

“YOU WILL SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING”: THE SANHEDRIN AND THE NEARNESS OF THE PAROUSIA*

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Abstract: Limbajul apropierii Parusiei este prevalent în NT. Scopul acestui studiu este să exploreze o afirmație – „Veți vedea pe Fiul Omului venind” (Marc. 14:62; Mat. 26:64; cf. Apoc. 1:7) – pe care Hristos a adresat-o membrilor sinedrului. A promis Isus ascultătorilor Săi că-L vor vedea în persoană, la a doua Sa venire, ori venirea menționată este de natură simbolică? Trebuiau aceștia să-L vadă în realitate sau actul vederii era mai degrabă o metaforă pentru înțelegere? Trebuia ca lucrul acesta să se petreacă în generația aceea înainte ca adresații să moară? Acestea sunt cele mai importante întrebări ale acestei cercetări. Importanța acestor întrebări stă în faptul că ne oferă mai multe informații cu privire la viziunea lui Hristos despre timpul venirii Sale și facilitează oportunitatea de a aprecia mai bine limbajul NT cu privire la apropierea Parusiei. O analiză atentă a textelor de mai sus va pune în lumină cum ar fi înțeles afirmația lui Isus ascultătorii și destinatarii inițiali ai evangheliilor.

Keywords: Parousia, iminentă, apropiere, sinedriu.

1. Introduction

The language of nearness with regards to the Parousia of Jesus is quite prevalent in the NT. The purpose of this study is to explore one particular statement – “You will see the Son of Man coming” (Mark 14:62; Matt 26:64; cf. Rev 1:7), which Christ addressed to the members of the Sanhedrin in the context of His trial. The four questions of this research are: (1) did Jesus promise His audience that He will be seen by them in person, at His Parousia, (2) is the coming mentioned here symbolic, (3) were they to see Him in reality or the action of seeing is rather a metaphor for the capacity of understanding, and (4) was that supposed to happen in that generation before they would die? The importance of these questions lies in the fact that they tell more about Christ’s view on the timing of His return and facilitate one the opportunity to better fathom the NT language of nearness. Scholars are divided over the issue mostly because they have different theological worldviews. A careful analysis of the texts above will highlight how Jesus’

* „Veți vedea pe Fiul Omului venind”: sinedriul și apropierea Parusiei

immediate hearers and the initial recipients of the gospels would have understood His saying.

The methodology of the research requires the following steps. First there will be done a review of the main opinion on the issues raised here. Second, the paper will tackle the image of the coming with clouds and its most probable meaning in Matthew and Mark. Third, the study will undertake the range of meanings of the collocation “from now on” so as to clarify whether the members of the Sanhedrin were supposed to see something of a continual nature or a punctilinear event. Fourth, the verb “to see” will be analyzed in order to find out whether there is any possibility of a non-literal perception in the passages in Matthew and Mark. Fifth, the implications of the use of the second person plural pronoun will be inferred. In light of the findings, this study will conclude about the implications of Jesus’ saying for the general topic of nearness of the Parousia in the NT writings.

2. Literature Review

In literature, there are three opinions. The first is that Jesus is referring to His enthronement and Parousia (Lane 1974, p. 537; Collins/ Attridge 2007, p. 705; Allenn 1907, p. 284). This opinion is as old as Justin Martyr who partially quotes the dominical saying about Christ returning with clouds in his First Apology 51,52 (Oden/ Hall 2005, p. 219-220). Commenting on Matthews version, Nolland (2005, p. 1131-1132) argues that the Sanhedrin were to see hints of Christ’s enthronement, not necessarily understanding, but finally having no doubt about who Christ is when He comes at the consummation.

The second is that in light of Dan 7:13, Jesus alludes to a moment when He comes not to earth but before the Ancient of Days in order to receive authority. It is this universal authority that the members of the Sanhedrin would see. This dominion of Christ became expressed in the resurrection and ascension, but while the Sanhedrin did not see the risen Christ it witnessed the consequences of Christ’s kingship seen positively in the expansion of the church and negatively in the destruction of Jerusalem (France 2002, p. 611-613)¹. A simplified form of this second opinion is that Mark 14:62 promises that the Sanhedrin would see Jesus coming in judgment to his enemies (Evans 2002, p. 450-452). Positively put it, Christ judges were to see how His kingdom advances in the world. Based on the Matthean ἀπ’ ἄρτι (“from this very time on”) and the Lukan ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν (“from now on”) it is suggested that “the language cannot refer to what was to take place at the end of the world, but to what was to take place continually in the world from that time on” (Gould 1922, p. 279). Still positively, some see here Jesus promising the members of the Sanhedrin that they would understand His claims especially by His exaltation (Brooks 2001, p. 243; Hagner 2002, p. 800; Blomberg 2001, p. 403).

¹ The enthronement idea is very old and dates back to Origen (*Commentary in Matthew*, 111) as Simonetti (2002, p. 266) shows.

There is also a third view, a combination of the previous two. Thus, Jesus speaks primarily of the Parousia as the ultimate vindication of his Messiahship, but this began with the resurrection and His ascension (Davies/ Allison 2004, p. 529-531)². So the events immediate after the trial made their contribution to the perception of the Sanhedrin about Christ, while the Parousia is to definitively defend Him, but in a remote future.

There seems to be an incompatibility in the expositors’ estimation between the possibilities of a literal coming of Christ, literally seen by the Sanhedrin during their lifetime. Those who see the literal coming of Christ do not emphasize His return in that generation. They argue that Christ’s addressees would see evidences of His enthronement and later literally see Him when He returns. Scholars who stick to the time limit of the Sanhedrin’s members’ lifetime argue for a symbolic coming of Christ also symbolically perceptible to the contemporaries of Jesus either in judgments upon the Jews or in the prosperity of the Christian church. In the following section I will argue that Jesus promised the Sanhedrin to see Him coming upon return from heaven. Whether this was meant to happen during their lifetime is secondary.

3. The Coming with Clouds

One of the critical issues in Christ’s saying to his judges is the expression μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (“with the clouds of heaven”). Does it point to judgment and reception of the dominion or Parousia? The many verbal parallels between the saying of Jesus and Dan 7:13 make commentators to easily affirm that “This is an unmistakable allusion to Dan 7:13.”³ Common vocabulary between the context of the two verses include: the expression “son of man,” the description of this figure as coming, and his reception of the dominion from God. A point of disagreement, however, seems to be the destination of the son of man. In Daniel, he definitely comes before the Ancient of Days. But is Christ referring to the same thing in Mark 14:62; Matt 26:64? Neither Mark nor Matthew are specific about this. Jesus simply tells of the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. In order to find out whether this coming is in the presence of God or from heaven to earth one needs to bring into play all the contexts where the action of coming and the clouds are combined.

² “He sees the miracles of Calvary, the resurrection, the ascension, the coronation at the Father’s right hand (‘the right hand of the Power,’ that is, ‘of the Almighty’), Pentecost, the glorious return on the clouds of heaven, the judgment day, *all rolled into one*, manifesting his power and glory. On the final day of judgment, he, even Jesus, will be the Judge, and these very men – Caiaphas and his partners – will have to answer for the crime they are now committing” (Hendriksen/ Kistemaker 1953-2001, p. 932-933); italics mine.

³ Evans (2002, p. 452) argues that Dan 7:13 is a background also because of “Jesus’ previous self-references as ‘the son of man.’”

It is true that there are OT and apocryphal contexts which make the clouds to be a symbol of judgment (Nah 1:3; Zec 2:17; Epj 1:61)⁴. But clouds and coming is the combination that informs Jesus' saying to the Sanhedrin. For this we turn exclusively to the NT. The shortened form of the expression is found in Rev 1:7. Here, the phrase Ἰδοὺ ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν is obviously a description of the second coming. Moreover, the expression Ἰδοὺ ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν is not strictly speaking a verbatim quotation from the LXX as we have it. The Septuagintal phrase in Dan 7:13 is Ἰδοὺ ἔρχεται ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν. It is in Theodotion's rendition of Dan 7:13 where the preposition ἐπὶ is replaced with μετὰ. It is hard to believe that John relies on Theodotion and not on the LXX. Indeed, the more common way of expression in Greek combine ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν or ἐν νεφέλαις. Thus, in Mark's version of the Olivet Discourse, the Son of Man is seen "coming in clouds" (ἐρχόμενον ἐν νεφέλαις, Mark 13:26), whereas in Matthew's version He is seen "coming on the clouds" (ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν, Matt 24:30). Both these verses refer to the Parousia and, interestingly enough, both Mark and Matthew are consistent in making Jesus repeat the exact same expression before the Sanhedrin (cf. Mark 14:62; Matt 26:64). At the moment of the consummation, 1 Thess 4:17 pictures the faithful being taken "in the clouds" (ἐν νεφέλαις) to meet the Lord.

In light of all this data, it is almost unavoidable to conclude that the most natural meaning associated with the son of man coming with/ on/ in the clouds of heaven is His Parousia. Jesus talks to the Sanhedrin about His coming at the end of time. Because the addressees of Jesus were supposed to see this with their own eyes and from the time of the statement onward, there are scholars who cannot see the allusion to Christ's second coming⁵. But as it will be shown further, these limitations are not to outrun the pragmatic meaning of the expression "coming with the clouds", which is clearly eschatological. The next step in our research is finding out what Matthew and Luke meant by the expression "from now on".

⁴ "The phrase 'coming with the clouds of heaven' – see also Dan 7:13; Joel 2:2; Zeph 1:15; Rev 1:7; 14:14-16 – reminds us of the fact that Scripture frequently associates 'a cloud' or 'clouds' with the idea of judgment, God's coming in order to punish the wicked. This, however, is by no means always the case. In fact, sometimes it is God's love, mercy, and grace that are emphasized (Exod 34:5-7), though even then punitive justice is not left out of the description" (Hendriksen/ Kistemaker 1953-2001, p. 612).

⁵ "On this understanding of the imagery the 'coming on the clouds of heaven' cannot be read as a reference to the *parousia*, as has been the traditional exegesis until relatively recently. See on 24:30 for a parallel issue, where exactly the same words are used (without the intervening reference to Ps 110:1) with reference, as I argued there, to the enthronement of the Son of Man in contrast to the destruction of the temple. There the event predicted was to take place within 'this generation,' and here too Matthew's wording demands a fulfillment which is imminent rather than set in the indefinite future: it is something which 'you' (the current Sanhedrin members) 'will see,' and it will come true 'from now on'" (France 2007, p. 1027-1028).

4. “From Now On”

Unlike Mark who tells nothing about when Christ’s judges will see His kingship and coming, both Matthew and Luke use similar expressions to suggest continuity⁶. Matthew uses ἀπ’ ἄρτι (Matt 26:64), while Luke prefers ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν (Luke 22:69). Luke omits the coming of the Son of Man and creates no problem with regards to the Son of Man being continuously seen as sitting at the right side of the power of God. But Matthew includes also the coming of Jesus. Therefore, scholars cannot fathom how an event such as the Parousia can constantly be seen taking place. Therefore, they dismiss that Jesus spoke about His return.

It is true that ἀπ’ ἄρτι “is quite emphatic”⁷. It is also problematic primarily in light of how things took place after. The Sanhedrin see only a chained man making bold claims about himself. Are these claims pointing to the Parousia? It has been recorded that the disciples only see the exalted Lord in all His power and authority (cf. 28:18-20). The Jewish leaders only witness some bad omens such as the tearing of the temple inner curtain, an earthquake in the context of Jesus’ death, the resurrection of the dead saints (27:51-53), and the disappearance of Jesus’ body (28:11-15). Luz and Koester suggest that “If we want to avoid taking refuge in impossible philological artifices, there is only one possible solution. Verse 64 is to be read not merely as an empirically recoverable sentence but at the same time as a histologically programmatic sentence”⁸. This would mean that “from now on” conveys that the whole world will see things in a different perspective. However, this too seems to be an artifice.

Rather the very fact that within a few days we have Christ risen from the dead and assuming His divine royalty, while neither the high priest nor any of his companions did at that time literally witness Jesus coming before their eyes in glory

⁶ Continuity is also present in Mark, as France (2007, p. 611-613) argues: “Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark does not specify *when* they will see, but in the comments that follow I shall argue that he has in mind the same immediacy which is expressed in Matthew’s ἀπ’ ἄρτι and Luke’s ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν. That is, after all, what the second-person address would naturally imply: the vision will be that of those who hear Jesus speaking, not of some future generation... We need not be more specific, since Mark is not, but within this complex of events it would certainly be possible for Jesus’ judges within their lifetime to see that the ‘Messiah’ they thought they had destroyed had in fact been vindicated and exalted to the place of supreme authority”.

⁷ “Those listening to Jesus are asked to see in the person surrounded by enemies The-Man-in-glory, the cloud rider of Dan 7:13 ff. (cf. also Ps 110:1). In a very real sense this is the climax of all that Matthew’s tradition has so carefully preserved for us in the sayings about The Man. Though Jesus does not say ‘You will see *me*’, the identification is plain enough to his hearers” (Albright/ Mann 2008, p. 333).

⁸ “‘From now on’ means that for Jesus’ blinded judges who see nothing of the truth the only perspective remaining is the future of the judgment of the world” (Luz/Koester 2005, p. 430).

and coming with/ on the clouds of heaven. “To insist that the expression must be taken to mean ‘from now’ overlooks the fact that neither the friends of Jesus nor his enemies could see the change of which he speaks beginning ‘now’. While seeing the roots of the change in what was to happen immediately, it appears that the complete fulfilment of what Jesus is saying belongs to the future” (Morris 1992, p. 684). There seems then to be another explanation to look for.

This comes through BDF §12, the section on word division in the NT. BDF explain the phenomenon of *scriptio continua* and the principles based on which the ancient writers were to divide the text⁹. These principles are not absolute however and there remained many exceptions and instances where the text can be divided in more than one way. Such an example is our ἀπ’ ἄρτι, which at least in some cases could be read as ἀπαρτί, found in Ionic and popular Attic, and means ‘exactly, certainly’. This seems to be the case in Rev 14:13 for example, where the combination ἀποθνήσκοντες ἀπ’ ἄρτι seems infelicitous. One cannot die from now on, since death is a momentary experience. And so is the Parousia. Therefore, in Matt 26:64, BDF, 8¹⁰ would have ἀπαρτί in combination with ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου... ἐρχόμενον, with the result “certainly, you will see the son of man... coming”. With such a reading, there is no need to force participle “coming” to mean anything other than the Parousia.

At least some exegetes would embrace this direction of thought:

We should read ἀπαρτί instead (BDF § 12:3) and so find a prophecy of the *parousia*. Although usually quickly dismissed, this is a real possibility; ἀπαρτί ‘certainly’ is probably the right reading in Rev 14:13 and possibly Jn 13:19. Here moreover ‘the usual reading of Matt 26:64 with ἀπ’ ἄρτι, “from now on”, does not make good sense at all, because a prediction beginning “From now on you will see” must be followed by a continuous state, not a single event, as the object of the vision. (Davies/ Allison 2004, p. 530)

Davies/ Allison (2004, p. 531) go on showing what the reasons for which Jesus could have and not have spoken about ascension and enthronement are. In support of the idea that the Son of Man was to go *to* God and not to come to earth *from*

⁹ They make reference to principles such as (1) words must be separated when the constituent elements cannot be separated by another word; (2) words need separation when some new accent is created; and (3) there needs to be a separation when new meanings arise and impact the whole.

¹⁰ Not all scholars agree with this. Hagner (2002, p. 800), for example, thinks that Matthew could have been clearer if this was his intention. “As a third possibility, but less probably, ἀπ’ ἄρτι could be taken as a single word with the quite rare meaning ‘certainly’ ” (BDAG, 81a; BDF §12[3]); thus: “Assuredly you will see the Son of Man...”. This avoids the problem of ἀπ’ ἄρτι being placed before ὄψεσθε, “you will see”, but if this is what the evangelist meant, he could have chosen much more obvious words or phrases”. However, in light of *scriptio continua*, there is no need to conjecture Matthew’s lack of clarity. It is probably the opacity of the reader to be first blamed.

God, there are several evidences brought up. First, since Jesus makes an allusion to Ps 110:1, which is elsewhere in the NT used to describe Christ’s coronation and ascension, there seems natural to infer the same idea in Matt 26:64. Second, Dan 7:13 clearly portrays the one like a son of man going into the presence of the Ancient of Days. Third, the phrase ἄπ’ ἄρτι would point out to an immediate future, most probably to Jesus’ exaltation, but not in reference to His Parousia. However, Dan 7 does not only speak about the one like a son of man coming into the presence of God, but also of the Ancient Days marching to earth for judgment (cf. Dan 7:22). Further, in both Matt 26:64 and Mark 14:62 the sitting is put before coming. This means by logical necessity that the coming cannot be in the presence of God, since Jesus is already sitting at God’s right side. Lastly, the definitive argument comes, as I have partly shown before, from Matthew’s use of the same imagery elsewhere in his gospel. Thus, the coming of the Son of Man indiscriminately refers to the Parousia. Also, the image of Christ sitting on a throne is an eschatological tableau (cf. Matt 19:28; 25:31), never related to an earthly kingdom. So far, it was shown that Christ promises to the members of the Sanhedrin that certainly they will see Him coming. But what exactly does the verb “to see” imply?

5. The Verb to See

In trying to harmonize the promise of Jesus to the Sanhedrin with the fact that He did not return as yet, some scholars prefer to take the verb “to see” in the sense of “to understand”¹¹. But is that legitimate so far as the usage in the NT is concerned? According to LSJ, *s.v.* the metaphorical usage of ὁράω is present in classical Greek. Thus, for example, SOPHOCLES (p. 78-152) has the blind Oedipus say: φωνῇ γὰρ ὁρῶ, τὸ φατιζόμενον (“For I see by sound, as the saying is”) or the comic poet ALEXIS (p. 382-389, 391-423, 425-440, 442-462, 464-522, 52) has one of his character “seeing” the smell of wine (οἴνου μόνον ὀσμὴν ἴδωσιν).

BDAG, *s.v.* identifies several types of combinations that make the verb ὁράω to convey the meaning of understanding: (1) when it is combined with accusative followed by infinitive; *e.g.* ὁρῶ, κράτιστε Διογνητε, ὑπερῆσπουδακότα σε τὴν θεοσέβειαν τῶν Χριστιανῶν μαθεῖν (“I see you, most excellent Diognetus, having taken exceedingly great pains to learn about the way Christians worship God”) (*The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus* 1)¹²; (2) in the case of ὁράω + ὅτι, *e.g.* ἰδόντες ὅτι (Mark 2:16), ἰδὼν ὅτι (Mark 12:28¹³); (3) when it is combined with indirect quest

¹¹ See for example: “The statement ‘you will see’ (gr. ὄψεσθε) does not necessarily imply that Jesus will return as judge to punish his enemies. Note that chapter 13 does not portray Jesus executing such a judgment when he returns as Son of Man (13:24-27). Rather, the activity he comes to carry out is the gathering of the elect. The force of “you will see” is that Jesus will be vindicated in their eyes” (Collins/ Attridge 2007, p. 705).

¹² DIOGNETUS (p. 52-84).

¹³ This is by far the most common type. See for other examples M. Ant. 9, 27, 2 (MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS, p. 4-250); Philo, Migr. Abr. 46 (PHILO, p. 1-60); Just., D. 23, 3 al.

following, e.g. οὐχ ὄραξ, ὅσω πλείονες κολάζονται, τοσοῦτω, πλεονάζοντας ἄλλους (“Do you not see that the more of them are punished, the greater becomes the number of the others?”) (*The Epistle of Mattheos to Diognetus* 7:8¹⁴); (4) when direct discourse follows ὄρατε (“You see, brethren, jealousy and envy wrought a brother’s murder”) (1 Cl 4:7).

When it comes to Mark 14:62 and Matt 26:64, ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου does not meet any of the criteria above. Therefore, it must mean that Caiaphas and company were to see Jesus in reality, with their own eyes. It is the same literal sense like in Mark 16:7 and Matt 28:7 where the disciples are told by the angel that they will see Jesus in person in Galilee (ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε). This was by no means metaphorical.

Now, if the perception was to be physical, it applies to both the act of coming and to the act of sitting. We cannot apply the verb in two different ways in the same text. This consistency makes good sense. The Sanhedrin was to see Jesus both sitting and coming at the Parousia. How can this be? Indeed, some find a problem in juxtaposing the action of sitting, which is stationary, and the action of coming, which implies movement. And one way to avoid this is to suggest that the high priest and the other judges were to see evidences that Jesus sits at the right side of God and later on literally see Jesus coming on the clouds at the Parousia. But this is inconsistent with the laws of semantics.

Here is how Evans answers these issues:

Juel (*Messiah and Temple*, 95), finding incongruous the juxtaposition of being “seated”, which implies being stationary, and “coming”, which implies movement, concludes that “two separate scenes” have been combined. However, this supposition is unnecessary, for we find Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13 combined in Jewish exegesis (cf. *Midr. Ps.* 2.9 [on Ps 2:7]), which suggests that ancient exegetes found nothing incongruous in linking these texts. But the incongruity itself vanishes when we recognize that the throne of which Dan 7:9 speaks is God’s chariot throne, whose “wheels were burning fire” (cf. Ezek 1, 10). One can be *seated* and *moving* because one is in a chariot. (Evans 2002, p. 452)

In conclusion, there is no indication in the affirmation of Jesus that He was referring to understanding and not visual perception. He warned Caiaphas and the

(JUSTIN, p. 90-265); 1 Cl 12:8; 23:4; 44:6 (CLEMENT, p. 98-204), Gen 8:13; 16:4; 26:28; 39:13, Exod 3:2; 10:10; 20:22, Deut 5:24; 9:16; 32:39, Josh 8:21; 23:4, Jdg 12:3; 20:41, 1 Sam 10:14; 12:12, 17; 13:6; 28:21, 2 Sam 10:14; 17:23; 1 Kgs 3:28; 21:7, 2 Kgs 5:7; 11:1; 12:11, 1 Chr 19:15, 2 Chr 22:10; 24:11, 1 Macc 3:29; 4:20; 9:16; 11:39, Ps 33:9; 118:159, Odes 2:39, Eccl 3:22, Wis 18:1, Sir 24:34, Isa 22:9; 56:10, Jer 2:19, Bar 2:17, Ezek 19:5; 23:13, Dan 2:8; 4:23, Dat 2:8, 45, Bel 1:11, Matt 2:16, Luke 17:15; 24:39, John 6:22; 7:52, Acts 14:9, Gal 2:7, 14, Jas 2:24; 5:11.

¹⁴ See also 1 Cl 16:17; 41:4; 50:1; 15:8.

rest that they will see Him sitting in power and glory and coming on the clouds of heaven, both activities to take place at the Parousia.

6. Does “You” Infer During Lifetime?

The last question of this study is whether the second person plural address implies that Jesus would have come during their lifetime. When one understands the language of Jesus figuratively this is not an issue. If Jesus referred to evidences of His enthronement and His coming in judgment, the idea that the addressees were to see for themselves all these is the natural reading. Nonetheless, if as I have argued Jesus talked about His Parousia then the question is legitimate. Did He affirm that His judges will not die before Him to return?

There are three observations that inform the answer to this question. The first regards the usage of the second person. There are texts where the use of the second person with regards to the Parousia implies death and resurrection between the moment of speech and the fulfilment of the saying. One example is: ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων, ὅταν ὀψησθε Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ καὶ πάντας τοὺς προφῆτας ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὑμᾶς δὲ ἐκβαλλομένους ἔξω (“There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you will see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you being cast out”) (Luke 13:28). It is obvious that the addressees of Jesus were to experience the expulsion from the kingdom of God after the resurrection, since Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets were to be resurrected at the consummation (Luke 20:37-38; cf. Matt 22:32, Mark 12:26-27). Though Luke 13:28 does not exclude as such that the resurrection could take place before the interlocutors of Jesus die, the mention of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the prophets may imply that those Jesus addresses would likewise experience death as the three patriarchs and the past prophets had.

A second example is: λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ πῖω ἀπ’ ἄρτι ἐκ τούτου τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ὅταν αὐτὸ πίνω μεθ’ ὑμῶν καινὸν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου (“But I tell you, I will by no means drink from this fruit of the vine until that day when I will drink it new with you in the kingdom of my father”) (Matt 26:29). Like in the previous example, the death of the disciples may be implied in the fact that Christ himself was to pass through that experience just a day after the moment of speech. Therefore, the celebration in the heavenly kingdom may include death and resurrection meanwhile.

This seems to be confirmed by the only verse in the NT which is directly echoing the text under study (Mark 14:62, Matt 26:62). This is Rev 1:7, which reads: Ἴδοὺ ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, καὶ ὄψεται αὐτὸν πᾶς ὀφθαλμὸς καὶ οἵτινες αὐτὸν ἐξεκέντησαν, καὶ κόψονται ἐπ’ αὐτὸν πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς (“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and every tribe of the earth will mourn Him”) (Rev 1:7). The image of coming “with clouds” is verbatim taken from Mark 14:62 and Matt 26:62, and is found only

here. The verbal connection is strong. Now, John writes at the end of the first century, which means after more than 6 decades since the incident in the hall of the high priest. Probably, most of the members of the Sanhedrin, if not all, were dead by the time John writes. This suggests that the warning of Jesus remains valid and its fulfillment includes the death of the addressees.

This is not to say that the first-hand witness necessarily took Christ's statement this way. It should not be overlooked the fact that at least some of the members of the Sanhedrin were Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection. Therefore, when they heard Christ forewarning them about seeing Him when He comes, they may not have thought about dying and experiencing that after resurrection.

7. Conclusions

Christ promised the high priest and Sanhedrin that they will see Him at His Parousia, and this implied an interim time span of death. However, they did not understand it in this terms since they expect no resurrection.

One implication about this for the topic of nearness and delay in the NT is that many of the promises of soon return of Jesus may imply that the initial recipients will experience death meanwhile. The impact on the first readers however highlights nearness, either in negative or positive terms. The promise of the soon second coming is not a promise of divine foreknowledge, but one of divine conditional plan. Whenever the conditions were fulfilled He would have come.

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