

THE UNSEEN WORLD OF THE BIBLE

Session 12: 'The Cloud Rider'

14 January 2023

Objectives

Identify: true and false cloud riders.

Explain: why Jesus called himself Son of Man.

Understand: the limited authority of fallen 'gods'.

Affirm: everlasting salvation of loyal faith in Jesus.

Lesson Themes

"What evil misperceived as the moment of triumph turned out to be its own defeat." Heiser, *Supernatural*, 122

"Salvation is about believing loyalty—trusting what Jesus did to defeat Satan's claim, and turning from all other gods and the belief systems of which they are a part." 125

Major False Gods of the Old Testament

Ashtoreth, Astarte: Canaanite goddess of fertility, consort of Ba'al.

Ba'al, Bel: Canaanite god of weather. Yahweh's main nemesis in Israel.

Chemosh: national god of the Moabites.

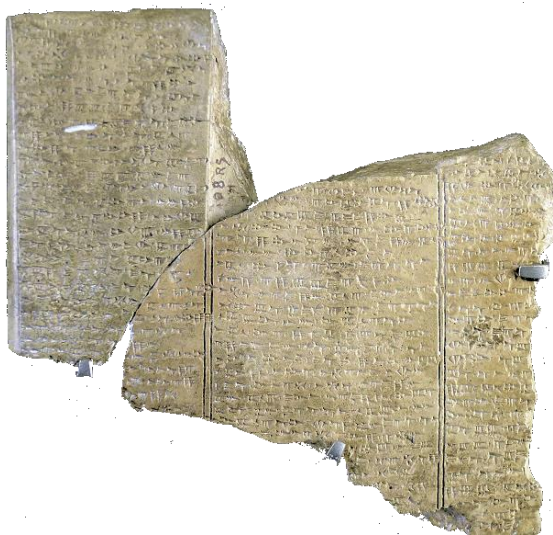
Dagon: god of the Philistines.

Marduk: Babylonian god of fertility, having many names, including Ba'al.

Milcom: National god of the Ammonites.

Moloch: Canaanite god or child sacrifice.

Ba'al Cycle Tablets



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“Cloud Rider” In Ugaritic and in Hebrew

“What enemy stood up to Bacal, (what rival, to the Rider of Clouds?”

(KTU 1.3: III: 37-38)

Rider (of the) Clouds

rākib ʿurpati

(read from left to right)

𐎒𐎗𐎒𐎗𐎒𐎗𐎒𐎗𐎒𐎗𐎒𐎗𐎒𐎗𐎒 (r k b ʿ r p t)

= rkb ʿrpt

“Extol him who rides on the clouds; ... his name is Yahweh.”

(Psa. 68:4, En 68:5)

Rider on the Clouds

rokeb ba ʿerabût

(read from right to left)

רכב בערבות (tôbrʿ b bkr)

= rkb b ʿrbt with b-p interchange

He who rides across the sky (15th century BC)

“There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides across the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty.” Deut 33:26

So Israel will live in safety;

Jacob will dwell secure in a land of grain and new wine, where the heavens drop dew. 33:28

A people saved by the LORD [Yahweh]. 33:29

He who rides across the sky (10th century BC)

“Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth, sing praise to the Lord [Adonai], to him who rides across the highest heavens, the ancient heavens, who thunders with mighty voice. Psa 68:32-33

The LORD [Yahweh] ... makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. Psalm 104:2-3

Who/what was the ‘Son of Man’ to be and to do?

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.” Daniel 7:2-3

The five empires foreseen by Daniel:

1. Babylonian 1792–539 BCE
2. Persian 550 – 330 BCE
3. Grecian 323 – 31 BCE
4. Roman 509 BCE – 1453 CE
5. Everlasting 33 CE – Perpetuity

Thrones set in heaven

"As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat... His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze." Daniel 7:9

Ancient of Days: Eternal God measured in time.

"This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD [Yahweh]." Ezekiel 1:26-28

A divine-human cloud rider (6th century BC)

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence." Daniel 7:13

Like a son of man: ke bar 'enaš, a human-like person. Jesus would later apply this title to himself.

Clouds of heaven: A divine cloud rider.

His everlasting dominion

"He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." Daniel 7:14

Everlasting: Jesus has begun to reign over those who obey him; he will one day extend his reign over everyone everywhere.

Yahweh rides clouds to Egypt (8th century BC)

"See, the LORD rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt with fear." Isaiah 19:1

Jesus identifies himself with the Son of Man.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" Matt 16:13

"Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 15-16

Query: Although we know that Jesus is both, 'Son of God' (Messiah) and 'Son of Man', how did Jews understand these two titles?

Reply: Messiah was to be king of restored Israel. But who/what was the 'Son of Man' to be and to do?

Jesus announces his soon death and resurrection.

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Matthew 16:21 NIV

Query: After signalling to the spirits that he was about to reveal his glory and reclaim the nations, how would Jesus ensure that human authorities would put him to death publicly?

Jesus confesses before the high priest (33 CE)

The high priest said to [Jesus], "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

"You have said so," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! ... "He is worthy of death," they answered. Matthew 26:63-66

The Son of Man will be crucified

Jesus ... said to his disciples, "As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. Matthew 26:1-3

Spiritual beings are powerless against us.

He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Colossians 2:13-15

He raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion. Ephesians 1:20

Why this matters

You were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. Ephesians 2:1-2

God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 2:6

What God requires of us

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8

We did not earn everlasting life by good performance,
and we cannot lose it by poor performance.
God requires of us nothing more than our loyal faith in Jesus Christ

Jesus departed from us, riding on clouds

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11

Jesus will come for us, riding on clouds

"Immediately after the distress of those days ...

all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." Matthew 24:29-31

When the harvest will be ripe

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested. Revelation 14:14-16