Old Testament. But Luke 21:27 does show the Son of Man coming on the clouds. Again this is the reference to Dan 7:13-14 which may be seen as the coronation of the king and which occurs as the end of judgment as seen by Dan 7:26-27

Luke 21:31 the kingdom is near at hand

The "nearness" is similar to "coming" in the Greek, "Parousia," or coming near. The similarity is only noted for future consideration but is strong enough to have any argumentative benefit.

It was seen earlier that Jesus was coming in the kingdom indicating a connection of the judgment with the kingdom, a connection seen also in Daniel 7.

#### **Observations**

So the words *coming* and *come* have developed a prophetic meaning that began in the Old Testament and was carried forth in the New Testament. The idea of a *coming* stands out even though the idea of coming and going is a normal part of life.

The idea conveyed is primarily one of judgment. And the judgment of Malachi is over Israel or Jerusalem. When speaking of a *coming* the Israelites are the one's that are judged in accord with Mal 3 and 4. Then there is a judgment of nations in accord with Dan 7:13-15.

Per Matt 24, the prophecies indicate that a destruction of the temple occurs, Tribulation occurs, and famines occur. Which of these are desirable to the Christians?

They may expect the final judgment. But isn't that judgment still 1000s years away according to their understanding? And what matters the judgment since Christians pass from judgment into eternal life?

The most significant summary of ideas related to the *coming* is that this is a period of judgment on the earth, and not even a final event on the earth. Or when does the 1000s years occur in relation to the "passing of the heavens and earth" of Matt 24:35?

Luke 21:33 also places the passing away of the heavens and earth closer in relation to that generation when the temple was destroyed -- showing that the new heavens and new earth was a first century event --which makes more sense, except for the interpretation of "new heavens and earth" as a literal event

The following is a little bit of my thoughts to analyze the idea of *coming* as if it were to match the idea traditionally assumed. It also contains a summary of what I have figured out.

Again the strong ideas presented about the coming are:

- 1) it is a time of judgment
- 2) it is the start of the kingdom
- 3) that the kingdom comes upon earth from God (Matt 6:10). Note: although the kingdom doesn't descend from heaven, the kingdom was implemented to start the operation of the will of God upon earth as His will had been done in heaven.
- 4) It speaks of clouds -- which draws attention to Dan 7:13-14 coronation of the King.
- 5) The kingdom's coming is associated with Christ Jesus (the Messiah). Messiah is synonymous with King, though it may apply to priests as well. And indeed Jesus came also as Priest.

The weak idea is that the coming is a physical arrival to the earth. Yet a physical coming isn't the only option. The following problems occur:

- 1) Act 1:11 "just as you saw Him leave, so shall He come" is assumed to mean a physical arrival when it more likely refers to "coming on the clouds"
- 2) What would it mean physically to say Jesus was coming back to earth on the clouds?
- 3) *Coming* is assumed to be a physical coming since people are physical and cause it is assumed Jesus is coming to do a physical rulership. But it may be circular reasoning in that it may assume a physical rule cause of His physical coming.
- 4) Though, there may be some support for a physical coming since the kingdom was to be on earth. Therefore if Jesus were coming in the kingdom, it could be extrapolated to say that Jesus must be coming physically. Yet it is weak cause the disciples weren't expecting Jesus to go away. And Jesus didn't correct them on this. (Jesus didn't say He was going away but would be coming.)

#### Clarification

Consider the idea of using the word *appearing* as a synonym to *coming*. This may help clarify a problem in understanding Matt 10:6

First it should be noted that some may misquote Matt 10:6 to say that the

kingdom was coming down to earth. Yet it isn't the kingdom coming down but it is the will of God coming down to earth. And such is the definition of the kingdom – the will of God being done on earth.

Yet the "coming of the kingdom" (Matt 6:10) is an unusual phrase in translation. It may be that people today associate the coming of the kingdom with similarity in form with that of a circus coming to town, that the caravan enters town with all the workings of a circus.

It may be that Matt 6:10 would better be translated as "appearing of the kingdom." Then in Matt 24:30 "coming in the clouds" could be spoken of as "appearing in the clouds" except that the words in Dan 7:13-14 speaking of a coming. [But which direction were these translated, between Dan 7:13 and Matt 24:30? Which was translated first? and was the one passage used to determine the translation of the other passage?]

The "appearing of the kingdom" makes a little more sense but there's a problem in that the kingdom may have only appeared to those who were believers. For Jesus said, "You shall see[perceive] the kingdom" (Matt 16:28).

### Seeing the kingdom

Matt 13:11-13,16 shows that the disciples would understand the mysteries of the kingdom and they would see[perceive]. What would they then perceive but the kingdom itself?

John 3:3 except he be born again shall not see the kingdom of God.

John 3:3 would seem to violate the concept of a physical kingdom, since if the kingdom were physically on the earth, everyone would supposedly see it. But though the kingdom is on earth, people won't see it. Why? Because the kingdom is the changing of the people's and nations' behavior to act in accord with the will of God. Only Christians would see this change.

Secondly, there may be an element of timing involved in that the people of Nicodemus' time may not have lived until the start of the kingdom and hence would have to come to Christ (be saved both spiritually and physically) in order to survive to the time they could see the kingdom.

### The analysis

"Son of man coming in His kingdom" ( Matt 16:28) really messes up logical thinking -- really draws together ideas that may be assembled incorrectly. The image that has come to mind in the past is one of a cloudy whirlwind starting from the sky and coming to earth with Jesus in it fully ready to rule the earth as a man physically placed back on to the ground.

Then the question would have to arise "To where does He go next?" Is there a

greeting party? Is there someone that prepared a castle? Maybe someone has developed the ideas this far.

It seems more plausible that the kingdom was starting out of a time of judgment upon the earth. That this judgment was the time of transition from where man or the devil was in control into the age where Jesus began the oversight of the nations' behavior. Matt 16:28 actually then sounds much like Mal 3:2 to which we could synthesize the phrase, by adding Dan 7:13-14,

“Who can abide the day of the Son of man's coming in His kingdom”

Jesus truly blended these ideas in Matt 24:28-30 [see the article on Matt 24:27-31]. Judgment was tied with the beginning of the kingdom.

### Why so popular?

Why is the second coming concept so popular?

- 1) Is it the only hope of Christians?
- 2) Is there a desire for an end?
- 3) Is there an expectation that the devil has had too much power? (and power over them?)

And a question for another time is “How does the 1000s years fit in with their ideas of the second coming?”

Christians are often excited about a rapture. But why should Christians be excited about a rapture unless they are living in failure and despair. And who says that they are in failure and despair? but maybe the devil?

There should be no reason to have any higher hope in a rapture than the hope found if there is not a concept of a future rapture. Especially, aren't the extra benefits being sought only temporary (i.e. the 1000s years reign)?

Note that the actual purpose of the prophecies here were to give the hope that gave extra strength to the believers in the first century. Those believers needed the strength to survive their times. But believers today aren't in such tribulation, at least in the Americas, at least not at the time of this writing.

Do Christians want the earth to be thrown into great upheaval and judgment?  
What benefit are Christians seeking in this judgment?  
What difference are so many people expecting in the kingdom's formation that does not exist now?

It seems that there is much value placed in the concept of a kingdom, yet there is no definition of the kingdom, as a future event, that specifies benefits to Christians that they don't have now.

Probably, Christians mix "kingdom of heaven" with "heaven" and hence hope to enjoy the benefits of "heaven" at the moment of this expected rapture.

The drive for seeing a happy ending may be at the heart of the motivation of Christians to hold to the popular concept of a second coming. The expectation of a grand finale may work strongly in their minds, the idea of a bold visible act of God.

This is not to say that God doesn't act boldly, but He often acts unobtrusively to bring forth His will. He expects faith among the people, not natural reactions to overwhelming circumstances, such as a sudden quake of the earth with a sudden vision of a man in the air.

Are Christians still blessed with all the blessings of the heavens whether or not these were to come through a visible second coming?

Even without a second coming, as a concept envisioned by so many Christians, the blessings in Christ still remain. The resurrection still stands as the future benefit beyond the benefits of having eternal life and of seeing Jesus when we die.

The reason of this long explanation is to see why people hold to their concept of a second coming while there is very little evidence for the type of expectation they have. The verses in Matthew that might be used in support of the traditional physical coming are quickly connected to Old Testament verses that show fully different meanings than that of a physical appearing. Whereas Heb 9:28 talks about a second appearing ( a gazing, not a glance) rather than a second coming. So the term "second coming" doesn't even show up in scripture.

[Further investigation would show that there is a logical concept of Christ working upon the earth to bring all things in subjection. Then there's an end to that action. Though it is not described as appearing or a coming there still ought to be that great expectation of this completion. And if the "coming" weren't so mired with dogma, this event might be seen as a "coming" but it is best seen as a completion of a task.]

### Words

The word in English seen as *coming* is derived from the Greek words *Erchomai*, and *Parousia*. Then in the gospels, only Matthew uses *Parousia* to describe the eschatology but only in Matt 24:27 but not in Matt 24:30.

Also the word *appear* occurs in Matt 24:30 "then shall appear the sign in the clouds of the Son of man." Hebrews 9:28 again speaks of the appearing a second time. The idea of *appearing* is different from that of *coming* at least on first look. On closer study the *coming* can be seen more as the idea of "coming near" which then would be like an appearance. So *appearing* actually shifts Matthew 24:27-31 away from a physical coming into an appearance.

## Audience

An issue vital to the study of the *coming* is one of audience.

Malachi would address Israelites as the audience, that the Jews would be the object of judgment within the context. John the Baptist preached to Jews too in confirmation of Malachi.

And Daniel, though also addressing the nations, can be seen in verse 7:15 that there was trouble for his own people.

The timing and the audience received some further focus in that the desolations of Matt 24 followed the indictments against the Judeaens in Matt 23. So the *coming*, if not fully focused on Judeaens, had obtained its timing in connection with the acts of the Judeaens in the first century.

## Idea of Physicality

Finally a closer look should be made on the idea of physicality of the *coming* of the Son of Man.

Nothing of Mal 3:2, Mal 4:5, Dan 7:13-14 indicate a physical coming of the king. So the key Old Testament foundational prophecies lack support of the physical coming of the king. Yet the context of Daniel indicates that the domain would be physical (Dan 7:14 – over all nations, peoples and languages).

In Acts 1:11 where the angels said "he will come just as he has left." Though this may appear that Jesus would come back physically. The reference seems to allude more to the "coming on the clouds."

And if a physical second coming were being presented, the count goes beyond the second and third coming. In using the idea of "coming" as being the arriving and departure of Jesus:

1. Jesus came first physically
2. Jesus died
3. Jesus came in resurrected physical body (2nd time coming)
4. Jesus disappeared by the Day of Pentecost
5. Jesus appeared to Saul (3rd time coming)

Any other appearing or coming, in a sense, would be subsequent to the 3<sup>rd</sup> coming. This is mostly to say that the phrase "second coming" may not have as much strength as normally assumed.

## Conclusion

It seems that the idea of second coming was developed in opposition to the natural direction of the prophetic verses, especially with respect to the foundations of the concept of the *coming* from the Old Testament.

At minimal, a doctrine for a future coming of the Lord in a physical body at a future time then must overcome the bias against such idea found in the Old Testament prophecies.

Yet it is unlikely that scripture directs minds to a spiritual coming so strongly while reserving room that Jesus was coming physically by the same verses. Of course it should be noted that the judgment had physical effects upon the people and nations, but yet there was no physical return of Jesus in bodily form as part of this physical reality.

A simple summation of the scriptures description of the *coming* and the result of the analysis herein is that the *coming* has now been shown to be a supernatural action of God to bring judgment on Judea and the nations. And some evidence was provided that showed that the judgment was a first century event. If this truly represents the meaning in the scriptures, then many changes of thought must occur within many doctrines of the Church.

Common Law Copyright 2007 by Michael, Whitney

<http://www.BibleReexamined.com/>