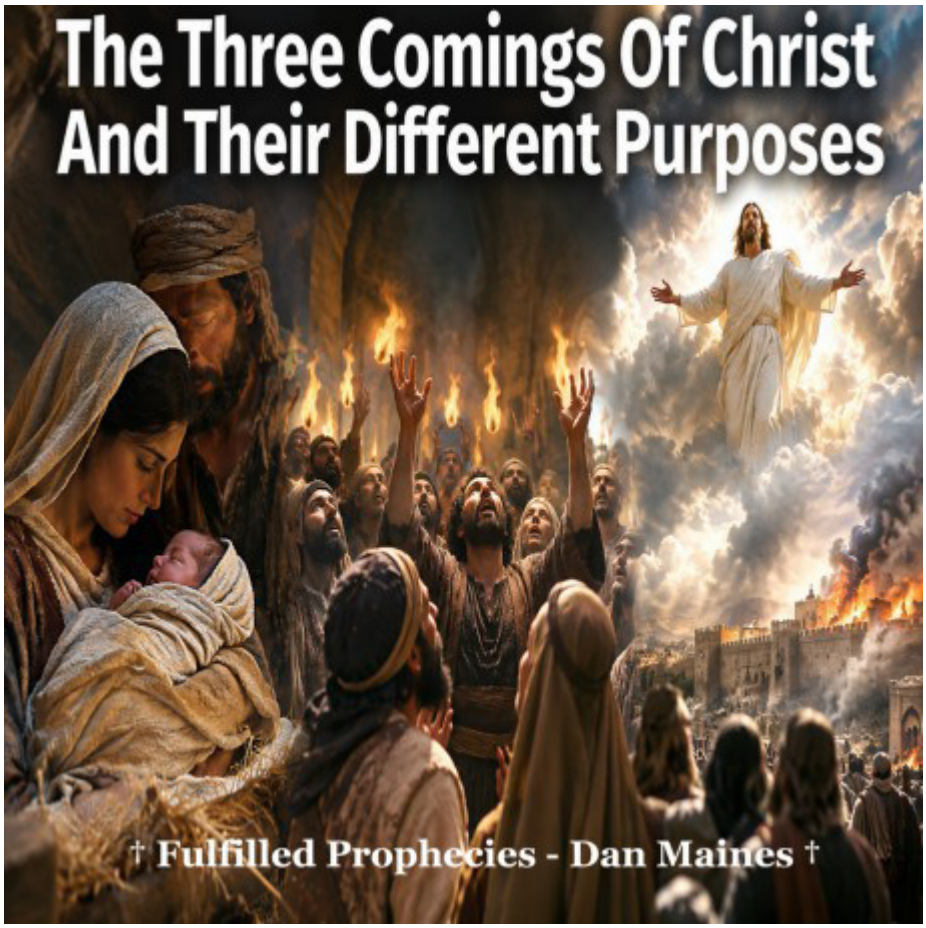
Fulfilled Prophecies

The Three Comings Of Christ And Their Different Purposes



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Scripture reveals three distinct ways Christ came to accomplish God's plan of redemption. First, He came in the flesh, born of a woman under the Law, to fulfill the promises made to Israel and establish the New Covenant through His sacrifice. Second, He came to His disciples through the Holy Spirit, sent in His name at Pentecost, to teach, strengthen, and guide the first-century believers through the covenant transition. Third, He came on the clouds in judgment against unfaithful

covenant Israel, bringing the Old Covenant age to its final conclusion in AD 70.

† These weren't three separate plans. They were three connected stages in one divine purpose. God knew Israel would break His covenant, foretold their judgment, promised a faithful Prophet, sent His Son, empowered His followers through the Spirit, and completed the covenant transition through judgment (Deuteronomy 31:16-21; 18:15-19; Hebrews 8:13).

† Understanding these three comings helps us recognize why the Holy Spirit was essential to the success of the New Covenant. The first-century believers weren't simply being asked to change their religious practices. They were being called to leave the covenant system their ancestors had followed for centuries, even when doing so could cost them their lives (Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 3:6).

God Foretold Israel's Covenant Unfaithfulness
Deuteronomy 31:16-17

The LORD said to Moses, Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them.

Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them; so that they will say in that day, 'Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?'

† Before Israel entered the Promised Land, God already knew they would become unfaithful and break His covenant. Their future rebellion wasn't a surprise to Him (Deuteronomy 31:21).

† God warned that covenant unfaithfulness would bring judgment. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was the final historical expression of the covenant judgment Jesus later

announced (Luke 21:20-22).
† This establishes an important foundation. Christ's coming in judgment wasn't an unexpected development. It belonged to the covenant history God had revealed through Moses (Deuteronomy 32:20; Matthew 24:34).

The Song Of Moses Was A Witness Against Israel
Deuteronomy 31:19, 21
Now therefore, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the sons of Israel; put it on their lips, so that this song may be a witness for Me against the sons of Israel.
Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); for I know their intent which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore.
† God commanded Moses to teach Israel a song that would serve as a continuing witness against their future unfaithfulness. The song wasn't merely worship music. It was covenant testimony (Deuteronomy 32:1-43).
† Every generation was to remember what God had warned. When judgment arrived, Israel couldn't claim God had never revealed the consequences of breaking His covenant (Deuteronomy 31:21).
† Deuteronomy 32 explains the covenant accusations, Israel's rebellion, and God's promised vengeance. These themes provide the background for Jesus' warnings concerning Jerusalem (Matthew 23:35-36; Luke 21:22).

Deuteronomy 32:20, 43
Then He said, I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be; For they are a perverse generation, Sons in whom is no faithfulness.
Rejoice, O nations, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And will render vengeance on His adversaries, And will atone for His land and His people.
† The Song of Moses identifies covenant unfaithfulness as the

reason judgment would come. God wasn't abandoning His promises. He was carrying out the consequences already revealed (Deuteronomy 31:16-17).
† The song also anticipates the vindication of God's servants and the inclusion of the nations in rejoicing. Judgment and redemption belong together in God's covenant purpose (Romans 15:10).
† Jesus later identified His own generation as the one upon whom judgment for the blood of the righteous would come. This connects the covenant warnings of Moses with the first-century judgment against Jerusalem (Matthew 23:35-36).

God Promised A Faithful Prophet Greater Than Moses
Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19
The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.
I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.
It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.
† God promised that another Prophet would arise from among Israel's own people. This Prophet would speak God's words with divine authority (Acts 3:22-23).
† Jesus fulfilled this promise. Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ was faithful as the Son over God's house. The people were commanded to listen to Him (Hebrews 3:5-6).
† Rejecting Jesus meant rejecting the very Prophet Moses had announced. Israel couldn't claim faithfulness to Moses while refusing the One Moses told them to hear (John 5:46; Acts 3:23).
† The transition from Moses to Christ wasn't a rejection of God's original purpose. It was the fulfillment of that purpose. The Law pointed forward to Christ, and Christ brought what the Law couldn't accomplish (Galatians 3:24-25).

The First Coming: Christ Was Born Of A Woman
Galatians 4:4-5
But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,
so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.
† Christ's first coming was physical and historical. He was born of a woman and entered the world under the Law of Moses (Luke 2:6-7).
† His purpose was redemption. He came to fulfill the Law, reveal the Father, offer Himself for sin, and establish the New Covenant through His blood (Matthew 5:17; Luke 22:20).
† Jesus didn't come to preserve the Old Covenant indefinitely. He came to accomplish what it anticipated and bring God's people into the promised relationship of sonship (Hebrews 8:6-13).
† His birth began the earthly ministry through which the promised Prophet would teach Israel, expose covenant unfaithfulness, and prepare His disciples for the coming kingdom (Matthew 4:17; John 1:17).

Malachi Foretold The Messenger And The Lord's Coming
Malachi 3:1-3
Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming, says the LORD of hosts.
But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.
He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness.
† Malachi foretold a messenger who would prepare the way before the Lord. Jesus identified John the Baptist as that messenger (Matthew 11:10).

† Jesus came to the temple during His earthly ministry, confronting religious corruption and announcing judgment against the unfaithful leadership (Matthew 21:12-13; 23:38).
† Malachi's refining language reveals purification and separation. Christ was establishing a people whose righteousness wouldn't depend upon the old temple sacrifices but upon His completed work (Hebrews 10:10-14).
† The apostles became servants of the New Covenant through the Spirit. Their ministry carried forward the purification and transformation begun by Christ, although Malachi specifically names the sons of Levi in his prophecy (2 Corinthians 3:6; 1 Peter 2:5).

Malachi 4:5-6
Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.
He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.
† Malachi connected the coming of Elijah with the approaching Day of the Lord. The messenger would prepare the people before judgment arrived (Luke 1:16-17).
† John the Baptist fulfilled this prophetic role. He came in the spirit and power of Elijah, calling Israel to repentance and preparing the way for Jesus (Matthew 11:14).
† This places Malachi's prophecy within the first-century ministry of John and Jesus. The promised messenger appeared before the judgment that brought the Old Covenant age to its conclusion (Matthew 3:7-12).

The Second Coming In This Sequence: The Spirit Sent In Jesus' Name
John 14:26
But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.
† Jesus promised His disciples that the Father would send the

Holy Spirit in His name. This wasn't another physical birth or an appearance on judgment clouds. It was Christ continuing His work among His people through the Spirit (John 14:16-18).
† The Spirit would remind the apostles of Jesus' teachings and guide them into truth. They wouldn't be left to establish the New Covenant through human strength or memory alone (John 16:13).
† This spiritual coming was essential because the disciples faced persecution, rejection, and the difficult transition away from the Mosaic covenant system (John 15:18-20; Hebrews 8:13).
† Strictly speaking, the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Son. Jesus described the Spirit as the Helper sent in His name. Calling this Christ's spiritual coming describes His promised presence through the Spirit, not another bodily appearance (John 14:18, 26).

John 16:7, 13
But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.
But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.
† Jesus said His departure would benefit the disciples because the Helper would come. His physical absence wouldn't mean abandonment (John 14:18).
† The Spirit would guide them into truth and disclose what was coming. This was especially important during the approaching covenant crisis Jesus had already foretold (Matthew 24:4-34).
† The apostles needed divine understanding and courage. They were being sent into a world where loyalty to Christ could mean rejection by their own religious communities and even death (John 16:2-3; Acts 7:54-60).
† Without the Spirit's promised ministry, the apostles couldn't have fulfilled their appointed mission in the way Jesus intended.

The Spirit was central to the establishment and proclamation of the New Covenant (Acts 1:8).

Pentecost Demonstrated The Spirit's Arrival
Acts 2:1, 4
When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.
† Pentecost marked the fulfillment of Jesus' promise that His disciples would receive power from the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).
† The apostles were empowered to proclaim Christ publicly. Peter stood before the people and announced that Jesus had been raised and exalted (Acts 2:32-36).
† The same disciples who had previously struggled with fear now proclaimed the gospel boldly. The Spirit strengthened them for the work of gathering people into the New Covenant (Acts 4:8-13).
† Pentecost wasn't the final judgment coming on the clouds. It was the empowering presence of God preparing the church for its first-century mission (Luke 21:12-15).

The Spirit Made The New Covenant Ministry Possible
2 Corinthians 3:6-8
who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?
† Paul contrasted the ministry engraved on stones with the ministry of the Spirit. The Old Covenant had glory, but its glory was fading before the greater glory of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:9-11).
† Leaving Moses wasn't easy. Generations had lived under the Law, observed its ceremonies, and regarded the temple as the

center of covenant worship. Accepting Christ required recognizing that the promised fulfillment had arrived (Galatians 3:23-25).
† The Spirit enabled believers to understand that righteousness and life came through Christ rather than through continued dependence upon the Mosaic covenant (Romans 8:1-4).
† This explains why the spiritual coming was so important. Christ's sacrifice established the New Covenant, and the Spirit empowered its messengers to proclaim it despite intense opposition (Hebrews 9:15; Acts 4:29-31).

The Old Covenant Was Ready To Disappear
Hebrews 8:13
When He said, A new covenant, He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.
† Hebrews identifies the Old Covenant as obsolete and approaching its final disappearance. The New Covenant had already been established through Christ (Hebrews 9:15).
† The temple and its sacrifices continued physically for a time, but their covenant authority had been superseded by Jesus' completed sacrifice (Hebrews 10:9-14).
† This transition explains the urgency of the apostolic ministry. Believers were being called to leave the old order before its visible center was destroyed in AD 70 (Matthew 24:15-16).
† The Spirit helped them understand and endure that transition. Their confidence wasn't in the survival of the temple but in the unshakable kingdom they were receiving (Hebrews 12:27-28).

The Third Coming: Christ On The Clouds In Judgment
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 as an event connected to the judgment He had announced against Jerusalem. The language recalls Daniel's vision of the Son of Man receiving dominion and kingdom authority (Daniel 7:13-14).
† Cloud-coming language also appears in Old Testament descriptions of divine judgment. God didn't need to appear physically on earth for His judgment to be historically revealed (Isaiah 19:1).
† Jesus established the time frame by declaring that His own generation wouldn't pass away before all these things occurred. This places the fulfillment within the first century (Matthew 24:34).
† The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70 demonstrated that the Old Covenant order had reached its appointed end. Christ's kingdom wasn't destroyed with the temple because His kingdom belonged to the New Covenant (Hebrews 12:28).

Matthew 26:64
Jesus said to him, You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.
† Jesus addressed the high priest directly and announced His vindication and heavenly authority. Those who condemned Him would face the consequences of rejecting God's Son (Matthew 23:37-38).
† His coming on the clouds represented royal authority and covenant judgment, not a future physical return to establish an earthly political kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14).
† The judgment against Jerusalem vindicated Christ's prophetic warnings and revealed that the rejected Messiah was reigning at the Father's right hand (Acts 2:34-36).

Luke 21:20, 22, 27, 32
But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then

recognize that her desolation is near.
because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.
Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory.
Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.
† Luke provides the historical setting by identifying Jerusalem surrounded by armies. Jesus wasn't describing an event thousands of years beyond His audience (Luke 21:20).
† He called those days the days of vengeance, connecting Jerusalem's judgment with the covenant warnings already revealed through Moses and the prophets (Deuteronomy 32:43).
† The same generation that heard Jesus' warnings would witness their fulfillment. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 brought the temple system to its visible end (Luke 21:32).
† The three comings therefore served distinct purposes. Christ came in the flesh to redeem, He sent the Spirit to empower and guide, and He came in judgment to bring the unfaithful Old Covenant order to its appointed conclusion (Galatians 4:4-5; John 14:26; Matthew 24:34).

Historical References
† Josephus, writing in The Jewish War, Books 5-6, described the siege of Jerusalem, famine, internal violence, and destruction of the temple in AD 70. His account provides historical evidence for the catastrophe Jesus foretold (Luke 21:20-22).
† Eusebius, in Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5, reported the tradition that Christians in Jerusalem were instructed to leave the city and settle at Pella before the war. This tradition reflects the early Christian understanding of Jesus' warning to flee (Matthew 24:15-16).
† Tacitus, in Histories, Book 5, described the Jewish revolt and Roman campaign against Jerusalem. His Roman perspective

independently confirms the historical setting of the first-century judgment (Luke 21:20).
† These historical writers document the destruction and its setting. They don't independently establish every theological conclusion, but their accounts are consistent with the first-century events central to the fulfilled perspective (Matthew 24:34).

How It Applies To Us Today
† God knew Israel's future before it happened, and He faithfully carried out His covenant promises. We can trust His Word because His purposes weren't defeated by human unfaithfulness (Deuteronomy 31:21; Hebrews 10:23).
† The first-century believers faced an enormous challenge. They had to let go of the covenant system their families had known for generations and recognize that Jesus had fulfilled its purpose (Hebrews 8:13).
† Christians today often face a similar challenge when examining fulfilled prophecy. Letting go of futurism can be difficult because familiar interpretations may have been taught and believed for an entire lifetime (Matthew 24:34).
† The answer isn't to attack those who disagree. It's to examine the Scriptures carefully, respect their original audience, and allow Jesus' own time statements to guide our understanding (Acts 17:11).
† The Holy Spirit wasn't an afterthought in God's plan. He was essential to the apostolic mission, strengthening believers who faced persecution and helping them proclaim the New Covenant to others (John 16:13; Acts 1:8).
† Today we live under the completed New Covenant. We don't need another sacrifice, another Pentecost, or another coming in judgment to finish what Christ accomplished (Hebrews 10:12-14).
† Our responsibility is to proclaim Christ, live faithfully, love one another, and help others understand the redemption already accomplished through Him (John 13:34-35; Colossians 1:13-

14).

Q & A Appendix

Q: What were the three comings of Christ discussed in this study?
A: His physical coming through birth, His promised presence through the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and His coming on the clouds in first-century covenant judgment (Galatians 4:4-5; John 14:26; Matthew 24:30-34).
Q: Did God know Israel would break His covenant?
A: Yes. God foretold their unfaithfulness before they entered the Promised Land and commanded the Song of Moses to serve as a witness against them (Deuteronomy 31:16-21).
Q: Why was the Song of Moses important?
A: It testified to Israel's covenant obligations, warned of judgment for unfaithfulness, and announced God's vindication of His servants (Deuteronomy 32:20, 43).
Q: Who was the Prophet Moses promised?
A: Jesus Christ. Peter identified Jesus as the Prophet whom Israel was commanded to hear (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-23).
Q: Who fulfilled Malachi's prophecy about Elijah?
A: John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus before the approaching Day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 11:14).
Q: Was Pentecost another physical coming of Jesus?
A: No. It was the coming of the Holy Spirit sent in Jesus' name, through whom Christ continued His work among His disciples (John 14:18, 26; Acts 2:1-4).
Q: Why was the Holy Spirit so important to the New Covenant?
A: The Spirit taught, guided, strengthened, and empowered the apostles to proclaim Christ despite persecution and the difficult transition away from Moses (John 16:13; 2 Corinthians 3:6-8).
Q: When did Christ come on the clouds in judgment?
A: From the fulfilled perspective, His coming in judgment was manifested in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, within the generation Jesus addressed (Matthew 24:30-34; Luke 21:20-32).

Q: Why is leaving futurism sometimes difficult?
A: Like the first-century struggle to leave the Mosaic covenant, people can become deeply attached to familiar teachings. Scripture must remain our authority over inherited interpretations (Acts 17:11; Matthew 24:34).
Q: Are Christians waiting for another covenant-changing coming of Christ?
A: No. The fulfilled perspective understands Christ's redemptive work and the first-century covenant transition as completed. Believers now live under the established New Covenant (Hebrews 8:13; 10:12-14).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †
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Source Index
† Deuteronomy 31:16-17, 19, 21; Deuteronomy 32:20, 43; Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19; Galatians 4:4-5; Malachi 3:1-3; Malachi 4:5-6; John 14:26; John 16:7, 13; Acts 2:1, 4; 2 Corinthians 3:6-8; Hebrews 8:13; Matthew 24:30, 34; Matthew 26:64; Luke 21:20, 22, 27, 32.
† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-6; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5.

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