

79 DECODING PROPHETIC LANGUAGE— Part 1

INTRODUCTION: The inability to grasp the continuity of Old and New Testament symbolic language, has led to widespread misinterpretation of important Biblical teachings. The Word of God is one coherent whole and understanding prophetic apocalyptic passages in the Old Testament enables correct interpretation of apocalyptic passages in the New Testament. Preterist Paper #1 is foundational to all our studies.

JOSEPH'S DREAM IN GENESIS is instructive to understand the prophetic language of the Bible.

Sun, moon, and stars represent people, leaders: "He [Joseph] dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, 'Behold, I have dreamed yet another dream: and behold, the sun [his father] and the moon [his mother] and eleven stars [his brothers] bowed down to me.' He told it to his father and to his brothers. His father rebuked him, and said to him, 'What is this dream that you have dreamed? Will I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves down to the earth before you?' His brothers envied him..." Gen 37:9-11

A. SUN, MOON, STARS DARKENED = national judgment with leaders defeated and nation destroyed by war. Rescue for believers.

1. (OT) **Babylon to be conquered by Medes, 539 BC:** "Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light. The sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. "I will punish the world [Babylonian world] for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." Is 13:9-11
2. (OT) **Egypt Doomed, 585 BC:** "'When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, and bring darkness upon your land,' says the Lord God." Ez 32:7-8.
3. (OT) **Assyrian conquest of Israel, 722 BC:** "'It will happen in that day,' says the Lord Yahweh, 'that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.'" Amos 8:9
4. (NT) **Jesus prophesied the coming war with Rome when the tribes [Israel] mourn, AD 67-70:** "But immediately after the suffering of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the heavens and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven. Then all the tribes of the land will mourn..." Mt 24:29-30
5. (NT) **Jesus prophesied the coming Roman/Jewish War, AD 67-70:** "But in those days, after that oppression, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory." Mk 13:24-26
6. (NT) **Peter spoke of the first century national judgment of Israel, AD 67-70:** "I will show wonders in the heavens above, and signs on the earth beneath: blood, and fire, and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. It will be that whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." Acts 2:18-21
7. (NT) **Revelation prophesied the imminent judgment on Israel, AD 67-70:** "I saw when he opened the sixth seal.... The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became as blood. The stars of heaven fell to the earth... for the great day of his wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" Rev 6:12-17

B. RIDING ON CLOUDS & HEAVEN = invisible Divine Power directing external events (judgment and rescue)

1. (OT) **God's loving power to help:** "There is no one like God... who rides on the heavens for your help, in his excellency on the skies. The eternal God is your dwelling place. Underneath are the everlasting arms." Dt 33:26-27
2. (OT) **Yahweh is over all and blesses those who trust in Him.** "Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth! Sing praises to the Lord...to him who rides on the heaven of heavens, which are of old; behold, he utters his voice, a mighty voice. Ascribe strength to God! His excellency is over Israel, his strength is in the skies." Ps 68:32-34
3. (OT) **Yahweh is over all:** "He makes the clouds his chariot. He walks on the wings of the wind." Ps 104:3
4. (OT) **Civil War in Egypt, directed by God, 714 BC:** "Behold, Yahweh rides on a swift cloud, and comes to Egypt. The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence..." Is 19:1
5. (NT) **Coming in the clouds brings mourning to the tribes of Israel, AD 66-70:** "The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heaven. Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the heavens with power and great glory." Mt 24:30
6. (NT) **Terror-filled coming in the clouds in judgment, AD 67-70:** "There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars; and on the earth anxiety of nations...men fainting for fear and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world.... Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Lk 21:25-27
7. (NT) **Coming in clouds brings mourning to the tribes who "pierced Him", AD 67-70:** "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, including those who pierced him. All the tribes of the earth will mourn over him." Rev 1:7

8. (NT) Ingathering of faithful AD 67-70: "I looked, and saw a white cloud, and on the cloud one sitting like a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.... He who sat on the cloud thrust his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped." Rev 14:14-16

C. DAY OF THE LORD = national judgment, destruction by armies (but rescue of believers)

1. (OT) Defeat of Babylon by the Medes, 539 BC: "Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land a desolation, and to destroy its sinners out of it.... I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity. I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease..." Is 13:9-11.

2. (OT) Israel defeated by Assyrians, 721 BC: "Alas! Alas! ... In all vineyards there will be wailing, for I will pass through the middle of you," says Yahweh. "Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of Yahweh? It is darkness, and not light." Amos 5:16-18

3. (OT) Pharaoh defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, 605 BC: "For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, A day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries. The sword shall devour; it shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood; For the Lord GOD of hosts has a sacrifice in the north country by the River Euphrates." Jer. 46:10

4. (OT) Nebuchadnezzar to conquer Egypt, 587 BC: "Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: Wail, woe to the day! For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near; it will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles. The sword shall come upon Egypt, and great anguish shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain fall in Egypt, and they take away her wealth, and her foundations are broken down.'" Ez 30:2-4

5. (NT) Israel to be defeated by Rome, AD 67-70: "I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath: blood, and fire, and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. It will be that whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." Acts 2:19-21

6. (NT) Israel to be defeated by Rome, AD 67-70: "For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. For when they are saying, "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction will come on them, like birth pains on a pregnant woman. Then they will in no way escape." I Thess 5:2-3

7. (NT) Cataclysmic passing of Old Covenant Israel, AD 67-70: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements [Old Covenant practices] will be dissolved with fervent heat; and the land [of Israel] and the works that are in it will be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10

8. (NT) National judgment was near. Believers needed patience, AD 67-70: "You have lived in luxury on the earth, and taken your pleasure. You have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.... you [apostate Israel] have murdered the righteous one. He doesn't resist you. Be patient therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.... Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand... Behold, the judge stands at the door." James 5:5-9

SUMMARY THOUGHTS: The sun, moon, and stars were representative of the leaders of a nation. Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple, which housed Israel's government. To the Jews, temple leadership was representative of heaven (Heb 8:5, 9:23-24) and the destruction of the temple extinguished all their heavenly lights. History records the destruction of Jerusalem (the holy city) and the temple in AD 70.

Cloud riding or heaven riding is symbolic of God's omnipresent directing of history and has nothing to do with literal clouds. References to Yahweh symbolically riding the clouds/heaven in the Old Testament are frequent, and Jesus vowed he would come to Israel in the same manner as the Father. Luke 9:26. "Whatever things He [the Father] does, these the Son also does likewise." Jn 5:19

The day of the Lord was an expression that meant national judgment, that is, war. This is consistent in the Bible. But it also meant rescue and salvation to believers. Jesus knew those in Judea were in danger of being caught up in the war and he warned his followers to leave Judea (Lk 21:20-21) when they saw the Romans gathered outside of Jerusalem. They would see God's judgment—the day of the Lord Lk 21:25-27 but, would also be the recipients of the blessings of fellowship of "God with us" (Rev 21:3).