

made to *pasai hai phulai tēs gēs* (πάσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς) or “all the tribes of the earth”<sup>163</sup> mourning at the sight of Yeshua the Messiah returning. This is an expansion of the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10-14, which indicates how Israel proper will look at its pierced Messiah and mourn, now including the entire world:

“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves; all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves” (Zechariah 12:10-14).

To be significantly reckoned with, as it involves not just the return of the Messiah but the nature of the Messiah, is how Yeshua not only refers to Himself as the “Son of Man” (Mark 13:26; Matthew 24:30b; Luke 21:27) coming in the clouds—but that quotations from Daniel 7:13-14 are witnessed. When this is considered, the One arriving to Planet Earth is no mere supernatural figure, but He is One coming to inaugurate a significant phase of salvation history:

“I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14).

While the description of Yeshua “coming on the clouds” is here to be viewed from the vantage point of His future, literal descent to Planet Earth, this is not His only quotation from Daniel 7:13-14. The concept of Yeshua “coming on the clouds” will be repeated again at His trial before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:62; Matthew 26:64), where He is accused of blasphemy.

## **Mark 13:6; Matthew 24:5; Luke 21:8**

### **“The Rise of False Messiahs”**

“Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He!’ and will mislead many” (Mark 13:6).

“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will mislead many” (Matthew 24:5).

“And He said, ‘See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, “I am He,” and, “The time is near.” Do not go after them”’ (Luke 21:8).

Frequently in the Gospels, those who hold to a high Christology connect statements made by Yeshua, where He employs “I am” or what appears in the source text as *egō eimi* (ἐγώ εἰμι), with the revelation of the LORD or YHWH at the burning bush as “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14). Those who advocate a low Christology of Yeshua as a created supernatural agent of God, will often argue back that *egō eimi* or “I am” can be used by entities which are unambiguously

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<sup>163</sup> Messianic versions such as the CJB/CJSB and TLV have probably done a disservice by having, “all the tribes of the L/land.”

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

created, and thus that using “I am” really does not mean anything. It needs to be recognized that the specific usage of “I am” is always contingent on the context in which it is spoken, as it can be used to indicate some kind of association with the Exodus 3:14 theophany, or it can be used as a simple statement of self-identification of one person or entity to another. Several uses of *egō eimi* appear in the source text of Yeshua’s Olivet Discourse, in the Messiah’s warnings of Mark 13:6; Matthew 24:5; and Luke 21:8.

In Matthew 24:5, the Lord warns His Disciples, as appears in the source text, *polloi gar eleusontai epi tō onomati mou legontes egō eimi ho Christos* (πολλοὶ γὰρ ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου λέγοντες· ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ χριστός), “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah’” (TLV). Later on, Yeshua informs His Disciples, “Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many...For false Messiah’s and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:11, 24). The statement to be made by some, “I am the Christ” or “I am the Messiah,” has been concluded to be a statement made by false spiritual leaders affirming that Yeshua is the Messiah, but who will obviously present concepts of the Messiah and teachings which are apostate. Alternatively, though, it need not be excluded that “I am the Messiah,” *egō eimi ho Christos*, is reflective of figures which will arise who actually think themselves to actually be the Messiah. In his commentary on Matthew, Hagner offers the general summary,

“[T]he attention is upon the πολλοὶ, ‘many,’ who will claim—presumably not at once, but over a period of time—ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ χριστός, ‘I am the Christ [=Messiah].’ The statement that such persons will come ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ‘in my name,’ means either that they will come using the name of Jesus...or that they will come assuming the messianic office of Jesus...The claim to be the Christ means here the claim to be the eschatological Messiah.”<sup>164</sup>

Unlike what is witnessed in Matthew 24:5, which could be taken as various people usurping the place of Yeshua the Messiah, by claiming *egō eimi ho Christos*, “I am the Christ” or “I am the Messiah”—or perhaps even “I am the Anointed One”—the source text of both Mark 13:6 and Luke 21:8 uses *egō eimi* isolated. As such, most English translations will render *egō eimi* with “I am He” (NKJV, NASU) or “I am he” (RSV/NRSV/ESV), as a statement of self-identification, with people either claiming that Yeshua is the Messiah or that they are the Messiah/Anointed One. Yet, what might change in one’s orientation to these passages if “I am” were considered as the alternative translation?

“For many will come in My name, saying, I AM [*eπi tō onomati mou legontes egō eimi*, ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου λέγοντες ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι]! And they will lead many astray” (Mark 13:6, LITV).

“And He said, Watch that you not be led astray. For many will come on My name, saying, I AM [*eπi tō onomati mou legontes egō eimi*, ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου λέγοντες· ἐγὼ εἰμι]! Also, The time has come! Do not go after them” (Luke 21:8, LITV).

Recognizing what is stated in Matthew 24:5; Mark 13:6; and Luke 21:8, Morris observes in his Matthew commentary, “Mark and Luke both mention that the false teachers will say, ‘I AM.’ This probably means ‘I am he’ and will be another way of claiming to be the Messiah, but we should not overlook the fact that there is a hint of the divine name about this form of speech and that Jesus may well be warning that some of these people will come close to claiming deity.”<sup>165</sup> While much probably awaits us in future history, in terms of the future antimessiah/antichrist not just declaring himself to be “the Anointed One” but perhaps even

<sup>164</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 690.

<sup>165</sup> Morris, *Matthew*, 597.

invoking “I am” as though he were God (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:4)<sup>166</sup>—there is actually some academic debate over the ancient figure of Simon Magus, who tried to purchase the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:5-24), and whether he actually invoked himself to be the “I am.”<sup>167</sup>

Not all uses of *egō eimi* or “I am” in the source text of the Apostolic Scriptures imply that an entity is God, or even that an entity is supernatural. This is why it is important that the surrounding details be evaluated, of what an entity speaking or identifying with “I am” involve.

## **Mark 13:32; Matthew 24:36**

### **“Why Does the Son Not Know the Time of His Return?”**

**“But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone”** (Mark 13:32).

**“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone”** (Matthew 24:36).

The statement made by Yeshua the Messiah, in His Olivet Discourse about the time of His return, has generated no small discussion about His nature: “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matthew 24:36, NIV). That this statement does feature in any analysis as to whether or not Yeshua is the eternal, uncreated Son of God or a created supernatural agent sent by God, is obvious, given the conclusions of those who hold to a low Christology. Commenting on Mark 13:32, one proponent of a low Christology forthrightly concludes, “This statement of Jesus that the Son of God does not know the time of the Parousia rules out any dogma about Jesus being God Himself.”<sup>168</sup> For Matthew 24:36, this same person just states, “Proving beyond all argument that the Son of God cannot be GOD.”<sup>169</sup> The logic offered is that if God is an omnipotent being knowing all things, and that if Yeshua says in Mark 13:32 and Matthew 24:36 that the Son does not know the time of the Second Coming, thus Yeshua cannot be God.

Proponents of a high Christology would first counter such logic, by interjecting the reminder that there are claims made in the Apostolic Writings or New Testament, of Yeshua of Nazareth, which would be considered blasphemy to the God of Israel if Yeshua is not, in fact, integrated into the Divine Identity. Secondly, since the early centuries of emerging Christianity, it has not gone unnoticed that passages such as Mark 13:32 and Matthew 24:36 do need to be reckoned with. An evangelical Christian voice such as Carson, who doubtlessly holds to a high Christology of Yeshua being God, critically observes for Matthew 24:36,

“Jesus’ self-confessed ignorance on this point has generated not a little debate. In fact, it is part of the NT pattern of his humiliation and incarnation (e.g., 20:23; Luke 2:52; Acts 1:7; Phil 2:7). John’s Gospel, the one of the four Gospels most clearly insisting on Jesus’ deity, also insists with equal vigor on Jesus’ dependence on and obedience to his Father—a dependence reaching even to his knowledge of the divine. How NT insistence on Jesus’ deity is to be combined with NT insistence on his ignorance and dependence is a matter of profound importance to the

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<sup>166</sup> “[W]ho opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

<sup>167</sup> Cf. D.E. Aune, “Simon Magus,” in *ISBE*, 4:516-517.

<sup>168</sup> Anthony F. Buzzard, trans., *The One God, the Father, One Man Messiah Translation* (Atlanta: Restoration Fellowship, 2014), 149.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.