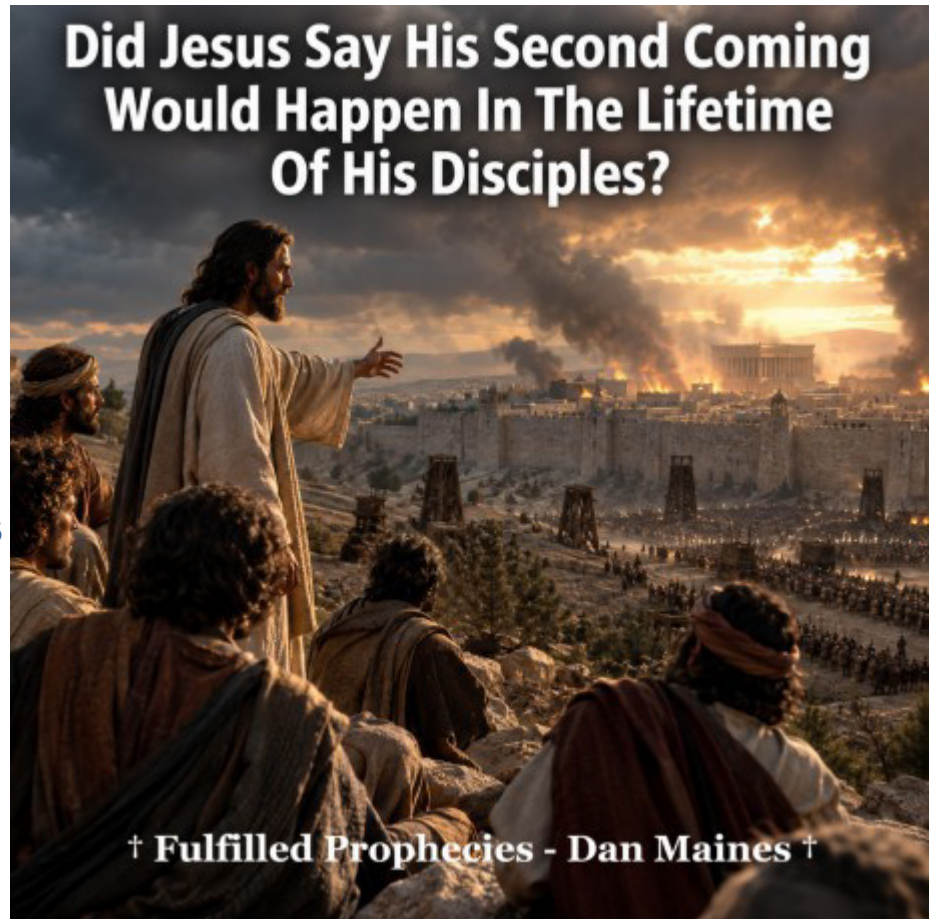


# Fulfilled Prophecies

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**Did Jesus Say His Second Coming Would Happen In The Lifetime Of His Disciples?**



By Dan Maines

**Did Jesus Say His Second Coming Would Happen In The Lifetime Of His Disciples?**

## Introduction

† One of the most important questions we can ask about Bible prophecy is also one of the simplest: When did Jesus say He would come?

† Instead of beginning with a prophecy chart, a denomination, or something we've always been taught, let's begin with the words of Jesus Himself.

† Jesus spoke directly to His disciples about His coming, and

He repeatedly connected it with people who were alive in the first century.

† If Jesus said some standing before Him wouldn't die before seeing the Son of Man coming in His kingdom, we need to believe Him.

† If Jesus told His disciples they wouldn't finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man came, we need to take His words seriously.

† If Jesus told the high priest that he would see the Son of Man coming on the clouds, we shouldn't move that statement thousands of years beyond his lifetime.

† And when Jesus placed the events of the Olivet Discourse within "this generation," He gave His disciples a time frame they could understand.

† The question isn't whether Jesus promised to come. The question is whether we believe the time statements He gave concerning that coming.

### **Matthew 10:23**

But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.

† Jesus was speaking to His disciples about their mission through the cities of Israel, and He connected that mission directly with the coming of the Son of Man.

† The words "till the Son of man be come" placed His coming within the historical mission Jesus had given those disciples.

† Jesus didn't tell them that people living thousands of years later wouldn't finish going through the cities of Israel. He said "you," referring to the disciples standing before Him.

† This fits the first-century judgment coming against that generation and Jerusalem (Matthew 23:34-36).

### **Matthew 16:27-28**

For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every person according to his deeds. "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are

standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

† Jesus described the Son of Man coming in His Father's glory, with His angels, bringing judgment according to each person's deeds.

† He immediately gave the time frame: some of the people standing there would still be alive when they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

† Jesus didn't say their descendants would see it. He didn't say people thousands of years later would see it. He said some standing there wouldn't die before it happened.

† The audience and the time statement belong together. Separating them removes the very time frame Jesus gave.

### **Matthew 24:30, 34**

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

† Jesus described His coming on the clouds and then said, "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished."

† "All these things" includes the events Jesus had just described, including the coming of the Son of Man.

† Jesus had already identified the judgment of Jerusalem as belonging to the generation then living (Matthew 23:36-38).

† Cloud-coming language was already established in the Old Testament as language describing divine judgment upon nations (Isaiah 19:1).

† Jesus wasn't teaching that His physical body had to ride on a literal cloud. He was using familiar prophetic judgment language and applying it to the judgment that would fall upon that generation.

### **Matthew 26:63-64**

But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I place

You under oath by the living God, to tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

† Jesus wasn't speaking to Christians living thousands of years later. He was speaking directly to the first-century high priest.

† Jesus told him that he would see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

† This draws directly from Daniel's vision of the Son of Man receiving dominion and a kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14).

† The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple publicly demonstrated that Jesus had been vindicated and that the authority of the rejected Messiah was real.

### **Luke 21:20-22**

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are inside the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of punishment, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled.

† Jesus identified the event clearly. Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies, and His disciples were told what to do when they saw it.

† They were to flee because these were "days of vengeance."

† Jesus said these were the days in which "all things which are written may be fulfilled."

† This wasn't a warning intended for people thousands of years later. It was practical instruction for disciples who could see Jerusalem surrounded and escape from Judea.

† The Roman war against Jerusalem in AD 66-70 provides the historical setting that matches Jesus' warning.

### **Luke 21:27-28, 31-32**

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take

place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. So you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.

† Jesus again connected the coming of the Son of Man with the same first-century events surrounding Jerusalem.

† He told His disciples to recognize these things when they saw them happening because they were the audience expected to witness the signs.

† Their redemption was drawing near, and the kingdom of God was near in its covenantal fullness.

† Jesus then repeated the time limit: "This generation shall not pass away, till all things be accomplished."

† Matthew 24 and Luke 21 aren't describing two different comings separated by thousands of years. They describe the same judgment, the same generation, and the same coming of the Son of Man.

### **Hebrews 10:36-37**

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay.

† The writer of Hebrews encouraged living first-century believers to endure because the promised coming was approaching.

† "A very little while" meant something to the original readers who were suffering and waiting.

† The writer didn't tell them Christ might come thousands of years after they died. He told them that the One who was coming would come and wouldn't delay.

† This agrees with Jesus' own first-century time statements rather than contradicting them.

### **Revelation 1:1-3**

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to

His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, everything that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

† Revelation begins by telling its original readers that the events "must shortly come to pass."

† John also said, "the time is at hand." Those statements establish the time setting before the visions are interpreted.

† The book shouldn't be removed from the time frame that God placed around it.

† Jesus' statements in the Gospels and Revelation's statements of nearness tell the same story: judgment was approaching that first-century generation.

### **Revelation 22:6-7, 10, 12**

And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." And he said to me, Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to reward each one as his work deserves.

† Revelation ends the same way it begins, the events would happen shortly, the time was near, and Jesus said He was coming quickly.

† John was specifically told not to seal the prophecy because the time was near. Daniel had been told to seal his prophecy because its fulfillment was still distant from him (Daniel 12:4, 9).

† Jesus also connected His coming with rewarding each person according to his work, the same judgment language found in His promise in Matthew 16:27-28.

† The beginning, middle, and end of the New Testament prophetic message point toward the same first-century

fulfillment.

## **Historical References**

† Josephus described the Jewish-Roman War, the siege of Jerusalem, famine, internal fighting, destruction, and the burning of the temple in AD 70. His history provides an eyewitness-era record of the catastrophe that overtook Jerusalem.

† Tacitus described the Roman campaign against Jerusalem and the enormous conflict surrounding the city and temple. His Roman history independently confirms the historical setting of the Jewish war.

† Eusebius recorded an early Christian tradition that believers in Jerusalem left the city before the war and went to Pella. This strongly resembles Jesus' instruction that those in Judea should flee when the danger became visible.

† These historical writers don't establish our doctrine, Scripture does. Their writings show that the first-century historical events fit the setting Jesus described.

## **How It Applies To Us Today**

† We don't need to live afraid that Jesus failed to keep His promise. He did exactly what He said He would do.

† We don't need to turn "this generation," "shortly," "at hand," and "quickly" into statements meaning thousands of years.

† We can trust the time statements of Scripture just as much as we trust every other statement in Scripture.

† We're not waiting for Christ to become King. He reigns now, and believers have already been transferred into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Colossians 1:13).

† We're not waiting to approach the heavenly Jerusalem. Believers have come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22-24).

† Fulfilled prophecy isn't about taking hope away. It's about recognizing that Jesus kept His word, His kingdom stands, and we can live in the reality of His finished victory today.

## **Q & A Appendix**

**Q:** Did Jesus actually say His coming would happen while some of His disciples were still alive?

**A:** Yes. Jesus said some standing before Him wouldn't taste death until they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Matthew 16:27-28).

**Q:** Doesn't Matthew 24 describe a future coming at the end of the physical world?

**A:** Jesus placed "all these things" within "this generation" (Matthew 24:30, 34). Luke's parallel account identifies Jerusalem surrounded by armies and calls those events the days of vengeance when the written prophecies would be fulfilled (Luke 21:20-22).

**Q:** What did Jesus mean by coming on the clouds?

**A:** The Old Testament already used cloud language for God's judgment upon nations (Isaiah 19:1). Jesus used established prophetic language to describe His judgment and royal authority (Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 26:64).

**Q:** If Jesus came in the first century, why didn't everyone physically see Him standing in the sky?

**A:** The prophecy didn't require Jesus to stand physically in the sky. Biblical cloud-coming language describes divine judgment and the visible historical results of God's authority (Isaiah 19:1; Matthew 24:30).

**Q:** Why does Revelation matter to this question?

**A:** Because Revelation repeatedly says its events would happen shortly, the time was near, and Jesus was coming quickly (Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-7, 10, 12).

**Q:** Are Christians today still waiting for Jesus to fulfill these coming passages?

**A:** No. These passages were directed toward first-century people and contained first-century time statements. We live

after their fulfillment, under Christ's established kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:22-24).

**Q:** If Jesus' coming was fulfilled in AD 70, does that mean His coming wasn't real?

**A:** No. It was a real coming in judgment and kingdom authority, just as God had come in judgment against nations in the Old Testament. Jesus said His generation would see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30, 34). The fulfillment was real even though it wasn't a physical descent of Jesus to stand on the earth.

**Q:** Why do so many Christians still believe these passages are about our future?

**A:** Many of us were taught to begin with a future Second Coming and then read that belief back into every coming passage. But Scripture gives us the audience and the time statements. Jesus said "this generation," Hebrews said "a very little while," and Revelation said "shortly," "at hand," and "quickly" (Matthew 24:34; Hebrews 10:37; Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-7, 10, 12). We should let Scripture establish the time frame.

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

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## **Source Index**

† Matthew 10:23; Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:30, 34; Matthew 26:63-64; Luke 21:20-22; Luke 21:27-28, 31-32; Hebrews 10:36-37; Revelation 1:1-3; Revelation 22:6-7, 10, 12

† Historical writers: Josephus, The Jewish War; Tacitus, Histories; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

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