

Olivet Discourse, Matt 24-25

The Olivet Discourse, Matt 24-25

Overview

The Olivet Discourse completes the third of the four sections in Matthew's account of the Passion of Jesus the Messiah.

The entire section begins with narrative (20:17-21:17), but once the Lord arrives in Jerusalem, reported speech dominates (21:18-25:45). Each of these in turn can be divided into two parts, based on the involvement of the Jewish leaders (Table 1, chart).

		Genre	
		Narrative	Exposition
Participants	Disciples	20:17-34 Final Ascent	Ch. 24-25 Olivet Discourse
	Jewish Leaders	21:1-17 Triumphal Entry	21:18-23:39 Great Debate

Table 1: Structure of ch. 20b-25

- The entry into Jerusalem proper (21:1-17) engages the final conflict with the religious leaders, which is not explicit during the journey up to the Mount of Olives (20:17-34).
- The audience for the extensive debate and exposition is first the Jewish leaders (21:18-23:39), then the disciples (ch. 24-25).

24:1-3, Setting

24:1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple:--At the end of the Great Debate, the Lord declared (v. 38) that “Your house is left unto you desolate.” We saw that this is an echo of a common OT statement about what happened to the temple at the time of the Babylonian conquest. Before God allowed the temple to be destroyed, Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord departing from the temple.

First, in ch. 8, God shows him a series of abominations in the temple (chart, Figure 1). Throughout this revelation, God addresses Ezekiel by his title, “Son of Man,” which in the OT overwhelmingly belongs to Ezekiel.

Eze 8:5 behold northward at the **gate of the altar** this **image of jealousy** in the entry. 6 He said furthermore unto me, **Son of man**, seest thou what they do? ... but turn thee yet again, **and thou shalt see greater abominations**. ...

10 So I went in and saw; and behold **every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols** of the house of Israel, poured upon **the wall** round about. 12 Then said he unto me, **Son of man**, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark,... 13 He said

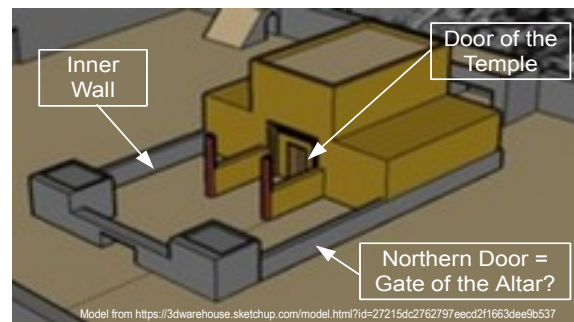


Figure 1: Abominations in the Temple

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also unto me, Turn thee yet again, *and thou shalt see greater abominations* that they do.

14 Then he brought me to **the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north**; and, behold, there sat **women weeping for Tammuz**. 15 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, **O son of man**? turn thee yet again, *and thou shalt see greater abominations* than these.

16 And he brought me into **the inner court** of the LORD'S house, and, behold, **at the door of the temple** of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and **they worshipped the sun** toward the east. 17 Then he said unto me, **Hast thou seen this, O son of man**?

Then, in chapters 10-11, he sees the Glory of the Lord depart (Figure 2, chart).

Eze 10:4 Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub [on the Ark of the Covenant], *and stood over the threshold of the house*;

Eze 10:18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims [carrying the throne]. 19 And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also *were* beside them, and *every one* stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD'S house; and the glory of the God of Israel *was* over them above.

Eze 11:22 Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel *was* over them above. 23 And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which *is* on the east side of the city.

As Jeremiah's history eloquently shows, the Jewish hierarchy thought that the temple would protect them from Gentile attack, but they did not know that the Lord had abandoned it. Six years after Ezekiel's vision, Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the temple.

There is a remarkable parallel between the history of the First Temple in the last days of the kingdom of Judah, and what is happening in the NT (Table 2, chart). Just as Ezekiel, the OT Son of Man, saw unspeakable abominations in the temple, so our Lord, the NT Son of Man, has just disclosed the hopeless corruption of the temple of his day. Just as the divine Spirit left the temple in response to the abominations, so the NT Son of God now departs. Just as the glory of the Lord paused on the Mount of Olives to contemplate the now-abandoned temple, so our Lord sits on

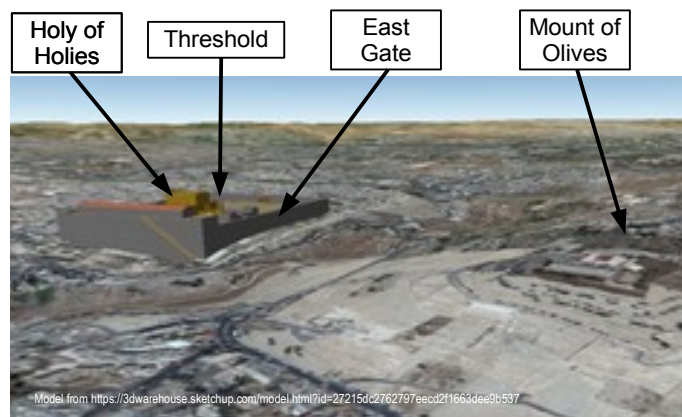


Figure 2: The Glory of the Lord leaves the temple

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the Mount of Olives and reflects with his disciples on the disaster that is about to happen.

and his disciples came to *him* for to shew him the buildings of the temple.--We can imagine that they are feeling conflicted. He has just shown the apostasy of the leadership, but they cannot help but be impressed by the grandeur of the building itself. The Talmud records,

	Babylon, ~600 BC	Rome, AD 30-70
The Son of Man witnesses corruption in the Temple	Ezek 8, 18 Sept 592 BC	Matt 23 31 March AD 33
The Glorify of the Lord = Son of God abandons the temple, looking back from the Mount of Olives	Ezek 10-11	Matt 23:38 Your house is left unto you desolate
	10:18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house	Matt 24:1 And Jesus went out and departed from the temple
	11:23 And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.	24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives ...
The temple is destroyed	Jer 52:12-13, 28 Aug 587 BC	10 Aug AD 70

Table 2: Parallels between Matthew 23-24 and Ezekiel 8-11

Baba Basra 4a He who has not seen the Temple of Herod has never seen a beautiful building.¹

They are probably confused. How could such a splendid structure not represent some truth about the God whom it purports to worship?

This confusion has a long pedigree. When Jeremiah pointed out the wickedness of the nation in the years before Nebuchadnezzar, the priests felt that the physical temple would protect them. God would surely not abandon his temple. Jeremiah reports their defense:

Jer 7:4 Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, *are* these.

And to this day, people are often impressed more by the architecture of a sanctuary than by the doctrine that it supports.

Jeremiah's response was to remind them of what happened to the sanctuary at Shiloh:

Jer 7:12 But go ye now unto my place which *was* in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. 13 And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; 14 Therefore will I do unto *this* house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the

¹ http://halakhah.com/bababathra/bababathra_4.html

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place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

Our Lord's response to the disciples is an echo of Jeremiah's warning.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.--Once more following the example of Ezekiel, the Lord describes the consequences of his abandonment of the temple:

Eze 7:20 As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty: but they made the images of their abominations *and* of their detestable things therein: therefore have I set it far from them. 21 And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it. 22 My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret *place*: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it. ... 25 Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and *there shall be* none. ... 24:21 Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword.

One characteristic of the day of the Lord, promised by the OT prophets, is that the great works of man will all be destroyed.

Isa 2:12 For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be* upon **every one that is** proud and lofty, and upon **every one that is** lifted up; and he/it shall be brought low: 13 And upon **all** the cedars of Lebanon, *that are* high and lifted up, and upon **all** the oaks of Bashan, 14 And upon **all** the high mountains, and upon **all** the hills *that are* lifted up, 15 **And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall,** 16 And upon **all** the ships of Tarshish, and upon **all** pleasant pictures. 17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD **alone** shall be exalted in that day.

Note the repetition of "every" and "all." In that great and final day, everything high will be humbled. But in a pattern that will be critical to our understanding of this discourse ("manifold fulfillment," discussed in the next section), the Lord often follows a prophecy with examples before the final fulfillment. The humbling of great buildings is a particular example. It happened with the first temple in 587 BC, and in AD 70, responding to a Jewish revolt over taxes and cultural differences, the Roman armies destroyed the second temple.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives,--He continues to imitate the departure of the glory of the Lord in Ezekiel.

Eze 11:23 And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which *is* on the east side of the city.

the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?--Their question is twofold: the time of the promised events, and the sign (singular) of his coming (παρουσια "appearance"),

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which they identify with the end of the age (Figure 3, chart). Note in particular the two question words. One deals with time (“When”), the other with specific signs (“What”).

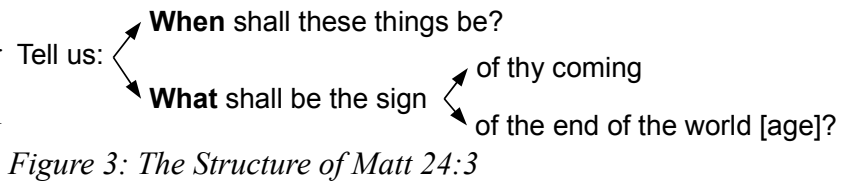


Figure 3: The Structure of Matt 24:3

Some people think that the second question is really two, but the disciples are asking for only one sign, not two.² To see the identification of the two parts, we should understand that “world” is *αἰών* (Strong 165, = Hebrew עולם), and is chronological, not geographical. The Jews distinguished “the present world of toil (‘*olam ha-zeh*’)” from “a Sabbatical millennium, ‘the world to come’ (‘*olam ha-ba*’...).³ The coming of the Messiah would be a distinctive feature of the future age. This distinction is reflected elsewhere in the NT:

Mat 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, **neither in this world, neither in the world to come.**

Eph 1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, **not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:**

The “world to come” is the day of the Lord, the Millennium, the Messianic age. So “thy coming” and “the end of the age,” in their minds, refer to the same point in time. They recognize that the degree of destruction the Lord has anticipated in v. 2 can only reflect the promised Day of the Lord, and want to know more about it.

This is not the first time in the Bible that people have asked “what” and “when” about the future. Another example is in Daniel 12. Since ch. 10, Daniel is listening to an extensive prophecy of world history, from the time of Alexander the Great down to the resurrection of the dead at the end of history. This message comes to him from a mighty figure, described in ch. 10 (chart),

Dan 10:5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins *were* girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6 His body also *was* like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his

2 The identity of the Lord’s coming with the end of the age is reinforced in an ancient (3rd -5th century) minority reading that omits the article on “end [of the age].” Blomburg (NAC) applies Granville Sharp’s (first) rule to emphasize their identity, but as originally articulated, Sharp’s rule applies only to nouns describing persons, not things (<https://bible.org/article/sharp-redivivus-reexamination-granville-sharp-rule>). However, the minority reading may be taken as an indication of a strong intuition by early scribes that the two descriptions refer to the same event.

3 See Kaufmann Kohler, “Eschatology,” *Jewish Encyclopaedia* (1906). He cites Tamid vii. 4; R. H. 31a; Sanh. 97a; Ab. R. N. i., ed. Schechter, p. 5; Enoch, xxiii. 1; II Esdras vii. 30, 43; Testament of Abraham, A. xix., B. vii.; Vita Adæ et Evæ, 42; Rev. xx. 1; II Peter iii. 8; Epistle of Barnabas, xv.; Irenæus, v. 28, 3. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5849-eschatology>

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arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

In ch. 12, two other heavenly figures appear (Figure 4).

Dan 12:5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river.

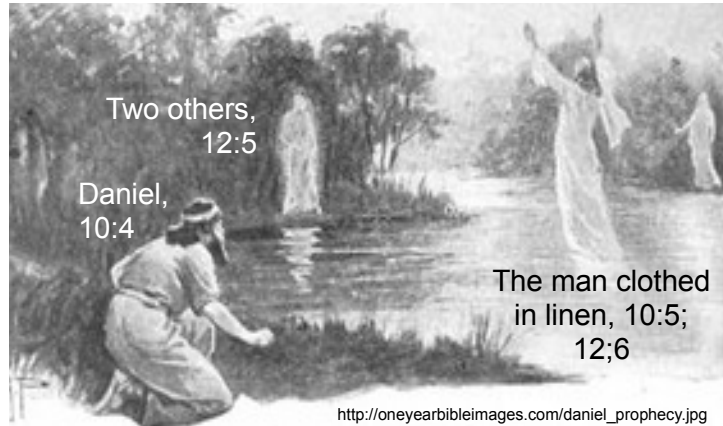


Figure 4: Daniel and the Two Questions

The first of them asks the “When” question:

Dan 12:6 And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of the river, How long *shall it be* to the end of these wonders?

As in Matthew 24, the events are the specific ones that form the focus of the immediately preceding chapters. In Daniel, these describe the events of the Antiochian persecution, and ultimately of the great tribulation. The man clothed in linen answers by describing a 3.5 year period, a number that relates both to the times of the Hasmonean persecution (Dan 8:11-14)⁴ and the coming tribulation.

Daniel himself asks the “What” question:

Dan 12:8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things*?

But the man clothed in linen gives no answer. He simply tells Daniel to go his way.

To see the full impact of the parallel with Matt 24:3, we need to consider the identity of Daniel’s “man clothed in linen.” The full description of this individual in ch. 10 has striking parallels with Ezekiel’s vision of the glory of the Lord enthroned above the cherubim (Ezekiel 1), the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7, and the glorified Lord in Revelation 1 (Table 3, chart).

Daniel 10	Daniel 7	Ezekiel 1	Revelation 1
5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold	9 the Ancient of days did sit,	1 ... as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, ... I saw visions of God.	13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks <i>one</i> like unto the Son of man,
a certain man clothed in linen,	a) whose garment was		a) clothed with a garment down to the foot,

⁴ For a convenient analysis, see <http://www.moellerhaus.com/2300.htm>

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Daniel 10	Daniel 7	Ezekiel 1	Revelation 1
	white as snow,		
whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz:			b) and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.
6 His body also was like the beryl ,		16 The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl :	
and his face as the appearance of lightning , and his eyes as lamps of fire ,		27 And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward , and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire , and it had brightness round about.	d) and his eyes were as a flame of fire ; g) 16 ... and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.
and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass ,			e) 15 And his feet like unto fine brass , as if they burned in a furnace;
and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude .		24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host : when they stood, they let down their wings.	f) and his voice as the sound of many waters .
	b) and the hair of his head like the pure wool :		c) 14 His head and his hairs were white like wool , as white as snow;

Table 3: Parallels with “The Man Clothed in Linen”

Clearly, this “man clothed in linen” is no mere angel, but an appearance of the Lord God in human form, and probably represents the pre-incarnate second person of the Godhead, the one who is elsewhere called the Angel of the Lord.⁵

Structure of the Sermon

All three synoptics record portions of this message. Comparison of their accounts shows two important things: 1) They don’t all preserve the same parts. 2) The parts they do preserve can be aligned with each other, so their changes are mainly dropping out sections, not making up their own order for the discourse.

Table 4 (chart) shows the alignment.⁶ For the most part, it is obvious, but two features require

⁵ See notes for further discussion.

⁶ Many scholars, including many who consider themselves evangelical, would protest strongly the key assumption

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Period	Mt 24,25	Mk 13	Lk 21	Description
1. Beginning of Sorrows (Mt 24:8)	24:3-13	5-13	8-19	The NT period, before the fall of Jerusalem. Corresponds to the first four seals of Rev 6.
2. Days of Vengeance (Lk 21:22)	(Lacking)		20-24a	Desolation of Jerusalem under Titus, AD 70.
3. Times of the Gentiles (Lk 21:24)	24:14	10	24b	Jerusalem is subdued by the Gentiles (Luke) and the gospel goes forth throughout all the world (Matthew).
4. Great Tribulation (Mt 24:21)	24:15-28	14-23	(Lacking)	"The abomination of desolation" (Dan 9:27), at the middle of Daniel's seventieth week.
5. Appearing of Son of Man (Mt 24:30)	24:29-31	24-27	25-28	Cosmic signs, return of Christ in glory, gathering of his saints
(6. Interlude)	24:32-25:30	28-37	29-36	Parables about, and exhortations to, watchfulness
7. Separation	25:31-46	(Lacking)		Final Judgment

Table 4: Synopsis of the Olivet Discourse

special attention: the identification of Matt 24:14 with Luke 21:24b, and the distinction of Luke's tribulation section (Luke 20-24a) from what we find in Matt 24:15-28 and Mark 13:14-23, which is supported by Paul's allusions to these events. These considerations lead to a major challenge in understanding Matthew's prophecies, which we will discuss.

Times of the Gentiles

All three records of the discourse refer to a period of time that is focused on the Gentiles. In Luke, this takes the form of "the times of the Gentiles" (24b), during which they have dominion over Jerusalem, and thus is most plainly exhibited in the destruction of Jerusalem. Matthew (24:14) and Mark (13:10) both talk about a period during which the gospel is preached to all nations. This common Gentile period will help us understand the relation among the other sections of the discourse.

Both Matthew and Luke define an end to this period. In Luke, the Lord anticipates a day when "the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled πληρωω," or completed. Matthew says that the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles must come before "the end." So in all versions, there is a period, dominated by the Gentiles, before the end of the story.

inherent in this analysis, that all three evangelists offer accurate, though selective, records of the actual discourse. The current popularity of Markan priority and the Q hypothesis leads most people to see only Mark as a direct record, and Matthew and Luke as highly edited combinations of Mark and other material. Such an approach flies in the face of the clear claim of all three accounts to be describing a discourse delivered by the Lord at a specific time and place. If we take the liberty to deny this testimony, what confidence can we have in anything that they report? My approach here is consistent with that applied to the Sermon on the Mount, where again we have multiple accounts (Matthew and Luke), both selective, but consistent in their overall order. See the notes at the end of the study on Matt 5:1-12 (<http://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/matt/notes/Matt5a.pdf>).

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Note that this period comes *after* the destruction of Jerusalem in Luke, but *before* the great tribulation in Matthew and Mark, and *before* the appearance of the Son of Man in all three versions. This common benchmark indicates that the tribulation in Matthew and Mark is distinct from the destruction of Jerusalem.

Comparison of the Persecutions in Matthew and Luke

All three accounts contain a description of a time of severe persecution. They contain some similar warnings, and many students think that they describe the same period. But there are important differences:

- They come on different sides of the times of the Gentiles. Luke's events come before he mentions the times of the Gentiles. Matthew and Mark describe the preaching to the Gentiles before they discuss their tribulation.
- They present a different marker. Luke sees Jerusalem compassed about with armies; Matthew and Mark speak of the abomination of desolation in the holy place.
- v. 21, alluding to Dan 12:1, marks this as a time of "great tribulation" and unprecedented suffering; Luke simply says "there shall be great distress and wrath" (21:23)
- Conversely Luke calls his period the "days of vengeance," Lk 21:22, a title missing in Matthew and Mark, suggesting that it is focused specifically on the Jews in response to their rejection of the Lord Jesus in a way that the later tribulation is not.
- They are at different temporal removes from the coming of the Son of Man. Luke's leads to the times of the gentiles, which has now lasted 2000 years, and which intervenes between the desolation of Jerusalem and the coming. In Matthew, the coming follows the desolation "immediately."

So the position I will take is that these are two different periods of time.

Parallels in Paul

Paul appears to have this discourse in mind in his epistles to the Thessalonians. Table 5 (chart) shows the parallels.

2 Thessalonians 2 shows striking parallels to his reference to "the abomination of desolation ... stand[ing] in the holy place."

- Both passages are intended to calm those who are anxious or "troubled." The latter word $\theta\rho\sigma\epsilon\omega$ appears only in the discourse (Matthew and Mark) and in 2 Thessalonians 2 in the entire NT.
- The cause of anxiety in both places is that the end (the day of Christ) has already happened. (As in our discussion of 24:3, the end [of the age] and the coming of Christ are

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identified.)

- In both cases, the teacher assures his audience that something extremely wicked must appear before “the end,” “the abomination of desolation” in the discourse, identified with the “man of sin” who claims deity in Paul.
- This wicked thing will violate “the holy place” (Matthew 24), “the temple of God” (Paul).

The parallel is very strong, but Paul clearly is not thinking simply of a military invasion and the destruction of a building. He has in view the personal antichrist.

The description of the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4 similarly draws on the discourse. In both cases

- the Lord appears with clouds,
- accompanied by angels
- and the sound of a trumpet
- to gather his people together.

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Mat 24:6 see that ye be not troubled θροεω : ... the end is not yet. ... 15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation , spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place ,	2Th 2:1 Now we beseech you... 2 That ye be not ... troubled θροεω , ... as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for <i>that day shall not come</i> , except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God , shewing himself that he is God.
Mat 24:30 and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet , and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.	1Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord , ... 16 ... the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel , and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive <i>and</i> remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds , to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Table 5: Paul's references to the Discourse

He very clearly associates the Lord’s prophecy, not with the events of AD 70, but with the appearing of the Lord.

Challenges

The differences between the suffering sections in Matthew-Mark and Luke, and Paul’s understanding of Matthew’s discourse, lead me to view both the time of great tribulation and the appearance of the Son of Man as still future. But this poses at least two problems.

The first is that his response in Matthew and Mark seems not to respond to the question of the disciples. He has introduced the destruction of the temple as his theme (v. 2). They ask when that

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will be, as well as inquiring about the end of the world. On our understanding, his response is all about the end of the world, but (unlike Luke) says nothing about the destruction of the temple.

The second problem is the statement in v. 34,

Matt 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

How can these things be “fulfilled” in “this generation” if everything that the Lord has been talking about, from v. 15 onward, is still future today?

Bible students discuss these problems extensively. Matt 24:34 was the trigger for German rationalism in the middle of the 19th century, which led to modern liberalism. These critics claim that Jesus was simply mistaken about what would happen when. Those who seek to defend our Lord’s knowledge focus either on “this generation” or on “these things.”

Some people try to limit “these things” to only a part of what he has been discussing. But that is awkward, when it is qualified by “all.” It certainly sounds as though he is summarizing everything he has been talking about.

Other people focus on “this generation” (the word γενεα that we studied in 23:36), and propose that it refers to a class of people (the wicked), rather than a cohort (those alive at the same time). But we have seen that Greek has a separate word (γεννημα) for this concept.

We will instead focus on the verb “fulfilled.” “Fulfilled” in 24:34 is actually a misleading translation of the underlying Greek verb γινομαι (Strong 1096). Of the more than 450 instances of this verb in the NT, only three times does our version translate it “fulfill.” A more literal translation would be “become” or “happen.” The English word “fulfill” is much more appropriate as a translation for the verb πληρωω (Strong 4137), which is what Matthew uses in his frequent statements “that it might be fulfilled which was written....” In 24:34, the Lord is not saying that all these things will be completed, but only that they will “happen.” The precise meaning of that statement depends on a principle we encountered early in our study of Matthew, the principle of Manifold Fulfillment.⁷

The Principle of Manifold Fulfillment

In our studies in Isaiah, we recognized numerous cases in which an initial prophecy is repeated down through time, sometimes in words and sometimes in events that foreshadow or partially realize the promise, until the ultimate fulfillment. Figure 5 (chart) shows the idea graphically in two ways—the chain diagram that we have used before, and the image of a container being filled up over time, which is perhaps easier to understand.

⁷ The concept, though not the term, is articulated by Willis Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (NY: Thomas Crowell, 1905), online at http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/OTeSources/23a-Prophets/ProphetseSourcesIndex.htm. The notes on Matthew 2 (<http://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/matt/notes/Matt2.pdf>) discuss several examples.

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Matthew contains several examples of this process, which are confusing if we do not keep this principle in mind.

Consider, for example, Matthew's citation of Hos 11:1

Matt 2:14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: 15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.



The verse in Hosea is:

Hos 11:1 When Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

At first glance, the citation is puzzling. Hosea is clearly speaking of the (past) Exodus of the young nation Israel, not of the (future) visit of our Lord to Egypt. But in the broader context of OT prophecy, and particularly Isaiah, Hosea's contemporary, we can understand what Hosea is saying. Isaiah uses the exodus from Egypt as a

prototype of the deliverance from Babylon, which in turn is a prototype of the great final regathering of his people to restored Zion. All these events and statements form a chain. It is grounded in God's promise to Abram that his seed would possess the land, and points to the final realization of that promise in the Millennium. Along the way, we have several illustrations of that process:

An initial prophecy may be **repeated** down through history,

- sometimes in **words** and 
 - sometimes in **events** that 
 - **foreshadow** or
 - **partially realize** the promise,
- until the time of the actual fulfillment.

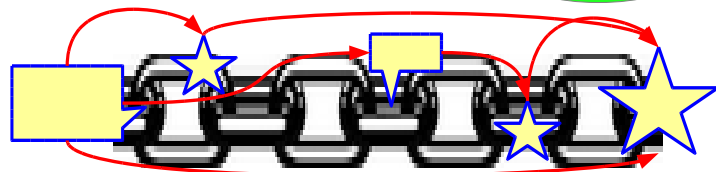
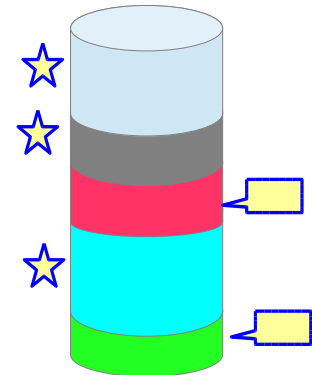
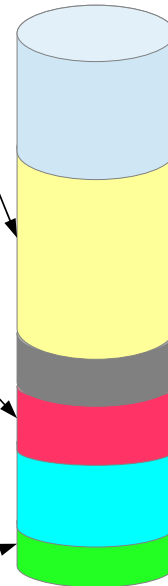


Figure 5: The Principle of Manifold Fulfillment

Mat 2:14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: 15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, **Out of Egypt** have I called my son.

Isa 48:20 **Go ye forth of Babylon**, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it *even* to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob. 21 And they thirsted not *when* he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.

Gen 12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, **Unto thy seed will I give this land:**



Isa 11:11 the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to **recover the remnant of his people**, which shall be left, **from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.** 12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah **from the four corners of the earth.**

Hos 11:1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son **out of Egypt.**

Deu 6:21 We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and **the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand:**

Figure 6: "Filling up" the return from Egypt

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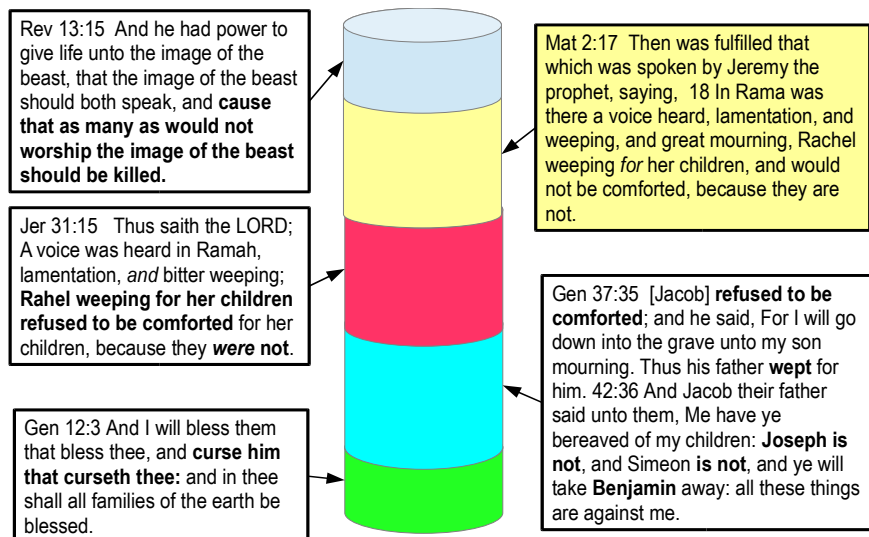
Israel's return from Egypt, the return from Babylon, and the return of Jesus from Egypt (Figure 6, chart). Our Lord is the new Moses, bringing his people out of bondage into freedom. How appropriate that his life should include a physical "return from Egypt," highlighting his role.

Note that Matt 2:15 does not say that the Lord's return from Egypt fulfills or completes the statement in Hosea, only that it took place **so that** the statement might be fulfilled. Along with other events, it contributes to filling that container. One of them is the return of our Lord from Egypt.

A few verses later in Matthew 2, we read another prophecy, this time from Jeremiah:

Matt 2:17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

The reference is to Jer 31:15. In context, Jeremiah is talking about the children of Israel going into exile in Babylon, and imagines Rachel weeping as they march in chains past her tomb. But Jeremiah draws his language from Jacob's mourning over Joseph in Genesis 37. These specific instances of the persecution of God's people are once again rooted in the promise to Abram about those who curse him, and find their ultimate fulfillment in the



Antichrist in Revelation 13 (Figure 7, chart). Again, the original promise is like a container, and the persecution of Joseph by his brothers, the Babylonian captivity, and the slaughter of the babies in Bethlehem, are all part of filling up that promise.

These examples, and many others that we might cite, show that God's promises are not limited to a single outcome. They point to a final event, but along the way, many intermediate events or statements may occur, recalling the original promise and reminding us of the final outcome yet in the future. Of any of these events, we can say, "This is what the promise was about. The promise happened."

In 24:3, the disciples ask about two things: the destruction of the temple (of which the Lord has spoken in v. 2), and his coming παρουσία, which marks the end of the age. In fact, each of these events is a link in a chain of events. The destruction of the temple is a link in the chain extending

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from the cursing of Abram and his seed in Gen 12:3 to the Antichrist (Figure 7). The coming of the Lord is a link in a chain that extends from the promise that man will subdue the earth (Gen 1:26-28) to the return of Christ in triumph (Revelation 19). Of any link along the way, it might be said, “this promise happened.” And in fact, links in both chains happened within the lifetime of those who heard the Lord’s words, which means he is indeed answering their questions, and accounts for the statement in 24:34. We will point out these connections as we consider each of these sections.⁸

24:3-13, Beginning of Sorrows

All three synoptic gospels record the first section of the discourse. As the sequence in Luke shows, these events will occur before the fall of the temple, but continue to be manifested throughout this present age.

Two things strike our attention about these events. First, they are all common throughout human history. Second, they align with the first five seals in Revelation 6 (Table 6, chart), suggesting that John’s vision is based on this teaching. There is nothing “eschatological” about this description. In fact, the Lord says, “the end is not yet” (v. 6).

Two days later, in the upper room, the Lord again alerts his disciples to expect tribulation (chart).

Joh 15:20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. **If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you;** if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Joh 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. **In the world ye shall have tribulation:** but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

And Paul repeats this warning to the Gentile churches:

Act 14:21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that **we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.**

In fact, as we have seen, Paul’s motive for writing 2 Thessalonians is the same as our Lord’s motive for describing the beginning of sorrows. The church was experiencing persecution:

2Th 1:4 we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your **persecutions and tribulations** that ye endure: 5 *Which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

⁸ Note what Luke records (21:28) after the statement about the Lord’s appearing in glory: “And when these things **begin to come to pass**, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

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Matthew 24: Beginning of Sorrows	Revelation 6: Seals
5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ ; and shall deceive many.	1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. 2 And I saw, and behold a white horse : and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. <i>Cf. Rev 19:11</i>
6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars : see that ye be not troubled: for all <i>these things</i> must come to pass, but the end is not yet.	3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. 4 And there went out another horse <i>that was</i> red: and <i>power</i> was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth , and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.
7 ...there shall be famines ...	5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny ; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.
7 For nation shall rise against nation , and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines , and pestilences , and earthquakes , in divers places. 8 All these <i>are</i> the beginning of sorrows.	7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword , and with hunger , and with death , and with the beasts of the earth.
9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you : and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.	9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held : 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they <i>were</i> , should be fulfilled.

Table 6: The Beginning of Sorrows and the First Five Seals

They feared that the end had come and God's judgments were fall on them, but Paul, like our Lord here, assures them that this will not come until the Man of Sin is revealed.

Suffering by the church is not an anomaly, a sign that God has forgotten his people. It is part of the fabric of our sinful world, "this present evil age" (Gal 1:4). Our suffering *for* Christ is no more anomalous than the suffering *of* Christ. We must not think that somehow we are exempt because we are saved. Quite the contrary, we will be the target for unbelievers. The Lord alerts us to this, not to discourage us, but so that we will not think that God has forgotten us.

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many

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shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.--This is a persistent theme throughout the discourse. We'll see it again just before the description of the Lord's appearance:

Mat 24:11 And many **false prophets** shall rise, and shall deceive many.

Mat 24:23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not. 24 For there shall arise **false Christs, and false prophets**, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25 Behold, I have told you before. 26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, *he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not. 27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming *παρουσια* of the Son of man be.

The first seal in Rev 6:1-2 is the crowned and conquering rider on a white horse. The white horse immediately calls to mind the only other white horse in the Revelation, that ridden by the Lord Jesus in Revelation 19. But there, instead of a crown, the Lord wears "many crowns," 19:12, and instead of a bow, he fights with "a sharp sword" out of his mouth. The rider in the first seal is a counterfeit of the true rider on a white horse. The first horseman is a false Messiah.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars:--This prediction corresponds to the second of John's horsemen, the rider on the red horse, who comes "to **take peace from the earth**, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword" (Rev 6:4).

see that ye be not troubled *θροεω*: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.--Compare 2 Thes 2,

which also exhorts believers not to **be troubled** *θροεω* (v. 2). This very rare verb appears in the NT only at this position in the Olivet Discourse and in 2 Thess 2:2, reinforcing our observation that Paul is basing his teaching on the Discourse.

Some find this passage about the beginning of sorrows very discouraging. We should note that the Lord intends it to guard his disciples against "be[ing] troubled." The Lord gives two reasons, each introduced by the conjunction "for" *γαρ* at the end of v. 6,



Figure 8: Reasons not to be troubled

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and again at the end of v. 7, and each marked with the words “all these” (Figure 8, chart).

The first reason that they are not to be troubled is the necessity of all these things. They are not great cosmic accidents. They are the outworking of God’s divine plan. That is the point behind John’s image of the sealed scroll: God has planned this history in great detail, and has it all under control. The world sees these events as unexpected and out of control. To us, they show the sovereign power of our God.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.--This prediction lies behind the third and fourth horsemen. The third, on the black horse, brings famine conditions, and the Lord here mentions “famines.” The fourth, Death, rides on the pale horse, “to kill with **sword**, and with **hunger**, and with **death**, and with the beasts of the earth” (Rev 6:8). It is at first puzzling to see “death” listed as one of the four threats, all of which cause death, but the term is probably being used in the specific sense of disease, as we speak of the plague as “the black death.”⁹ This becomes clear when we recognize that our Lord, like John, is drawing on Ezek 14:21 (Table 7, chart). This reference,

in turn, reinforces the explanation at the end of v. 6. God is in control. He was in control when he punished Jerusalem for her sin at the time of Ezekiel, and he is in control now.

Eze 14:21 For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword , and the famine , and the noisome beast , and the pestilence , to cut off from it man and beast?	Matt 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation , and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines , and pestilences , and earthquakes, in divers places.	Rev 6:8 And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword , and with hunger , and with death , and with the beasts of the earth.
Table 7: Roots and Branches of v. 7		

With this insight, we see that v. 7 clearly echoes the fourth seal: the sword corresponds to “nation against nation,” hunger to “famine,” and death (that is, disease) to “pestilences,”

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.-- “Sorrows” is literally “labor pains.” The birth of the new age (the “regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory”, 19:28), like the birth of a baby, will be preceded by a time of great pain, as the old order struggles mightily to retain control.

Here is the real point of the second “for.” Labor pains are unpleasant, but they lead to one of the most joyful experiences in human life, the birth of a new baby. These events are not random suffering, but the sign that the coming of the Messianic age is drawing near.

Vv 9-13 describe widespread hatred against believers, and the persecution they will suffer. It corresponds to the fifth seal, Rev 6:9, “them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.”

⁹ BDAG 3 gives a number of examples where the term means “a particular manner of death, *fatal illness*, *pestilence* and the like, as established by context.”

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Matthew 10	Matthew 24
<p>16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. 17 But beware of men: for they will deliver παραδιδωμι you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; 18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver παραδιδωμι you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. 21 And the brother shall deliver up παραδιδωμι the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against <i>their</i> parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake:</p>	<p>9 Then shall they deliver παραδιδωμι you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray παραδιδωμι one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.</p>
<p>but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.</p>	<p>13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.</p>
<p>23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.</p>	<p>14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.</p>

Table 8: Persecution in the Missionary Discourse and the Olivet Discourse

It also recalls the missionary discourse (Table 8, chart). Both mention

- being delivered up or betrayed παραδιδωμι to rulers
- being hated by all (with an emphasis on “all nations” in ch. 24)
- the promise about enduring “to the end” (to be discussed)
- a testimony to the gentiles/nations (10:18; 24:14)
- a statement about how long this state of affairs will endure.

But there are differences.

1. The emphasis in ch. 10 is on Jewish evangelism (10:6), and the Gentile impact is a side effect (10:18), while after the resurrection they are to pursue “all nations” (24:14; 28:19).
2. In ch. 10, the disciples will not have finished their task by the designated ending, while in ch. 24, they will.

The sober events described in vv. 9-12 increase in intensity.

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you:--Believers can expect opposition, even up to the point of death.

and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.--This opposition will be worldwide.

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There will be no sanctuary, no nation where they can flee.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.--Even within the church, some will fall away and betray their “brethren.”

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.--They will be aided in this by the rise of the false prophets, already anticipated in v. 5.

12 And because iniquity shall abound,--“Iniquity” *ανομια* refers to violation of the law of God. Even those in the church will not be concerned to live according to God’s law.

the love of many shall wax cold.--The genitive “many” here should be understood as subjective. Members of the church will no longer love one another as they should, leading to breakdown of the true life of the body.

Three phrases in v. 13 require attention (chart). The Lord’s promise to the church at Smyrna (Rev 2:10) is a striking parallel that may well be inspired by this verse.

13 But he that shall endure *υπομενω*¹⁰--Consider Luke’s parallel statement,

Luk 21:19 In your patience *υπομονη* possess ye your souls.¹¹

The believer’s response to this persecution is to be patient perseverance. Recall the Lord’s promise to the church at Smyrna, which was undergoing severe tribulation:

Rev 2:10 be thou **faithful** unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

unto the end,--“Unto the end” is misleading. There is no article. “End” here does not refer to the end of the age (as it does in vv. 6, 14). Rather, “unto end” is an idiom meaning “completely, thoroughly, finally, always” as (for example) (chart)

Luk 18:5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her **continual** coming she weary me.

Jos 10:20 And it came to pass, when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, **till they were consumed**, that the rest *which* remained of them entered into fenced cities.

Being “completely” faithful is sometimes marked by martyrdom, as in Smyrna:

Rev 2:10 be thou faithful **unto death**, and I will give thee a crown of life.

10 See Trench on contrast with *μακροθυμια*, which is what James 5:7-10 exhorts while waiting for the Lord’s return before turning to *υπομονη* in v. 11. *μακροθυμια* deals with people, which would be particularly appropriate in the midst of the apostasy described in the previous verses; here the Lord is focused on the circumstances of the tribulation.

11 At first glance, the previous verse in Luke (21:18) seems problematic: “But there shall not an hair of your head perish.” Luke, like Matthew, has already recorded the Lord’s warning martyrdom: Luke 21:16 “some of you they shall cause to be put to death.” The solution appears to be to recognize v. 18 as a well-known proverb (cf. 1 Sam 14:45; 2 Sam 14:11), here applied spiritually. We might paraphrase, “You remember the proverb, ‘There shall not a hair of your head perish.’ Well, if you endure, you will possess your soul.”

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the same shall be saved.--The word “saved” here is not a guarantee of physical safety, for the Lord has just said (v. 9) that many of them will be killed. Rather, it refers to being saved from our sins, entering the kingdom of heaven. The point is that God will deliver those who are steadfastly faithful to him. Recall again the promise to Smyrna:

Rev 2:10 be thou faithful unto death, and **I will give thee a crown of life.**

Luke’s version of the saying uses the word “soul” ψυχη:

Luk 21:19 possess ye your souls ψυχη.

This term has an interesting double meaning, which we have seen previously in Matthew. It can refer to the physical life, but also to our spiritual life, membership in God’s people.

Mat 16:25 For whosoever will save his life ψυχη shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life ψυχη for my sake shall find it. ~ 10:39

The spiritual sense is unambiguous in 10:28:

Mat 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ψυχη: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

The new life that the Spirit produces in a true believer does not recant when persecution mounts. The true believer is patient, enduring persecution, even unto death, reassured by the Lord’s promise of everlasting life.

24:14, Times of the Gentiles

14 And this gospel of the kingdom—We sometimes hear this gospel contrasted with “the gospel of the grace of God,” as though they were two different gospels. But this is a false dichotomy. Only once does the NT use the phrase, “the gospel of the grace of God,” when Paul is describing his ministry to the elders from Ephesus (chart):

Act 20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify **the gospel of the grace of God.**

Now note how he explains it in the very next verse.

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone **preaching the kingdom of God**, shall see my face no more.

The book of Acts is full of exhortations to people to “repent,” and full of the proclamation of “the kingdom of God.”¹² The early church preached the same gospel that John and our Lord did: “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.”

shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations;—While the content of the

¹² See the fourth of the kingdom studies, at http://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/special/KingdomOfGod/SeekingTheKingdom_Notes.pdf.

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message is the same, the audience is not. In ch. 10, the Lord restricted his disciples to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6), and said,

Matt 10:23 Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. But now he anticipates a world-wide preaching before the end of the age.

and then shall the end come.--Here is the answer to the disciples’ second question about the end of the age. Following the world-wide preaching of the gospel will come the end.

This verse probably lies behind Peter’s exhortation to his readers in his second epistle:

2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11 *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, 12 Looking for and **hasting unto** the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Peter is looking forward to the end of this present age, using the “thief in the night” language that our Lord introduces in 24:43. He says that we are “hasting unto the coming of the day of God.” The Greek expression here actually means, “hastening, hurrying.” Peter conceives that something we do can make the day of God come more quickly. Our Lord’s words explain Peter’s hope. The end is awaiting only the world-wide proclamation of the gospel, and when that proclamation is complete, the Lord will come.

24:15-28, Great Tribulation

Matthew has omitted the description of the destruction of the temple by Titus, which Luke records, but he includes a prediction of an even greater desolation, anticipated in Daniel and mentioned later in the NT, the coming of the Antichrist.

We consider this section in three parts. First we study the prophetic context to which our Lord refers in v. 15. Next we look at the description of the persecution itself in vv. 16-22. Finally we consider the warning against false Christs in vv. 23-28.

v. 15, The Prophetic Context

Background in “Daniel the Prophet”

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)--The Lord exhorts his hearers to recall what is written in Daniel, so we must begin there. The expression “abomination

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Figure 9: The Kingdoms of the Diadochi (<http://exploremed.com/Diadochi.asp?c=1>)

of desolation” appears, in slightly different forms, three times in Daniel (and one more time as “the transgression of desolation”), and once in the book of 1 Maccabees, which records the history of the Jews between the end of the OT and the beginning of the NT (chart). We will see that even within Daniel, this concept is an example of the principle of manifold fulfillment.

Let’s start with Daniel 8. Daniel sees a vision of a he-goat that conquers the Medo-Persian empire, and then splits into four kingdoms (Figure 9, chart).

Dan 8:8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

Daniel is describing the conquests of Alexander the Great in 334-323 BC. After his death, his generals and the governors he had appointed over provinces struggled for control. By 300 BC, four main power blocks emerged: the Ptolemies in Egypt, the Selucids in Asia, the descendants of Lysimachus in Asia Minor and Thrace, and those of Cassander in Macedonia.

In his vision, Daniel sees one of the four horns producing a “little horn” that sets itself against “the pleasant land,” taking away the daily sacrifice, and casting down the sanctuary (chart). This reference to “a little horn” will be important in a moment.

Dan 8:9 And out of one of them came forth a **little horn**, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant *land*. 10 And it waxed great, *even* to the host of heaven; and it cast down *some* of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. 11 Yea, he magnified *himself* even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily *sacrifice* was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was

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cast down.

Then Daniel hears a discussion concerning this outrage, which contains the first reference to the abomination, using the term “transgression of desolation”:

Dan 8:13 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain *saint* which spake, How long *shall be* the vision *concerning* the daily *sacrifice*, and the **transgression of desolation**, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

The 2300 days, a bit less than seven years, probably begin with the murder of the high priest Onias III in 171 BC at the instigation of Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc 4:7-10), to favor the pro-Greek party among the Jews. During this period, Antiochus severely persecuted Jews who sought to follow the law of Moses. In December 167 BC Antiochus set up a Greek altar in the temple and sacrificed pigs in the holy of holies, as recorded in 1 Maccabees:

1 Macc 1:54 Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, **they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar**, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side;

A band of faithful Jews opposed the Greeks, and in December of 164 BC, the end of the 2300 days, Judas Maccabaeus purified and rededicated the temple, an event celebrated in the Jewish feast of Hanukkah, the Dedication, which our Savior honored by his presence in John 10:22.

So the original reference is to the violation of the sanctuary by Antiochus in 167 BC. The same event is in view in Daniel 11,

Dan 11:31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily *sacrifice*, and they shall place **the abomination that maketh desolate**.

This passage is part of the history related to Daniel by the man clothed in linen, and the preceding context makes clear that here also we are reading a prophecy of the career of Antiochus Epiphanes, fulfilled in 167 BC.

The other two references are more obscure. We'll focus on 9:27, which fits our Lord's citation best. In Daniel 9, the Lord sends Gabriel to reveal to Daniel a vision of 70 sevens, or sabbatical cycles,¹³ that mark the coming of the Messiah. Gabriel divides the time into three segments of 7, 62, and 1 sabbatical cycle each (Figure 10 chart). Let's work through the passage.

*Dan 9:25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem--*This is the command given by the Persian king Artaxerxes in Nehemiah 2, 445 BC.

*unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks:--*Note the title

¹³ Newman, JETS 1973. See my Introduction to Matthew for detailed discussion.

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“prince.” Messiah is called “prince,” but in 26 we learn of another “prince” who is yet to come, one responsible for bringing the abomination of desolation. The similarity of title emphasizes the counterfeit between the Antichrist and the true Christ. We might say that in Daniel he is an “anti-prince.”

he street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.--The best explanation I know for the distinction of the

first seven sabbatical cycles is that this period marks the completion of Jerusalem around AD 400, though we have no independent documentation of this date.

26 And after [the]¹⁴ threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself:-- Sixty-nine sabbatical cycles (7 + 62) brings us comfortably to AD 33, the year of the Lord’s death.¹⁵

*and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.--*The people who destroy the temple at this point are associated with a prince who is yet to come. Daniel’s prophecies clearly lead us to expect that Roman empire will eventually produce a “little horn” who “shall speak *great* words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High” (7:8, 25). The Romans destroyed the temple and city in AD 70, and western civilization is still the continuation of Roman civilization and administration. Out of this tradition, the anti-prince will arise.

The destruction of Jerusalem under Titus is already beyond the 69 sabbatical cycles, but is not described as being within the 70th cycle. Our Lord in Luke 21 says that the destruction of Jerusalem will lead to “the times of the Gentiles,” a prolonged period during which “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles.” That period is not included in the 70 weeks. We sometimes say that God has stopped the clock on the events described in this chapter.

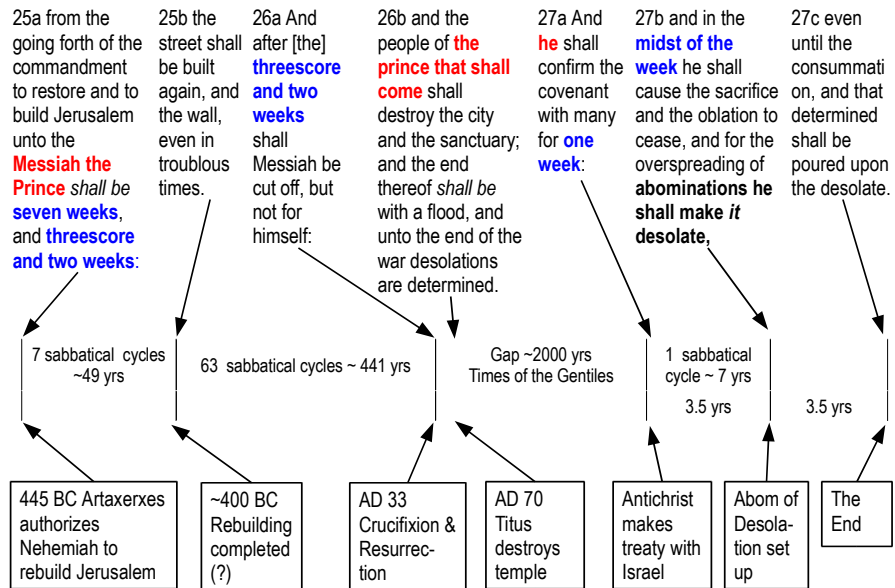


Figure 10: The 70 Weeks of Daniel 9, and the Final Antichrist (False Prince)

14 In Hebrew, though not in the KJV

15 We should not be confused by the preposition “after”--recall that our Lord’s resurrection is said to be both “on the third day” (Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19) and “after three days” (Matt 27:63).

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27 *And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week:*--The clock restarts when the anti-prince confirms or strengths some existing agreement with Israel, perhaps the 1947 UN resolution establishing the state of Israel.

and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.--After three and a half years of relative peace, this anti-prince will interrupt the worship of God and bring desolating abominations, the third instance of our expression. Our Lord appears to be referring to the LXX (see notes), and translates, “And upon the temple shall there be an abomination of desolations...”

Gabriel says that the sanctuary will be destroyed (v. 26), but then goes on to describe “sacrifice and oblation” (v. 27), which require a temple that the anti-prince goes on to profane. The temple must have been rebuilt in the interim. Lest this seem an arbitrary assumption, recall that at the time Daniel sees Antiochus desolating the sanctuary in 8:13, the Jerusalem temple has been destroyed, and the desolations by Antiochus also require a future rebuilding (which took place under Ezra). This may happen under the friendly attention of the anti-prince during the first half of the last week, and is in fact consistent with recent archaeological analyses showing that the axis of the Jewish temple lies to the north of the dome of the rock. Both could exist side by side.

This promised anti-prince, who originates in the Roman empire and who begins by making peace with Israel, ends up behaving like the Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes. But the anti-prince is not Antiochus: Antiochus came 170 years before the Messiah, while these events follow the coming of Messiah. We can see the distinction between them in another way.

In 8:9, Daniel described Antiochus as a “little horn.” 7:8 contains a similar expression.¹⁶ Daniel sees four beasts, corresponding to the four empires embodied in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2 (Figure 11, chart). The third of these beasts, a


	Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (Daniel 2)	Daniel's Dream (Daniel 7)	Daniel's 2 nd Dream (Daniel 8)	The Empires Prophesied
	Gold (Head)	Lion		Babylonian <538 BC>
	Silver (Bread & Arms)	Bear	Ram	Medo-Persian <333 BC>
	Brass (Belly & Thighs)	Leopard 4 Heads	He-Goat 4 Horns	Greek 8:9 Little (Greek) horn = Antiochus <63 BC>
	Iron (Legs)	Beast with Iron Teeth		Roman
	P R O P H E T I C			
	Iron & Clay (Feet)	Ten Horns		G A P 7:8 Little (Roman) horn = Antichrist
	Stone	Son of Man		Jesus Christ

Figure 11: Daniel's Visions of World History (extended from http://lamblion.com/articles/articles_issues1.php)

¹⁶ 8:9 (Hebrew) describes the horn representing Antiochus as צַעִיר, “insignificant.” 7:8 (Aramaic) describes the Roman “little horn” as זַעִיר, meaning “small” (even in Hebrew, which also has this morpheme). The two sound

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	Daniel 7	Daniel 8
Babylon	4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings:	
Medo-Persia (8:20)	5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it:...	3 ...behold, there stood before the river a ram ... 4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward
Greece (8:21)	6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads ;	8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. 9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn , ... 11 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.
Rome	7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: ... and it had ten horns. 8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn , ... 25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High,	

Table 9: Four Empires and Two Horns

four-headed leopard, corresponds to the he-goat in Daniel 8, with four horns, both representing the four kingdoms that came out of Alexander’s empire. (We should be careful not to confuse the four *empires* of Daniel 2, 7, and 8 with the four *kingdoms* that came from Alexander. All of those kingdoms belong to the third of the four empires.) Table 9 (chart) shows the alignment between the visions in ch. 8 and ch. 9.

The fourth beast, representing Rome, produces a “little horn” who will “speak *great* words against the most High, and ... wear out the saints of the most High” (7:25). In contrast, the “little horn” in Daniel 8 comes from Greece. God has revealed to Daniel that there will be two little horns, one Greek and one Roman. The Greek “little horn” is Antiochus Epiphanes. The Roman “little horn” has yet to appear, and he is the one mentioned in 9:27 (and in 12:11, the fourth reference to the abomination of desolation, which does not add anything to our discussion).

The amazing detail of these prophecies is a great comfort to us. As dark as the days of the Antichrist may be, they are completely under God’s control. Even when the Antichrist thinks he is being most successful in opposing God, he cannot help but follow the course that the Lord has revealed to his servants the prophets. When these things come to pass, God’s people can take comfort that they are not subject to the ravages of random ambition by sinful men, but under the protection of a sovereign Lord who allows these things for his purposes.

very similar, and their meanings are related, but the greater power of the Roman horn is clear.

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The Chain of Manifold Fulfillment

Already in Daniel, we see the principle of manifold fulfillment: the abomination (or transgression) of desolation refers both to Antiochus Epiphanes, about 170 BC, and to someone who will come after the Messiah, close to the time of the resurrection. This principle is important for understanding what follows in v. 34, so we should take some time to trace out some other links in this prophetic chain, some other steps in filling up the prophecy. An important common feature across these references is the defiling of God's sanctuary.

Like many other prophetic chains, the series is grounded in Genesis 12 (chart). In this case, the shift from the plural of those who bless Abraham to the singular for him who curses Abraham may anticipate the final Antichrist.

Gen 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and **curse him that curseth thee:**

In the time of David, Asaph saw that this hatred would be focused on the sanctuary of Israel's God:

Psa 74:3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; *even all that* the enemy hath **done wickedly in the sanctuary.**

300 years later, Isaiah saw the king of Babylon as a foreshadowing of the defiler:

Isa 14:13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, **I will exalt my throne** above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will be like the most High.**

We have already seen that Daniel anticipated Antiochus in 170 BC (8:13; 11:31; 1 Macc 1:54) and the ultimate Antichrist, post-Messianic (9:27; 12:11). So it perhaps should not surprise us that our Lord, in the Olivet Discourse, would speak both of the destruction under Titus (Luke 21) and of the ultimate Antichrist (our verse).

In Luke, our Lord anticipates the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, and with it, the temple.

Luk 21:20 And when ye shall see **Jerusalem compassed with armies**, then know that the **desolation** thereof is nigh.

Matthew records his statement later in the same discourse about the ultimate Antichrist.

Mat 24:15 When ye therefore shall see the **abomination of desolation**, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, **stand in the holy place**,

Paul warns of the coming of the Antichrist:

2Th 2:3 that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that **he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**

John sees his forerunners already active:

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1Jo 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that **antichrist** shall come, **even now are there many antichrists**; whereby we know that it is the last time.

Josephus, a Jewish historian, records the fulfillment of the prophecy that Luke records, which took place after most of the NT was written:

Jos. Wars 6.316 And now the Romans ... brought their ensigns to the temple and set them opposite its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy.

Finally, the Revelation (likely written after the fall of the temple) describes the final Antichrist, the Beast from the sea:

Rev 13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, **to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle**, and them that dwell in heaven.

The ultimate fulfillment of Gen 12:3 is when the Antichrist, with Satan and the false prophet (the beast from the earth of Rev 13:10), is cast into the lake of fire.

Rev 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The Lord goes on to give instructions for those alive during this time. Before we consider those, we should keep in mind a clear principle that we can learn from all these prophecies throughout Scripture about the Antichrist: respect holy things.

Principle: Respect Holy Things

A key characteristic of the abomination of desolation, in all its manifestations through the centuries, is that it intrudes “in the holy place” (v. 15), “where it ought not” (Mark 13:14). In its full form, this promise requires the rebuilding of the Jewish temple at Jerusalem (just as did Daniel’s prophecies in ch. 8-12, all given after the destruction of the first temple by Nebuchadnezzar). But the persistent spirit of Antichrist will seek to defile anything that is of God, and that includes the spiritual temple of this present age.

The NT makes clear that the church is God’s temple today, a spiritual building made up of many individual believers:

Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

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In 1 Corinthians, Paul uses this image to urge the believers to personal purity. He is reminding his readers of his role in building up the church:

1Co 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

If he, the evangelist, is building God's temple, they themselves form God's temple, and it must be kept holy:

1Co 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.

A specific consequence of this exhortation is that they must deal with the man guilty of fornication in ch. 5—and with a range of other offenses.

1Co 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Then in chapter six he motivates this exhortation with two metaphors: the body of Christ, and the temple of God. Note the grammatical difference in how he refers to the believers in the two cases.

1Co 6:15 Know ye not that **your bodies** are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot? God forbid.

Individually, their bodies are the members of Christ, the parts of his body. If they defile themselves, they defile Christ. Then he returns to the image of the temple from 3:19.

1Co 6:19 What? know ye not that **your body** is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Note the shift from “your bodies” to “your body.” He is no longer talking about individual believers, but about the overall body of Christ that they compose. As in ch. 3, the one body, the church, made up of believers, is God's temple, and must not be defiled. In fact, John describes those who were causing trouble in the church as a manifestation of Antichrist:

1Jo 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

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We may or may not see the Jewish temple rebuilt, and the final Antichrist taking his place there. But today, we are part of the temple of God, which is the church. Our adversary would like to place a false image there—to distract worship away from our God and his Christ and toward himself. As Isaiah called out the king of Babylon on his ungodly designs, as the faithful Maccabees opposed Antiochus, so let us be diligent to keep the temple God has given us focused on true worship.

We must be cautious in applying this principle, lest we fall into the trap of assuming that we can only meet with a perfect assembly of believers. If even Paul could say, “I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom 7:14), we might conclude that we should never associate with any fellowship. But the Scriptures provide us with a case study that is helpful—in fact seven case studies, the churches to which the Lord writes in Revelation 2-3. Note three things about these churches (chart).

First: they are represented by candlesticks, or lampstands, that surround the Lord.

Rev 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; 13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, ... 20 the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Being one of the candlesticks is not a trivial matter. The Lord warns the first of the churches, Ephesus,

Rev 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

What matters most about a church is whether the Lord recognizes it as one of his lampstands. If he disowns it, as he threatens to do to Ephesus, it is no longer functioning as he desires.

Second: of the seven churches, only two are without any rebuke from the Lord, Smyrna and Philadelphia. He brings a rebuke to each of the others: “I have somewhat against thee...” (2:4, 14, 20) or “I have not found thy works perfect before God” (3:2; compare 3:17 “thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked”). Yet they are all still among the lampstands. Perfection is not required; openness to rebuke and repentance is absolutely required.

Third: consider in more detail what he says to Ephesus. They are in fact very zealous for formal purity:

Rev 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: 3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

But their failing, for which he threatens to remove their candlestick, is a lack of love for him:

Rev 2:4 Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place,

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except thou repent.

The case of Ephesus is very interesting. It is impossible to love the Lord without having a heart of obedience toward him (“If you love me, keep my commandments”). But Ephesus was keeping his commandments, yet not loving him.

Recall Paul’s description of the Man of Sin, the final Antichrist:

2Th 2:4 he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

When an assembly no longer loves the Lord Jesus first of all, it ceases to be a valid assembly. As long as he is at the center, the members of the body can hear his rebukes, and respond to them. But when a church puts something else at the center, whether it be social justice issues, or respectability, or political power, or financial gain, it has left its first love, and believers can no longer participate in it.

Recall our meditations on the Shema. God expects us to love him with all our heart, soul, and abundance. We may sometimes stumble through carelessness or inexperience, but if we truly love the Lord, we will respond when he rebukes us. But when he is no longer at the center of our love, we are unfruitful soil, unfit for the kingdom.

vv. 16-22, Description of Persecution

Instruction: Flee from the Oppressor

The following section is very similar to the warning in Luke at the time of the destruction of the temple by Titus, but there are subtle differences (see notes), reinforcing our distinction between the two episodes.

The response of believers toward the Antichrist differs from that anticipated in Matthew 10 and the beginning of sorrows in 24:3-13. There, the trigger for flight is actual persecution:

Mat 10:23 But **when they persecute you** in this city, flee ye into another:

Here, the trigger is “**when you see** the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place.” Before that final wickedness comes, the disciples are to confront people with the gospel, but in that day, evangelization is over, and they are to flee.

16 Then let them which be in Judaea--Both times of trouble are focused on the Jewish people, and the Jewish heartland is the center of the adversary’s attention. These instructions are specifically for believers who live in Israel. We should be very cautious about generalizing them to tell all believers to go up in the mountains to wait for the Lord, as some have done. The point is that civilization will be controlled by the forces of evil,

Rev 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

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flee into the mountains:--“Fleeing into the mountains”¹⁷ means to leave the cities, where one might easily be found, and hiding in the off-road areas. It was common in the OT for people to take refuge from enemies in this way (chart):

Gen 19:17 And it came to pass, when [the angels] had brought them forth abroad, that he said [to Lot], Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. ... 30 And Lot went up out of Zoar, and **dwelt in the mountain**, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

Jdg 6:2 And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: *and* because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the **dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds**.

1Sa 23:19 Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in **strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah**, which *is* on the south of Jeshimon?¹⁸

The Lord’s words may remind the disciples of those who were faithful to the Lord in the days of Antiochus. The rebellion against the Greeks was led by Mattathias, a priest who lived in the town of Modi’in at the edge of the hill country of Ephraim, half-way between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

1Ma 2:15 the king's officers, such as compelled the people to revolt, came into the city Modin, to make them sacrifice. ... 25 [Mattathias protested:] God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances. 22 We will not hearken to the king's words, to go from our religion, either on the right hand, or the left. 23 Now when he had left speaking these words, there came one of the Jews in the sight of all to sacrifice on the altar which was at Modin, according to the king's commandment. 24 Which thing when Mattathias saw, he was inflamed with zeal, and his reins trembled, neither could he forbear to shew his anger according to judgment: wherefore he ran, and slew him upon the altar. 25 Also the king's commissioner, who compelled men to sacrifice, he killed at that time, and the altar he pulled down. ... 27 And Mattathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice, saying, Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me. 28 So he and his sons **fled into the mountains, and left all that ever they had in the city**.

Luke 21 goes on to urge them to get out of Jerusalem, but Matthew doesn’t mention Jerusalem in this section at all.

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field *αγρος* return back to take his clothes.--Luke 21 doesn’t have these verses (though it does warn those in the fields *χωραις* not to return to Jerusalem). However, these two verses do appear elsewhere in Luke, in ch. 17:31, where he is describing

17 See notes for Matthew’s peculiar idiom here (*επι* rather than *εις* as in Mark and Luke), reflecting LXX usage.

18 Cf. also 23:24-24:2, and 22:1-5.

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(17:30) “that day when the Son of man is revealed.”

Let’s consider the passage in Luke 17 in more detail. The overall section, vv. 20-37, begins with a question from the Pharisees about the coming of the kingdom. The Lord replies (v. 21) that the kingdom is already “among you” (hardly “in” hypocritical, Christ-rejecting Pharisees). His presence in the world was the down-payment on the promise that he and John the Baptist preached, “the kingdom of God is at hand.”

Then (vv. 22-37), he gives further instruction on this subject to his disciples, focusing on the “days” (vv. 22, 26) or the “day” (vv. 24, 30, 31) when he is revealed. Of the 16 verses in this section, half appear in Matthew 24 (including the repetition of Luke 17:31 in Matt 24:17-18), half of those in the great tribulation section, and none are found in Luke 21. This repetition strongly reinforces our conclusion that the description of the time of great tribulation in Matt 24:15-28 is distinct from the desolations of Jerusalem described in Luke 21.

To understand further the verses that our Lord repeats from Luke 17:31, consider how the repeated verses are arranged in Luke and in Matthew (Figure 12, charts). Luke separates two statements that the Lord’s coming will be obvious: it will be like lightning (v. 24) and like the vultures around a dead body (v. 37), but Matthew combines these in 24:23-28. Similarly,

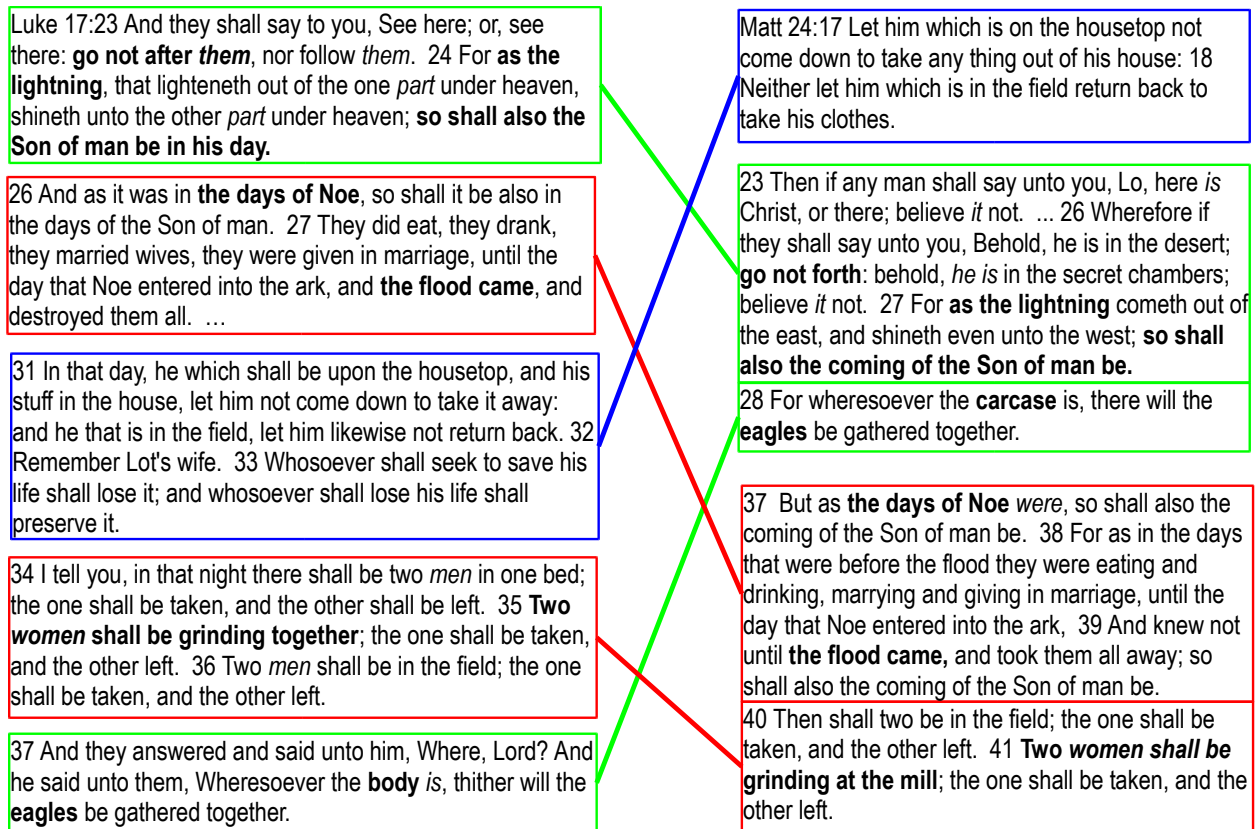


Figure 12: Folding from Luke 17 (left) to Matthew 24 (right)

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Matthew integrates the statements about the separation of the righteous and the unrighteous and the examples of the days of Noah and the people working side by side (24:37-41), which are separated in Luke (vv. 26-27, 34-36). The unification of this material in Matthew shows the thematic continuity of the separate pieces in Luke, and in turn reveals the overall chiasmic structure of Luke's discourse,

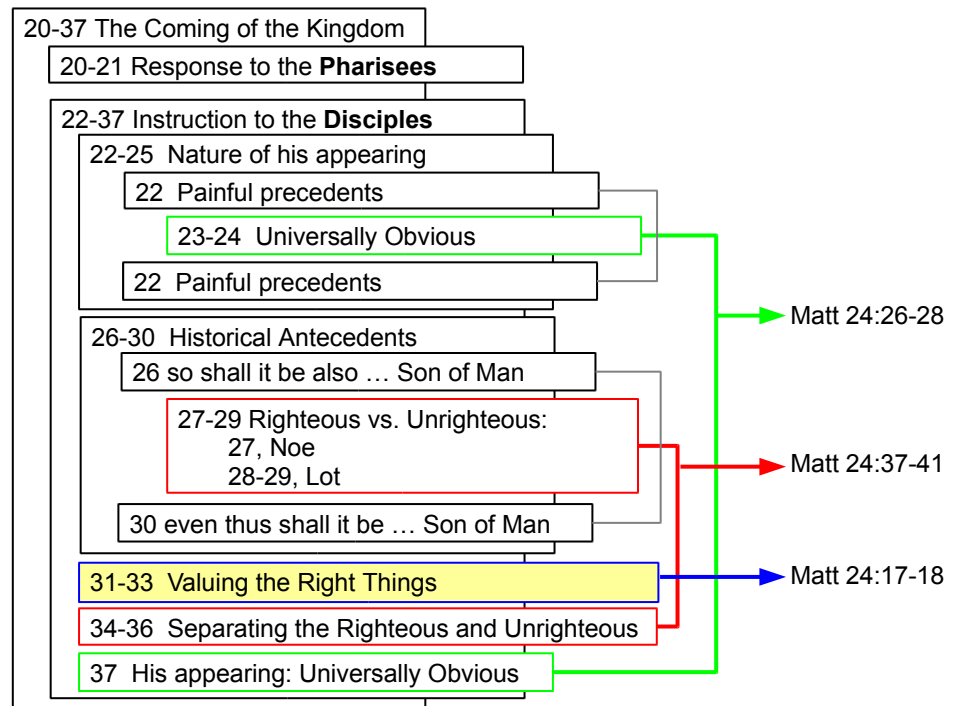


Figure 13: Structure of Luke 17:20-37

with v. 31, the parallel to Matt 24:17, at the center. Technically, we say that the chiasm in Luke has been *folded* to bring the corresponding elements together in Matthew. In this case, the folding has the effect of making clear the correspondences in Luke.

Figure 13 (chart) shows the full analysis. Note how the correspondents in the first panel of the chiasm are set off by their own chiasmic inclusions, and how our Lord in Luke adds to Noah the example of Lot. These additions account for the additional verses in Luke, not repeated in Matthew, but Matthew 24 touches all the components of the earlier presentation in Luke 17.

For our purposes, the major point of this analysis is recognizing the central position of Luke 17:31-11, which is the initial statement of Matt 24:17. In Matthew, our Lord repeats only the warning not to go into the house or return from the field for possessions when the end comes, but Luke amplifies this command with two further statements that help us understand the exhortation in both places (Table 10, chart). The yellow arrows show how chronologically earlier passages provide the background for later ones.

First, he amplifies the example of Lot, which in Luke (but not Matthew) is parallel to Noah:

Luk 17:32 Remember Lot's wife.

Recall the history of Lot's exodus from Sodom in Genesis 19. The exhortation from the Angels was very much like what our Lord is here telling his disciples:

Gen 19:17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said,

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Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

“Escape to the mountain” recalls Matt 24:16, “flee into the mountains,” while “look not behind thee” anticipates v. 17. Lot’s wife was safely out of the city, but in her affection for its material comforts,

Genesis 19	Matthew 24	Luke 17
	17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.	31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.
17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. ... 26 his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.		32 Remember Lot's wife.
	10:39 (Missionary discourse) 16:25 (First passion announcement)	33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

Table 10: How Luke 17:31-33 Amplifies Matt 24:17-18

Gen 19:26 his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

The second additional statement in Luke 17 is a version of the saying we have seen several times already (Matt 10:39; 16:25), about saving and losing one’s life:

Luk 17:33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

The first instance of this was in the missionary discourse, in Matthew 10. It applies, not only at the end of the age, but throughout our lives. Dedication to material things is a snare to spiritual health. Whether we are preaching the gospel (Matthew 10), fleeing the Antichrist (Matthew 24) or hearing the Lord’s call to join him (Luke 17), material things do not matter, and devotion to them will lead to disaster.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!--Luke 21 contains this warning as well. Times of persecution are especially difficult for expectant mothers or those with little children.

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:--Both of these conditions make travel more difficult—winter because the mountain roads may be impassible and the conditions wet and cold, the sabbath because (in Judaea, v. 16) transportation will be curtailed. Public transportation does not run on Sabbath, and in spite of recent efforts to reverse this restriction,¹⁹ the Lord’s words suggest that this hypocritical fastidiousness about the Sabbath, evident even in his day (Matt 15), will persist.

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to

¹⁹ <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-1.725835>

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this time, no, nor ever shall be.--Once again, Matthew includes something that is not part of Luke's description of the Desolation of Jerusalem. The period of time in view in Matthew is unparalleled in all of history. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was a time of suffering, but one can hardly describe it as worse than, say, the Spanish inquisition or Hitler's holocaust under Hitler in the last century.

The Man clothed in linen uses similar language to describe the time right before the resurrection of

the dead in Dan 12:1-2 (Table 11, chart). The two passages both go on to describe the deliverance of God's people at that time, and the final judgment separating the righteous and the unrighteous.

This description reinforces our conviction that the Lord's words recorded in Matthew and Mark do not describe the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, but something yet future, just before the final deliverance of God's people and the resurrection.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.--Luke described a prolonged treading down

Daniel 12	Matthew 24-25
1 ... there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time:	24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.
and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.	24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days ... 31 ... he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect
2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.	25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. ... 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Table 11: Unparalleled Tribulation

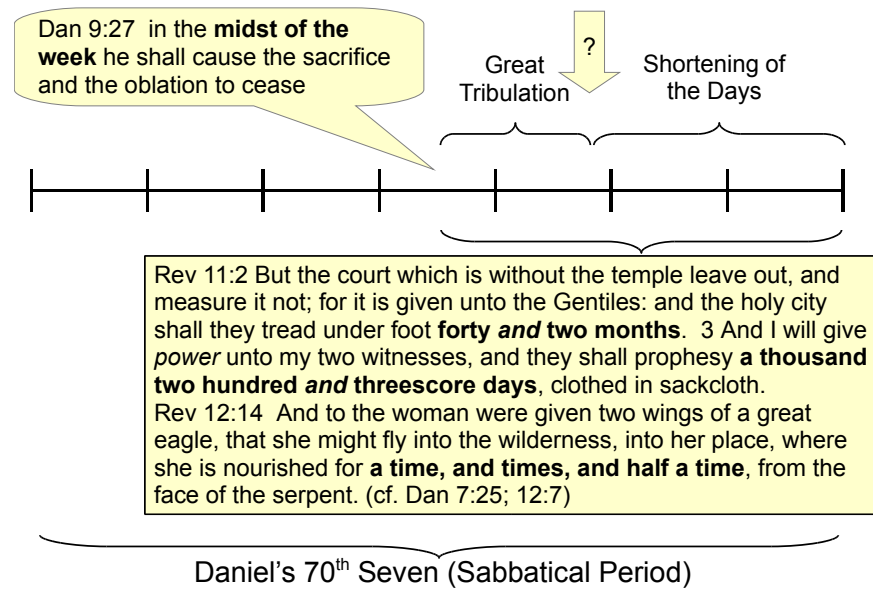


Figure 14: Shortening the Days

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of Jerusalem, throughout the times of the Gentiles, a period that has now endured for nearly 2000 years. Those days have certainly not been “shortened.” But the Lord here promises that the end-time tribulation will be divinely constrained for the sake of his elect.

Figure 14 (chart) shows the relevant time periods.

- Daniel 9 defines the seventy sabbatical periods of seven years each (“week” in the KJV), sixty-nine of which brought us to the time of Messiah.
- Dan 9:27 marks the middle of the seventieth seven as the point at which Antichrist disrupts the temple worship.
- The latter half of the seventieth seven, 3.5 years, is described three times in Revelation, variously as 42 months, 1260 days (figuring 30 days to the month), and a time, times, and half a time.

It is this latter section that is “shortened,” by taking out the believers before the period is expired. The two witnesses of Rev 11:3 remain throughout this period, but at some unknown point within the second 3.5 years, most believers are removed.

Principle: Rejoice in Persecution

Before we pursue this theme further, we should pause to reflect on the attitude that we should have toward persecution. It is not pleasant, but it is part of being a child of God in a wicked world. Remarkably, the Scriptures repeatedly exhort us, not to mope and whine, but to **rejoice** in our sufferings, and often give us striking **motives** for rejoicing. Here are some of them (chart):

Bearing persecution brings a heavenly reward:

Mat 5:11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 **Rejoice, and be exceeding glad:** [Luke 6:23 “leap for joy”] **for great is your reward** in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

It is a means to develop spiritual character in us:

Rom 5:3 And not only *so*, but we **glory** in tribulations also: knowing that **tribulation worketh patience;**

Jam 1:2 My brethren, **count it all joy** when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh **patience.**

It is a sign that we have progressed in our spiritual growth to the point that God can trust us with this load:

Act 5:41 And they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy** to suffer shame for his name.

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It advances the work of the gospel:²⁰

2Co 12:10 Therefore I **take pleasure** in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses **for Christ's sake**: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Col 1:24 Who now **rejoice** in my sufferings **for you**, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh **for his body's sake**, which is the church:

Peter gives an eloquent summary:

1Pe 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But **rejoice**, inasmuch as ye are **partakers of Christ's sufferings**; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, **happy are ye**; for **the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you**: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. 16 Yet if *any man suffer as a Christian*, let him not be ashamed; but **let him glorify God** on this behalf.

vv. 23-28, Warning against False Christs

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.--The ability to perform miracles is not in itself a proof of godliness. Recall the miracles wrought by the magicians of Egypt (chart).

Exo 7:22; 8:7, 18 And the magicians of Egypt did so with their **enchantments**

They were not as powerful as those done by Moses and Aaron, but they did have supernatural powers.

Moses warned that such devices would be used to lead people astray:

Deu 13:1 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, **and giveth thee a sign or a wonder**, 2 **And the sign or the wonder come to pass**, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; 3 Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams:

Paul mentions such signs as characteristic of the future Man of Sin, the Antichrist:

2Th 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 9 *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan **with all power and signs and lying wonders**, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish;

²⁰ This is probably the motive in Acts 16:25 as well, where their rejoicing leads to the jailor's salvation.

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And John, in the Revelation, describes miracles done by the beast out of the earth, the False Prophet, in promoting the worship of the first beast:

Rev 13:13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth **by the means of those miracles which he had power to do** in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

In the scenario the Lord sets before us, we can expect to encounter charismatic personalities who exhibit miraculous powers in support of their claim to be sent by God.

The question naturally arises then, “Of what value are the Lord’s miracles in showing that he is the Messiah?” The answer is that they were not simply miracles, but rather the fulfillment of specific promises made in the OT (Isa 35:5-6). Our Lord’s credentials are his alignment with the Scriptures in all that he says and does.

25 Behold, I have told you before.--The Lord here calls their attention to the fact that he is outlining these events before they occur. Recall that in Isaiah, God’s ability to predict the future was part of his claim against the false gods of Babylon (chart):

Isa 41:22 Let them bring them forth, and **shew us what shall happen**: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. 23 **Shew the things that are to come hereafter**, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together.

Isa 42:9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: **before they spring forth I tell you of them.**

Isa 45:21 Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: **who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD?** and *there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me.

Two days later, at the last supper, he expands on this policy.

Joh 13:18 I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. 19 **Now I tell you before it come**, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

Joh 14:28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come *again* unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. 29 And **now I have told you before it come to pass**, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

In particular, in John as in Matthew, he predicts the coming persecution.

Joh 16:1 **These things have I spoken unto you**, that ye should not be offended. 2 They

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shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. 3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4 But **these things have I told you**, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

He did not give them this degree of detail in advance, because he was still with them. Now that he is leaving them, he reveals how things will unfold so that they will not be surprised. Compare two ways of touring a foreign city: the best way is to have a personal guide to conduct you around, but lacking that, you need a map. During his earthly life, the Lord guided the disciples step by step; now he is leaving them a map.

He continues the theme of false Messiahs with a folding of two of the chiasmic elements in Luke 17:23-24, 37. His return will differ from his first advent, when people had to seek him out (chart).

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth:--This verse is based on Lk 17:23. The second coming will contrast with where John the Baptist first appeared and where he introduced the Lord Jesus:

Mat 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching **in the wilderness** of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying **in the wilderness**, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ... 5 **Then went out to him** Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.--as was sometimes the case at the first advent:

Mar 2:1 And again he entered into Capernaum after *some* days; and it was noised that he was **in the house**. 2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive *them*, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

When he returns to overthrow the Antichrist, it will be impossible to miss his appearance. The Lord illustrates this with two examples from nature about things that are broadly obvious:

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.--This example is paralleled in Lk 17:37.

28 For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles [vultures] be gathered together.--Now the Lord returns to an example he used in Lk 17:24. The statement seems bizarre to us, but in fact is a proverb based on the description of the vulture in Job 39:30.

Job 39:27 Doth **the eagle** mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? 28 She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. 29 From thence she seeketh the prey, *and* her eyes behold afar off. 30 Her young ones also

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suck up blood: and **where the slain *are*, there *is* she.**

24:29-31, Coming of the Son of Man

The last two verses are transitional, preparing us for the description of the Lord's return. It will be marked by cosmic disruptions (v. 29), the coming of the Lord in glory and power (v. 30), and the gathering of the elect (v. 31).

29, Cosmic Disturbances

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:--Disruption of the heavenly lights is a sign of God's judgment (chart).²¹ The first instance is the ninth plague on Egypt, the one that precedes the death of the firstborn.

Exo 10:21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be **darkness** over the land of Egypt, even darkness *which* may be felt. 22 And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was **a thick darkness** in all the land of Egypt three days:

The darkening of the heavenly bodies is often reported as a characteristic of the day of the Lord:

Isa 13:9 Behold, the **day of the LORD** cometh, ... 10 For **the stars of heaven** and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the **sun** shall be darkened in his going forth, and the **moon** shall not cause her light to shine.

Joel 2:10 The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: **the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:**

Joel 2:31 The sun **shall** be turned into darkness, and the **moon** into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Joel 3:15 The **sun** and the **moon** shall be darkened, and the **stars** shall withdraw their shining.

Isaiah 24 motivates this effect psychologically: the heavenly bodies have to hide their faces before the much greater glory of the Lord.

Isa 24:23 Then **the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed**, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

Something very much like this happened at the crucifixion:

Luk 23:44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth

²¹ In addition to those listed here, Ezek 32:7 may be another historical reference (as strongly suggested by 32:11), or it may be a description of the day of the Lord. See discussion in the notes. Pharaoh, like other totalitarian rulers in the Bible, anticipates in many ways the future Antichrist, and it is not surprising if his overthrow were depicted in terms already introduced by Isaiah in reference to the day of the Lord.

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until the ninth hour. 45 And **the sun was darkened**, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

This darkening makes sense because the Lord's death is God's judgment on the sin of wicked people. He underwent the day of the Lord for us, so that we might not suffer on that day.

Peter quotes Joel 2:31 in connection with the day of Pentecost, no doubt recalling the darkness that many of his hearers had already witnessed at the time of the crucifixion.

Act 2:16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ... 18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: 19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: 20 **The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood**, before that great and notable **day of the Lord** come:

We saw that the first five seals in the Revelation correspond to the beginning of sorrows, the period in which we have been living since the Lord's ascension, which culminates in the antichrist. The Lord says that "immediately after the tribulation of those days" the heavenly bodies will be dimmed, and in the Revelation, immediately after the fifth seal (the cry of the martyrs), we have the sixth:

Rev 6:12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and **the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood**; 13 **And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth**, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. ... 17 **For the great day of his wrath is come**; and who shall be able to stand?

v. 30, Coming of the Lord

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven:--The genitive is probably epexegetical, "the sign which is the Son of man," cf. 12:39, "the sign of the prophet Jonah." The sign consists of the appearing of the Lord himself.

and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn,--The phrase "all the tribes of the earth" refers to the entire world, and not just Israel. This is the only way that the expression is used in the LXX. The corresponding passages are:

Gen. 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall **all families of the earth** be blessed.

Gen. 28:14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall **all the families of the earth** be blessed.

Ps. 72:17 His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and *men* shall be blessed in him: **all nations** shall call him blessed.

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Amos 3:2 You only have I known of **all the families of the earth**: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Zech. 14:17 And it shall be, *that* whoso will not come up of **all the families of the earth** unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. *LXX makes "all" explicit*

In the NT, in addition to our verse, the expression appears only in Revelation, as an obvious citation of this verse:

Rev. 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and **all kindreds of the earth** shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

They “mourn” because of the judgment that they see about to fall. We have seen this in the darkening of the heavenly bodies, and in the next verse, in the notion that the Lord is “coming.”

and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power δυναμις and great glory δοξα.--This verse is the basis for

Paul’s description of the Lord’s appearing in 1 Thes 4:16-17 (Table 12, chart).

The image of the Lord’s glorious coming is found throughout the OT, and is another instance of manifold fulfillment (chart). Like the

darkening of the heavenly bodies, it is an image of judgment.

Sometimes it anticipates judgments that God brought on his people in OT times for their sin. Amos 4 recounts the sin of the northern kingdom (4:1), and God’s judgments: famine (6), drought (7), pests (9), pestilence (10), overthrow (11), and concludes:

Amo 4:12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: *and* because I will do this unto thee, **prepare to meet** **ἄρῃ επικαλεσῶ thy God**, O Israel.

Similarly, Hosea rebukes Ephraim (13:1),

Hos 13:6 ... they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. 7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe

Matthew 24	1 Thessalonians 4
4 And Jesus answered and said unto them,	15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord , ...
30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven : and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet , and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.	16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel , and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive <i>and</i> remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds , to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.
Table 12: Paul's reference to Matthew 24 in 1 Thessalonians 4	

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them: 8 **I will meet** פגיש **απανταω** **them** as a bear *that is* bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.

As we have learned to expect, Isaiah develops this image into a picture of the day of the Lord:

Isa 40:3 Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Isa 62:11 Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, **thy salvation [LXX thy savior] cometh** בוא **παραγινομαι**; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

Isa 63:1 [the arrival of the redeemer promised in ch. 62] Who *is* this that **cometh** בוא **παραγινομαι** from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this *that is* glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. 2 Wherefore *art thou* red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? 3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the peoples *there was* none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. 4 For the day of vengeance *is* in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. 5 And I looked, and *there was* none to help; and I wondered that *there was* none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. 6 And I will tread down the peoples in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

The very last prophet of the OT sees the focus of his judgment as sin in the temple, which is the hallmark of the coming Man of Sin who brings the Abomination of Desolation:

Mal 3:1 ... the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly **come** בוא **הוא** to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall **come** בוא **ερχομαι**, saith the LORD of hosts. 2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: 3 And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

The Lord's words in Matthew 24 clearly allude to the event predicted in Daniel 7, when the son of Man comes to the ancient of days to receive authority, glory, and a kingdom (Table 13, chart). Both mention the Son of man, a coming,

Matthew	Dan 7:13-14
24:30 and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power δυναμις and great glory .	13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him
28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power [authority, εξουσια] is given unto me in heaven and in earth.	dominion εξουσια , and glory δοξα , and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion εξουσια is an everlasting dominion εξουσια , which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Table 13: Distinguishing Matt 24:30 and Dan 7:13-14

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the clouds of heaven, and glory.

This heavenly transaction appears to have taken place sometime between the crucifixion and the ascension, for after the resurrection, the Lord tells the disciples that he has already received the promised **dominion**. But the promise in Matt 24:30, though based on Daniel 7, differs from it in three ways:

- In Daniel 7 the coming is to the ancient of days in heaven, and Daniel could see it only in vision. Here, it is to appear to all the earth, in a way that is obvious to all and cannot be mistaken (Matt 24:26-28).
- In Daniel 7, he comes to heaven to receive exaltation from the ancient of days; here, he is already exalted.
- Daniel 7 makes no reference to power *δυναμις*, which he has received by the time Matt 24:30 is fulfilled.

This last point deserves amplification (chart). In the canonical Daniel, *δυναμις* is used only in association with earthly kings: Nebuchadnezzar (3:20), Darius (6:24), and the king of Syria (11:7). Today, the followers of Christ do not seek to exercise such power. To do so would place them in violation of the meekness and gentleness that he commands his followers. But it is a mark of the future return of our Lord. The Lord taught us to end the prayer he gave his disciples by remembering that “power and glory” are the mark of his coming kingdom:

Mat 6:13 For thine is the kingdom, and the **power *δυναμις***, and the glory, for ever.
Amen.

Note the association of “power and glory,” the two characteristics that mark the coming of the Son of Man, with the “kingdom” for which we are to ask earlier in the prayer.

Paul describes the Lord’s return using this term, as well a related noun describing intrinsic force:

2Th 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his **mighty** angels [angels of his **power *δυναμις***], 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his **power *ισχυς***; 10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

The word is common in the Revelation, which focuses on the final arrival of the day of the Lord and the establishment of his earthly kingdom. In the heavenly vision of Revelation 4-5, preparing for the coming of the day of the Lord, power *δυναμις* is ascribed first to God on the throne, and then to the Lamb, and then both are described with *κρατος*, a very similar term.²²

Rev 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and **power *δυναμις***: for

²² TDNT, in its discussion of these two words, describes *δυναμις* as describing the capability for action that comes from power, while *κρατος* refers more to the factuality of the power itself.

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thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Rev 5:12 Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive **power** **δυναμις**, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

Again, in Revelation 7 at the end of the seals and beginning of the trumpets, the angels ascribe power to God:

Rev 7:11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and **power** **δυναμις**, and **might** **ισχυς**, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

When Michael casts Satan down from heaven in ch. 12, opening the door for the appearance of the final Antichrist in ch. 13, we read,

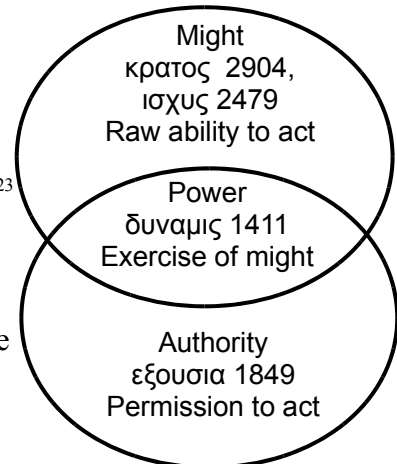
Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and **strength** **δυναμις**, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

And after the fall of Babylon, the great harlot, as the Lord is preparing to return to earth to set up his kingdom,

Rev 19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and **power** **δυναμις**, unto the Lord our God:

So the coming “with power” promised in this verse is his coming to exercise government over the earth. It will not longer be true that his kingdom is “not of this world” (John 18:36), but God’s kingdom will finally come “on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10).

We can summarize the relation among the main words translated “power” in the NT with a Venn diagram (Figure 15, chart). Authority (εξουσια 1849) is permission to act, which our Lord received at the resurrection. Might (κρατος 2904 and ισχυς 2479)²³ designate the raw substance of power, the ability to act, which is an eternal attribute of deity. The power of 24:30, δυναμις 1411, is the exercise of might according to the scope of authority. Informally, εξουσια is a driver’s license, κρατος and ισχυς describe gasoline, and δυναμις is the driver in the car driving down the road. We see this relationship clearly in Paul’s description of the Father’s power and might,



Eph 1:19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his **power** **δυναμις** to us-ward who believe, according to the working *power in the NT*

²³ Between these two κρατος is more quantitative, and ισχυς more qualitative. We read of the κρατος της ισχυος, but never of the ισχυς του κρατου.

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of his **mighty power κρατος της ισχυος**, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,

There is no reference to the Father's authority; he receives authority from no one, but is the source of all authority. But his δυναμις is described as the application of his κρατος and ισχυος.²⁴

The Lord has already received authority over all the earth, but the exercise of divine might according to that authority, his δυναμις, is delayed until his return. But as with all the prophecies of this chapter, we observe manifold fulfillment. The word δυναμις is a common word to describe our Lord's earthly miracles, for example,

Mat 11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his **mighty works δυναμις** were done, because they repented not: 21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the **mighty works δυναμις**, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

And Acts records how he enabled his apostles to exercise power in his name:

Act 19:11 And God wrought special **miracles δυναμις** by the hands of Paul:

v. 31, Gathering of the Elect

31 And he shall send his angels [13:41] with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.--The theme of the gathering of God's elect is another instance of manifold fulfillment (chart, notes).

The **original promise** is in Deuteronomy, when Moses warned the people that God would scatter them if they abandoned him, but then promised,

Deu 30:3 ... the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and **gather** thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. 4 If *any* of thine be driven out unto the outmost *parts* of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God **gather** thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:

Asaph, contemporary of David, associated this final regathering with the coming of God and calling God's people to account:

Psa 50:3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. 4 He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. 5 **Gather** my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

A step along the way is in Israel's **return from the captivities** in the time of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, promised by Isaiah (who introduces the image of a trumpet that we see in our Lord's promise as well:

²⁴ Similarly, believers are to be strong (ενδυναμωω, a verb closely related to δυναμις) in the κρατος της ισχυος αυτου (6:10).

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Isa 27:12 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and **ye shall be gathered** one by one, O ye children of Israel. 13 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the great **trumpet** shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Psalm 107 describes this gathering as having already occurred. Hengstenberg puts this Psalm at the celebration of Ezra 3, after the return but before the reconstruction of the temple.

Psa 107:2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; 3 And **gathered** them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

But this did not exhaust the return. Most Jews did not come back from captivity, as the story of Esther in Persia (480 BC, 84 years after Cyrus' decree and 66 years after the completion of the temple) shows. Zechariah, writing after the return, still anticipates a future gathering, introducing the image of the "four winds of heaven" that we find in our Lord's words:

Zec 2:6 Ho, ho, *come forth*, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven [LXX for I will **gather** you from the four winds of heaven], saith the LORD. 7 Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest *with* the daughter of Babylon.

This is a command for the people still in exile to return.

The promise of gathering may be why Luke emphasizes the identity of the people present at **the day of Pentecost**.

Act 2:5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, **out of every nation under**

heaven.²⁵ ... 9 (www.generationword.com/framework_images/81_map_lands_pentecost.gif)

Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and

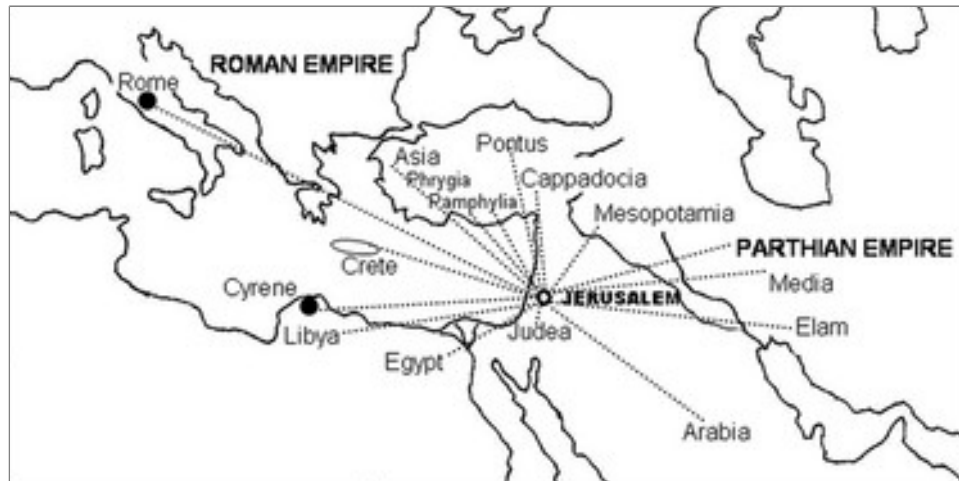


Figure 16: The Gathering at Pentecost

25 Cf. 2 Macc 2:18, using this same language in a letter to Jews in Egypt expressing desire that the promised regathering might take place

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Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretes and Arabians, ...

His catalog of nations and places blankets the known world (Figure 16, chart). These were mostly pilgrims, not permanent immigrants, and they were not brought by the Gentiles, but came on their own accord. But they are a picture of the coming regathering of Israel.

Some suggest that v. 31 predicts the **evangelistic mission of the church**, bringing in the Gentiles. This is difficult for two reasons: first, in Matthew *αγγελοι* are always supernatural beings, not just messengers.²⁶ Second, “gathering” (here, *επισυναγω*; in the OT passages, *συναγω*) is never used of evangelism (see next note). Nevertheless, we can see evangelistic outreach as at least anticipatory of the final ingathering.

But the primary reference of v. 31 is an **end-time gathering**:

1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

2Th 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our **gathering** together unto him,

This gathering differs from the final fulfillment of Moses’ promise, because it deals with a mixed church (Thessalonica was primarily Gentile), not a return of repentant Jews to Israel. The agents are also different. Angels gather the church, but in the **final gathering** in the millennium, Gentiles do the gathering.

Isa 11:12 And he shall set up an **ensign** **׃** for the nations, and shall **assemble** the outcasts of Israel, and **gather** together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Isa 49:18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these **gather** themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. ... 22 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my **standard** **׃** to the people: and **they shall bring** thy sons in *their* arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders.

Isa 60:3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. ... 9 Surely **the isles** shall wait for me, and the ships of **Tarshish** first, **to bring** thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

It is interesting that the last chapter of Isaiah predicts the outreach of Jewish missionaries (like

²⁶ As France himself recognizes in his commentary, though in his dissertation he advocated understanding them as human messengers

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Paul and Thomas) to the Gentiles as a precursor to the return of Jews to the land, led by those Gentiles:

Isa 66:19 ... and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, *to* Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, *to* Tubal, and Javan, *to* the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. 20 And **they shall bring** all your brethren *for* an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, ...

So the gathering promised in v. 31 is a link in a chain of manifold fulfillment that stretches from Deuteronomy all the way to the millennium.

24:32-25:30, Exhortations to Watchfulness

The predictions of the future will resume in 25:31, but now the Lord pauses to exhort the disciples to watch for what he has already described. A time of persecution and evangelization will extend from their day to the appearance of the abomination of desolation, which in turn will be followed shortly by cosmic disturbances heralding the day of the Lord, marked by the Lord's coming to gather his people. They are to expect this sequence of events, and be ready for its culmination.

This section is built around six parables (Table 14, chart). They fall into three groups, each of which emphasizes a different point about the Lord's return.

The first parable, the fig tree, tells us that the signs of the Lord's return are in place, so we can expect his coming. It is *sure* to happen.

The next two parables emphasize the *uncertainty* of the time of his return, in spite of the signs. This theme is marked with seven statements that the time is not known in advance (24:36, 39, 42, 43, 44, 50; 25:13), punctuating the first six parables.

The last three parables all remind us that the Lord's coming *may be delayed*, even "a long time" (24:48; 25:5, 19), and contrast two different kinds of disciples by their conduct during the time of waiting, with respect for their care for other believers, their alertness, and their productive occupation.

Three of the parables in the last two groups share another common feature: the statement about the uncertainty of the time is accompanied with a command to *watch* (24:42, 44; 25:13).

24:32-36, The Fig Tree: near but not known

The theme of this parable is that the signs of the end will be visible (v. 34), and should encourage believers to be ready.

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Parable	Theme	Time is unknown	Command to watch	Time may be long
24:32-36, The Fig Tree	It <i>will</i> happen	24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man ,		
24:37-42, The Days of Noah	The time is <i>unknown</i>	24:39 they ... knew not ; ...42 ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.	24:42 Watch therefore ...	
24:43-44, The Thief		24:43 if [he] had known ... 44 in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.	24:44 Therefore be ye also ready ...	
24:45-51, Faithful vs. Evil Steward	The time may be <i>delayed</i>	24:50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of ,		24:48 My lord delayeth his coming;
25:1-13, Wise vs. Foolish Virgins		25:13 ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.	25:13 Watch therefore ...	25:5 While the bridegroom tarryeth ,
25:14-30, Industrious vs. Lazy Servants		Two kinds of disciples		

Table 14: Parables about Preparedness

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree;--The Greek refers not just to “a parable,” but to “the parable”: “From the fig tree learn its lesson.” A distinguishing characteristic of the fig tree would be especially obvious to them in the spring, the season in which he spoke these words.

When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:--Of all deciduous trees, the transformation of the fig tree from winter to summer is perhaps the most striking, because its leaves are so large. The emergence of leaves on the fig tree would be an obvious sign of summer (as we saw in ch. 21).

If the Lord spoke these words in Michigan, he might use maple syrup season instead of fig trees as the sign. The point is that just as events in nature unfold in an orderly fashion, so will the events leading to the Lord’s return.

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.--The leaves of the fig tree correspond to “all these things,” and the summer to “it,” which may also be rendered “he,” that is, the Lord. The most natural interpretation is that “it” (“he”) is the Lord, whose coming marks “the end” of which the disciples asked at the outset. This interpretation agrees with James, who knows many of the Lord’s teachings from Matthew and

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may have this verse in mind (chart):

Jam 5:9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

The expectation of the Lord's return is a caution to each of us to be ready.

1Jo 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.--

This verse is the most challenging in the discourse, and the pivot on which our interpretation of other parts will turn. So we must spend some time considering it, and attempts that have been made to understand it.

In its most natural sense, the verse claims that everything that the Lord has described, including the coming of vv. 29-31, will be “fulfilled” during “this generation,” the lifetime of those alive while our Lord was speaking. But the second coming has not yet happened. What are we to make of this circumstance? We will consider five approaches.

First, unbelieving scholars take the verse to show the limitations of our Lord's knowledge. He was, they claim, mistaken. But it is strange that in this case the early church would have preserved his statement. And the last three parables show that in fact he recognized that there could be a long delay.

Second, the preterist (“past”) approach claims that these events have already happened. In particular, it identifies “the abomination of desolation” in 24:15-28 with the “days of vengeance” in Luke 21:20-24 and understands the coming of the Son of man not of his return to earth but of his exaltation before the Ancient of Days, and claims all of these things became obvious to the Jewish nation during the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in AD 70. But we have shown the distinction between the abomination of desolation and the Roman conquest, and how vv. 29-31 go beyond Daniel 7 and are understood by Paul of the second coming.

A third approach focuses on the word “generation” γενεα 1074, observing that sometimes in the LXX it refers not to a group of people alive at the same time, but to a class of people, for example, the Jewish nation.²⁷ But this is not at all Matthew's usage. Recall his chronological use of the term in ch. 1:

Mat 1:17 So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and

27 Alford is an authoritative advocate of this position: “γενεά has in Hellenistic Greek the meaning of a race or family of people. See Jer_8:3 LXX; compare ch. Mat_23:36 with ib. Mat_23:35, ἐφρονεῖσατε ... but this generation did not slay Zacharias—so that the whole people are addressed: see also ch. Mat_12:45, in which the meaning absolutely requires this sense (see note there [*sic*; in fact, his note on that verse does not treat this detail at all]): see also Luk_17:25; Mat_17:17; Luk_16:8 (where γενεά is predicated both of the υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου and the υἱοὶ τοῦ φωτός): Act_2:40; Php_2:15. In all these places γενεά is = γένος, or nearly so; having it is true a more pregnant meaning, implying that the character of one generation stamps itself upon the race, as here in this verse also.”

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from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations.

Throughout the gospel, “this generation” is always *γενεα*, and describes his contemporaries, the Jews who are in the process of rejecting their own Messiah.²⁸

In dispensational circles, a fourth approach is sometimes suggested that preserves the chronological sense of “generation,” but understands it to refer, not to the Lord’s generation, but to the generation described in the preceding context, either the appearance of the Antichrist, or sometimes the return of Israel to the land (Hal Lindsey in *Late Great Planet Earth*), which some see as pictured in the leafing of the fig tree (a parallel that is far from obvious and not supported in the context). But throughout Matthew, “this generation” refers to the Lord’s contemporaries; we would have expected him to say “that generation” if he were referring to one that was long separated from his own.

I prefer a fifth solution, which focuses not on the word “generation,” but on the word that the KJV translates “fulfilled.” The English word conveys the sense of something that is completed, but the Greek word, *γινωμαι*, has a very different sense. It describes a process rather than a point, events as unfolding rather than being complete, and we might better translate the verse, “all these things shall happen.” Matthew often uses the Greek word for “fulfilled” *πληρωω* 4137,²⁹ but that is not the word he uses here.

The concept of manifold fulfillment that we have observed repeatedly throughout this section is critical to this understanding. That concept shows us how events representing a final completion of a prophecy may occur before that final completion arrives. In particular (chart):

- There is no problem with “the beginning of sorrows.” All of the difficulties that the Lord describes in this section are documented in the book of Acts.
- The preaching of the gospel throughout the known world was clearly underway by the end of the book of Acts.
- “The abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet” (v. 15) will not be completed until the Antichrist arrives, but already in the time of John, “the spirit of antichrist” was already active (1 John 4:3). While the days of vengeance in AD 70 are not the same as the abomination of desolation, they do anticipate it. It was not “fulfilled” in that generation, but it did “happen,” in the sense that links in the chain of manifold fulfillment occurred.
- The cosmic disruptions of v. 29 were anticipated by the darkness at the crucifixion, attested by Luke.
- The imagery from Daniel 7 in v. 30 recalls his exaltation by the Ancient of Days, a link in the chain leading to the Lord’s final rule over all the earth, and our Lord revealed to his

28 A distinct word, *γεννημα* 1081, appears in the expression “generation of vipers” in 3:7; 12:34; 23:33, and does refer to a class of people, but it’s not the word the Lord chose in 24:34.

29 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35, 48; 21:4; 23:32; 26:54, 56; 27:9

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disciples in Matt 28:18 that in fact “all authority” had been given to him by that time.

- While the coming of the Son of man described in vv. 30-31 goes beyond what Daniel saw in Daniel 7, his power *δυναμις* was demonstrated in his resurrection and the miracles performed by the disciples during the book of Acts.
- The promise of the gathering of the elect is anticipated by the international audience on the day of Pentecost.

All of these things have been unfolding since the first century. In one form or another, they all “happened” during the lifetimes of those then living, yet their final culmination has not yet come.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.--This is a striking statement, in which the Lord claims for his own words a status hitherto reserved for the word of God (chart).

Mat 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Isa 40:8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Isa 54:10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

Psa 119:89 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

We should not miss the striking parallel between these two verses and a verse in the Sermon on the Mount, 5:18 (Table 15, chart). Both passages

- begin with the solemn affirmation “verily”
- speak of the fulfillment (“happening”) of all things (*γίνομαι*)
- insist on the permanence of God’s revelation, which shall not “pass away” *παρερχομαι*
- provide temporal landmarks of something that does “pass away” *παρερχομαι*: the end of “heaven and earth” in both cases; “this generation” in 24:34.

5:18 For verily I say unto you,	24:34 Verily I say unto you,	
Till heaven and earth pass,	This generation shall not pass,	35 Heaven and earth shall pass away,
one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law,		but my words shall not pass away.
till all be fulfilled [happen].	till all these things be fulfilled [happen].	
Table 15: Two Similar Promises		

There are other links between the two discourses: perhaps we should speak of the two sermons

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on the mount. Both teach believers to expect persecution (5:10-12; 24:3-13, 15-28), both speak of the “power and glory” associated with the coming of God’s kingdom (6:13; 24:30), and the account of the last judgment in 25:31-46 bears striking similarity to the judgment described in 7:21-23, both determining who shall enter the kingdom. Recall that the Sermon on the Mount, with structure parallel to Deuteronomy, presents the law that governs the kingdom, while this discourse deals with the events around the coming of that kingdom. In both cases, the final victory reverses the defilement of the sanctuary (by those who would abolish the law in 5:17-19; by the Antichrist in 24:15-28).

The unfolding of this final drama is what both 5:18 and 24:34 promise us will “happen” by a specified time. 5:18 offers us only one time horizon, the duration of the heaven and earth. But 24:34-35 zooms in more closely. The Lord’s contemporaries will witness “all these things,” which will continue to unfold to their full realization before the heaven and earth end. The chronological progress between “this generation” and the duration of “heaven and earth” reflects the development inherent in manifold fulfillment.

The disjunctive at the head of the next verse emphasizes a change in emphasis. The point of the first parable is that the signs mean that we can be sure the Lord will return. But certainty of the fact does not imply any knowledge of the time, and as the next two parables will emphasize, that time remains hidden.

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.--Mark 13:32 adds, “neither the Son.” In the mysteries of the godhead, the Father has reserved certain knowledge to himself, and the Son continues to be subject to the Father’s direction. What an exhortation this is to us, when we insist on knowing in advance what is going to happen, and when.

The next parable consists of two halves that are separated in Luke 17:26-27, 35-36, but here are combined (Figure 12, page 33, chart). This parable and the parable of the thief emphasize the surprise that the Lord’s return will bring.

24:37-42, The Days of Noah

The theme of this parable is that the Lord’s return will interrupt ordinary daily life in an unexpected way. First he recalls what happened historically in the days of Noah, then he describes what will take place at “the coming of the Son of man.”

37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,--That is to say, life went on as usual. As is often the case, the Scriptures contain within themselves the information we need to understand this expression about marriage. Recall Jeremiah’s letter to the captives in Babylon. After Jeconiah and some of the people (including Ezekiel) were taken captive in 597, a false prophet named Hananiah was spreading the prediction that the captivity would end within two years (chart):

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Jer 28:1 And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, *and* in the fifth month, *that* Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which *was* of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, 2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3 **Within two full years** will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD'S house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: 4 And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

Jeremiah countered his prophecy, and wrote a letter to the captives telling them that they would be there for 70 years, and because of this, they should settle down for the duration.

Jer 29:6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. . . . 10 For thus saith the LORD, That after **seventy years** be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

Marrying presumes that life will continue. As long as they thought things were going to change, they hesitated to make long-term plans. A couple might say to themselves, “If we’re going to be home in a year or two, let’s wait until then to start our family.” But Jeremiah tells them that everything is going to continue.

In the days of Noah, God’s prophet was telling them a very different message. The Bible teaches that Noah tried to warn them of the coming judgment:³⁰

2Pe 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Given the size of the ark and the unusual animal movements in the final days before the flood, it would have been difficult for people around him to ignore what he said. They would have known of the threat of coming judgment but not the time, and they had no excuse when they were destroyed. Yet by their actions they show that they did not expect his warnings to come true.

Paul may have this passage in mind when he writes,

1Co 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

He exhorts the Corinthians to live with an alert expectation of the Lord’s return. He does not forbid marriage, but urges that they evaluate it in the light of what will enable them to “attend upon the Lord without distraction,” v. 35. Their focus must be on him and the promise of his

30 This was a common Jewish tradition of the time. Josephus, *Ant.* 1.74; *Jub.* 7:20–29; *Sib. Or.* 1:128–29, 150–98, cited by Schreiner, T. R. (2003). *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Vol. 37, p. 339). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

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return.

until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39 And knew not until the flood came, and took *αρω* them all away [Lk: destroyed them all]; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.--Is the “taking” to judgment, or the deliverance of Noah and his family? The reference is almost certainly to judgment. The “them” who are taken away is the “they” who were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and ignorant of the impending judgment, not Noah, who was making preparation and entering into the ark.³¹ The parallel in Luke 17:27 also clarifies: there, the Lord says, “the flood came, and destroyed them all.” So the taking here is to judgment.

The Lord emphasizes the uncertainty of the time of the event in the statement that they “knew not,” and that “the coming of the Son of man” will be similarly delayed.

As we have seen, the ignorance of Noah’s contemporaries is inexcusable. God did not leave them without warning, but they deliberately chose to ignore it.

The Lord compares people engaged in daily activities of his time (men working in the field, women grinding grain to make bread) with Noah’s contemporaries. Daily life will continue right up to the end, when his angels will gather his elect (24:31).

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken *παραλαμβανω*, and the other left.

41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken *παραλαμβανω*, and the other left.--The verb “taken” in these two examples is different from that in v. 39. This verb is always used with a positive sense,³² of accepting a person or a teaching, for example (chart),

Joh 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own **received** him not.

Col 2:6 As ye have therefore **received** Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him:

It suggests protection and approval, and here probably describes the gathering of the elect by the angels in v. 31.

The two examples that the Lord uses may be suggested by two OT stories.

The first corresponds quite closely to the call of Elisha by Elijah.

1Ki 19:19 So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who *was* plowing *with* twelve yoke *of oxen* before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. 20 And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and *then* I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? 21 And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

Elisha was one of twelve farmers working this ground—he had his yoke of oxen, which he later

31 Anita Parunak notes that those who are taken are plural, while only Noah is said to have “entered into the ark.

32 See note for discussion of alleged negative instances.

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slew and shared with the others. But he alone was taken to join Elijah.

The second story shifts from men (indicated by the masculine pronouns in v. 40) to women doing their typical work. We don't have a picture of a woman being called from others milling grain, but Boaz has other women working in his field besides Ruth:

Rut 2:8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by **my maidens**: ... 22 And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, *It is good*, my daughter, that thou go out with **his maidens**, that they meet thee not in any other field. 23 So she kept fast by **the maidens** of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law.

Yet the others remain only servants, while he takes Ruth to be his wife.³³

42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.--Throughout ch. 24-25, the Lord often warns that the hour is unknown. This is the first of three places (including 24:44 and 25:13) that supplement this indicative with an imperative to be alert for his coming.

24:43-44 The Thief

43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.--The example of Noah was ancient already in the Lord's day, and people might treat it more as a story than as a real potential event. So the Lord adds another example with which they would have daily familiarity—a thief robbing a house.

This is not the first time that the Lord compares himself with a thief. In Jeremiah's oracle against Edom, we read (chart),

Jer 49:9 If grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave *some* gleaning grapes? if **thieves by night**, they will destroy till they have enough. 10 But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he *is* not. (cf. Obadiah 5).

Again, the thief comes by night, but in addition to being unexpected, the Lord's judgment is far more severe than any thief could inflict. If they think it prudent to prepare for the possibility of robbery, how much more should they be ready for the Lord's return.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.--For a second time, the Lord adds the imperative to be on the alert. This parable, with its exhortation, appears to lie behind some passages by the apostles:

1 Thes 5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you **as a thief**. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the

³³ It is barely possible that we are meant to think of Ruth and Naomi as the two who are milling the grain that Ruth has gleaned, and Boaz takes Ruth and not Naomi.

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night, nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but **let us watch and be sober.**

2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come **as a thief in the night**; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Rev 16:15 Behold, I come **as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth**, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

The first parable emphasized that the Lord’s return is certain, because the signs are already appearing. The next two warn us not to predicting the time. It is not revealed, and believers need to watch. Each of the last three parables distinguishes two different kinds of people who are waiting for the Lord’s return. These parables recognize that the time may be long, and discuss how we are to conduct ourselves during this period. Table 16 (chart) shows

Parable	Trait	Sphere of Relation
Faithful and Evil Stewards	Responsibility	Other believers (the household)
Wise and Foolish Virgins	Preparation	The Lord (the bridegroom)
Diligent and Slothful Servants	Diligence	The world (the exchangers)

Table 16: Complementarity of the Last Three Parables

how they complement one another. Each emphasizes a different trait that the Lord desires among his people: *responsibility* to other believers under our responsibility, *preparation* to wait for him, and *diligence* in what he has entrusted to our care. Each focuses on a different sphere of relationship: *other believers*, *the Lord himself*, and *the world* to whom we are called to witness.³⁴

24:45-51 Faithful and Evil Stewards

The theme of the first of these three parables is our *responsibility* to care for *other believers*.

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?--“Giving them their meat” indicates that we are dealing with the steward, the person to whom is entrusted the key to the storerooms, and when he told the parable in Luke 12:42, the Lord actually called this person a steward.

This servant probably represents those who teach in the local church. Two reasons (chart):

First, the setting in Luke. Luke 12 tells us that the Lord gave this parable and the previous one about the thief on a previous occasion, preceded by another parable about servants waiting for their Lord. The first two parables are addressed to “ye,” in the plural (chart). Peter asks whether the Lord is talking just to the Twelve, or to all people:³⁵

34 There’s a Bible study principle here: when the Scriptures give several statements of seems to be the same teaching (here, patiently waiting for the Lord), look for complementarities among them.

35 His attitude is the same one that he manifests in John 21:21, anxious to know whether the Lord is demanding more of him than of other believers.

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Luk 12:41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

This parable, speaking of a single servant, is in response to Peter's question about whether the Lord is singling them out. The Lord's response is, "Yes, I am speaking to you, and those like you who feed the household of God."

Second, recall the Lord's teaching in Matthew, the final parable in ch. 13,

Mat 13:52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe *which is* instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure *things* new and old.

Here it's not the steward, but the householder himself, who is managing the storeroom, but he's expressly identified with the scribe, responsible for ministering the Word of God.

So the focus of the parable is on those who are responsible to provide for the household. It certainly fits the leadership of the local church. But each of us has some spiritual gift on which others depend, and we can either discharge that duty faithfully or abuse what God has given us for our own gratification.

46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.--As in the parable of the talents coming in 25:14-30, faithfulness in a little leads to increased responsibility later.

48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord **delayeth his coming;**--Here is the first hint that the coming, though unknown, may not be soon. We'll find a similar suggestion in the other two parables in this section.

49 And shall begin to smite *his* fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;--After all, he has the keys to the larder, and if he likes, can bring out the goodies for a drunken feast with his friends, while starving the legitimate servants into submission. The counterpart in reality is someone using a gift, not for the good of the church, but for their own gratification. Paul emphasizes this in his discussion of the gift of languages in 1 Corinthians 14 (chart),

1 Cor 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

Gifts are given to us so that we may edify one another, not to squander on ourselves. The general principle is common throughout the NT:

Rom 15:2 Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification. 3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

1Co 10:33 Even as I please all *men* in all *things*, not seeking mine own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.

This danger takes a particular form in the teaching of God's word. Just as the steward has the

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key to the storeroom, so teachers often gain special knowledge of the Scriptures (for example, the original languages, historical background). This tendency is particularly true in a system, like modern evangelical Christianity, that encourages teachers to seek special academic preparation. It is tempting for teachers to use this knowledge to defend themselves against criticism: “You can’t challenge what I say. I am the authority on what the Bible says, and you have to take it from me.”³⁶ Really serious discussion of what the Bible means is restricted to the clique of professional clergy, and the laity must simply accept the teacher’s authority. In the terms of the parable, the steward eats and drinks with the drunken, gorging himself on spiritual insights with others who share his special knowledge. But if we see teaching as a gift to be received with thankfulness and shared freely, the teacher should be equipping the saints with as much of the skill needed to understand the Bible as they can absorb.

50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,--The warning of imminency in this parable is not a separate exhortation at the end, but embedded in the parable itself.

51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.--These two descriptions show us that the evil steward has no part in the kingdom. The Lord has told us what he thinks of “hypocrites” in ch. 23, and elsewhere we read of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” as evidence of being cast out of the kingdom:

Mat 8:12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Mat 22:13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We will also see this warning at the end of the parable of the talents (25:30).

The parable is a solemn warning for those in positions of responsibility in the church. Recall the teaching of James:

Jam 3:1 My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation [judgment].

We must pay careful attention to the instructions for caring for the flock in Matthew 18. Peter may well have this parable, originating in an answer to his question, in mind when he later writes,

1Pe 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear,

36 This dynamic leads to the emergence of what the Roman Catholic institution calls the magisterium. But modern evangelical scholarship is hardly innocent of the temptation to rely on what “great men of God” have taught, to the neglect of independent Bible study.

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ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Don't be like the evil steward, or you may find yourself on the outside looking in. Even the pastoral position is no sure sign of salvation. Some in that position will find themselves cast out.

So the message of the first parable is that while we wait for our Lord, we must recognize first of all care for one another in the body of Christ. This was the focus of his instruction to the disciples in Matthew 18, speaking of the care of the church for the little ones, and it is his point in the upper room discourse: "Love one another" (John 13:34; 15:12, 17).

25:1-13 Wise and Foolish Virgins

The theme of the second parable is being *prepared to meet the Lord*, rather than presuming that others will do it for us. The first of the three final parables focused on our relation with the church; this one emphasizes our individual responsibility in our relation to the Lord.

25:1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.--We usually picture the virgins as leaving the bridal house and falling asleep on the road somewhere. But they are not called to "go out" until v. 6, when he is seen approaching. This verse is better understood as a summary, or even a title (Luz), of the rest of the parable. "Let me tell you about ten virgins who went to meet the bridegroom."

The word "lamp" λαμπαι that describes the implements carried by the virgins is not the usual word λυχνος for a clay lamp for use in the room of a house (the "candle" that is not put under a bushel in 5:15, Figure 17, chart), but a torch, made of cloth soaked in olive oil and wrapped around the end of a stick (Figure 18). The word here also appears in John 18:3 to describe the equipment of the band of men who came to arrest the Lord in Gethsemene.



Figure 17: Clay oil lamp (λυχνος Strong 3088, KJV "candle" or "light") <http://www.garstang.us/images/illustrations/HerodLampLitRt.jpg>

2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.--Unlike a table lamp, the torch has no

reservoir, but must be replenished from a separate container. The cloth might be impregnated with oil from a previous use, but would not be fully charged until the time came to use it, to avoid making a mess in transit.

So running out of oil is not the result of the bridegroom's delay. All of the virgins must have known that additional oil would be required, whether the wait was long or short. But only some made provision. The others apparently thought that they could avoid the expense and borrow from their companions when the time came. The point of the parable is thus not the *perseverance* of the virgins, but rather their *preparation*.

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Figure 18: Torches (λαμπας Strong 2985, KJV "lamp," "light," "torch") Image from the sixth century Codex Rossanensi <http://www.calabria.org.uk/calabria/arte-cultura/CodexPurpureusRossanensis/004web.jpg>

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.--They are not criticized for this. Their job does not begin until the bridegroom appears; others in the house are keeping watch, as the next verse shows.

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.--

This detail shows that they were not yet out on the road, but in the house waiting. The expression "to meet him" is a special expression; the noun form (απαντησις, Strong 529, here) and the corresponding verb (απανταω 528) mean to encounter somebody as he approaches another destination, often in order to accompany him there (Figure 19, chart). For example, when the Lord heals the nobleman's son and sends him home, we read,

Joh 4:51 And as he was now going down, his servants **met** him, and told *him*, saying, Thy son liveth.

They were so excited with the healing that they came out to encounter him as he made his way home. In preparing for the last supper, the Lord instructs his disciples (chart),

Mar 14:13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the

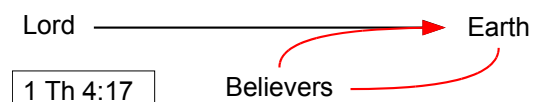
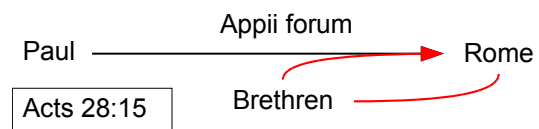
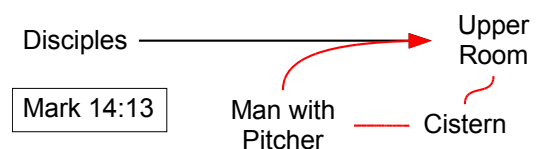


Figure 19: The meaning of απαντησις and απανταω

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city, and there shall **meet** you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.

And when Paul is on his way to Rome, a group of brethren come to escort him into the city:

Act 28:15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

That's what is happening in our verse. The destination of the bridegroom is the house where the virgins have been waiting. They come out to escort him back to the marriage banquet.

Significantly, this expression is the one chosen by Paul to describe the rapture in the passage that he says is based on "the word of the Lord" :

1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air:

The idea is not that we are caught away to heaven, but that we go out to meet him as he comes to establish his royal reign over the earth, and accompany him back to the subsequent banquet on Mount Zion (Isa 25:6).

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.--They charged them with oil and lit them in preparation for leaving the house.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.--The residual oil on their torches might have burned for a few moments, but without being refreshed, they quickly went out.

We see here something of the expectation of the foolish virgins in coming unprepared to the bridal house. Oil was costly; a stick with rags tied on the end was not. They were unwilling to bear the cost themselves, and assumed (or hoped) that others would bring sufficient for them.

9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you:--We may find the response of the wise virgins selfish, but in fact they have a job to do, and must not compromise their ability to fulfill their responsibility.

At first glance, this action seems to contradict the parable of the stewards. From that, we would have expected those with oil to tend to the needs of those without. This might be expected if the lack of the foolish virgins were due to the delay of the bridegroom, putting them all in need and requiring sharing as in the early church in Jerusalem. But we have seen that their problem is rather one of lack of preparation in the first place. They did not take seriously their relation to the bridegroom and what they needed individually to serve him. There is something in our relation to him that no other believer can supply, something that we must procure ourselves.

but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.--In the middle of the night, this would have been difficult, though in an economy where people lived above or behind their shops, it was perhaps not impossible to awaken the shopkeeper.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in

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with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. 11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.--Like the other parables in this section, the consequence for those whose behavior is defective is exclusion from the blessings of Messiah's return (cf. 24:51 weeping and gnashing of teeth; 25:30 cast into outer darkness). In this case, the Lord's verdict recalls the judgment depicted in the Sermon on the Mount (chart):

Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you:** depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Luke records a similar warning as the Lord is on his way to Jerusalem for the feast of the dedication:

Luk 13:26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. 27 But he shall say, I tell you, **I know you not whence ye are;** depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

Paul points out that not everyone who thinks they know the Lord, are actually known by him:

Gal 4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, **or rather are known of God,** how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

The lesson there was that many who think of themselves as believers may in fact find that they have no true relation to the Lord. A similar lesson appears to be active here, and may be reinforced if, as Edersheim has suggested, the neglect of oil by the foolish virgins

corresponds to their conduct, who, belonging to the Church—having the 'profession'—being bridal companions provided with lamps, ready to go forth, and expecting to share in the wedding feast—neglect the preparation of grace, personal conversion and holiness, trusting that in the hour of need the oil may be supplied out of the common stock.³⁷

Outwardly, all the virgins look the same. They all have torches; they all come to the bridal house; they all claim to look forward to the coming of the bridegroom. But in fact, five of them have only the form of godliness, and not the true power (2 Tim 3:5). They are like the religious leaders whom the Lord has so vigorously condemned (ch. 15; ch. 23), appearing to be the Lord's people, but actually defective. They think that the preparation of others in the company will suffice for them. And in the end they are cast out.

This interpretation is reinforced if here, as often in Scripture, oil represents the Holy Spirit. Paul will teach,

Rom 8:9 Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Indeed, the relation of the Holy Spirit to believers was different under the old covenant than

³⁷ Edersheim, A. (1896). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Vol. 2, p. 457). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

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under the new (Ezek 36:27; John 14:17), dwelling within believers rather than simply being with them. But the heroes of the OT are marked by his presence, and we may expect the disciples to realize even before Pentecost that those who claim to be the Lord's but who lack the personal presence of the Spirit of God cannot be pleasing to him.

Let's consider some examples where oil is a symbol of the Spirit (chart).

Israel's kings were anointed with oil, and in at least two cases, this anointing is specifically associated with the coming of the Spirit upon the king:

1Sa 10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of **oil**, and poured *it* upon [Saul's] head, and kissed him, and said, *Is it* not because the LORD hath anointed thee *to be* captain over his inheritance? ... 6 And the **Spirit of the LORD** will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

1Sa 16:13 Then Samuel took the horn of **oil**, and anointed [David] in the midst of his brethren: and the **Spirit of the LORD** came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

The most direct statement draws on a detail of the tabernacle and temple. In the holy place, the seven lamps on the lampstand (the Menorah) burned olive oil, and had to be refilled so that they would burn throughout the night, something that required Aaron's continuous attention:

Lev 24:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually. 3 Without the veil of the testimony, in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning before the LORD continually: *it shall be* a statute for ever in your generations. 4 He shall order the lamps upon the pure candlestick before the LORD continually.

After Cyrus sent the Jews back to rebuild the temple, the Lord encouraged Zerubbabel, the governor, who faced many challenges in this project. The Lord gave Zechariah a vision, based on the Menorah, to encourage him (chart):

Zec 4:1 And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, 2 And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all *of* gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which *are* upon the top thereof: 3 And two olive trees by it, one upon the right *side* of the bowl, and the other upon the left *side* thereof. 4 So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What *are* these, my lord? ... 6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This *is* the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. ... 11 Then answered I, and said unto him, What *are* these two olive trees upon the right *side* of the candlestick and upon the left *side* thereof? ... What *be* these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden *oil* out of themselves? ... 14 Then said he, These *are* the two anointed ones [Joshua the high

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priest, and Zerubbabel the governor], that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

Now the Lord gives Zechariah a vision of an automatic lampstand that does not require manual refilling. Trees grow on either side of the lampstand, emptying their oil into a bowl from which pipes convey it to each of the lamps (Figure 20, chart). When Zechariah asks for the explanation of this fantastic contraption, the angel explains that it is to remind Zerubbabel that the work he is to do is “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit.” The continuous supply of olive oil to the lamps is a picture of the provision of God’s empowering Holy Spirit to Zerubbabel.



Figure 20: Zechariah's Auto-Filling Lampstand (Zech 4:2-11). M. Bihn & J. Bealings, *The New Bible Symbols*. London: Hertel, 1922, now public domain (<http://creationism.org/books/BibleInPictures/index.htm>)

So the parable of the virgins warns us again of a common theme throughout Matthew, the danger of outward conformity to biblical standards without a true personal relation to the Lord. We cannot rely on the experience of others to be right with God. We must come individually in repentance and faith, and allow God’s Spirit to mold us individually into the image of Christ.

13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.--Once again, we have the reminder that the time is not known, and an exhortation to watch.

25:14-30 Diligent and Slothful Servants

The theme of the third parable is our *diligence* in serving the Lord, with special focus on our relation to the *world*.

This is the only one of the parables that does not contain a statement about the uncertainty of the time. It’s almost as though we are to be so occupied with serving the Lord that the thought of his coming recedes. Warnings about its urgency are especially relevant to those who are discouraged or who need motivation in the Christian life, but if we understand that we have a job to do for him, the second coming is not the most important thing to us. The faithful labor of these servants, like the slumbering of the virgins, is not preoccupied with the rapture.

14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own

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servants, and delivered unto them his goods.--Their work extends role of the steward, to buy and sell on behalf of the household.

15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability;--The Lord does not charge us with more than he knows we can handle. Compare (chart)

1Co 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

The word “talent” in this parable, as everywhere in the Bible, refers to a unit of weight, about 30 kg. It does not have the modern meaning of an innate ability or skill. That is conveyed in this very verse by a different word, “ability” δυναμις. Our English word is simply a transliteration of the Greek ταλαντον, which means first the scales, then what is weighted upon them. The Romans picked up the same word, *talentum*, in the same meaning. But by the mid-1400s, largely under the influence of this parable, the word had come to mean a special ability or skill! So while the Lord is speaking here about financial endowments, our vocabulary for a divinely-given capability has come from this parable.

And in fact, upon his departure, the Lord did endow his disciples with special gifts, by means of the Holy Spirit. While the Spirit’s coming was after his departure, he promised it before he left, particularly with reference to the preaching of the gospel.

Joh 20:22 And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: 23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.

and straightway took his journey.--The Lord anticipates his return to the Father.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.--The activity of trading is our first clue that the parable concerns our relation with the world. Israel’s economy was predominantly agricultural, not mercantile. When we encounter trade in the Bible, it is between Israelites and other nations: think of the ship from Tarshish docked at Joppa in which Jonah sought to escape from the Lord (Jonah 1), or Solomon’s dealings with Hiram king of Tyre for the temple (1 Kings 5), or his trading journeys to Africa (1 Kings 10).

If we are right that the talents represent the spiritual empowerment of the church, this trading activity is emblematic of the outreach of the apostles in fulfillment of the great commission. Trading is an apt figure for evangelism, requiring us to travel and engage with other people.

17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.--The third servant will not use the endowment the master has given him, but lets it lie idle.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.--Once

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again, we are reminded that the Lord may be gone for a long time. When he returns, we must give account., as Paul reminds his readers:

2 Cor 5:9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant:--The commendation focuses on his conformity to God's law (good, not morally defective) and his attention to the task given him (faithful).

thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things:--Recall our study of the kingdom: the purpose for which we have been created is to have dominion over the earth. The Lord trains us for this task by entrusting us with exercises, and as we grow and prove our ability, he gives us more.

There is no hint with either of the first two servants that the Lord takes back either the initial capital or the profit realized by the servants. In fact, his transfer of the talent of the third servant to the first implies that they continue to be responsible for what they have managed and what they have gained. The outcome of the entire exercise for the faithful servants is to enrich them.

enter thou into the joy of thy lord.--The genitive could be understood in two different ways. It might mean, "the joy that comes from thy lord, that he gives." But I believe we should understand it to mean, "the joy that belongs to your lord, that he feels."³⁸ The Scriptures depict the Lord as experiencing joyful rest when he completes his work. This was the case at the creation (chart):

Gen 2:2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and **he rested** on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would derive satisfaction from his offering for his people:

Isa 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall **be satisfied**:

And Hebrews describes his motive for suffering using the same word, "joy," that we have here:

Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who **for the joy** that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

"The joy of thy Lord" is his own satisfaction with how he has completed the work that God gave him to do. Our verse is the root from which springs a rich garden of NT promises that we shall one day participate in his joy.

38 My interpretation of this phrase draws extensively on Alford's comment on this verse.

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2Ti 2:11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:
12 If we suffer, **we shall also reign with him**:

Rom 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that **we may be also glorified together**.

1Pe 4:13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, **ye may be glad also with exceeding joy**.

Perhaps the greatest of these promises is the passage in Hebrews 4 that we studied at Easter in 2011. The writer is expounding God's statement in Ps 95:11 that the Israelites in the wilderness "should not enter into my rest."

Heb 4:7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. 8 For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. 10 For **he that is entered into his rest**, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. 11 **Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest**, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

"Jesus" here is Joshua, who could completely vanquish the Canaanites to give Israel rest in the land (Judges 1-2). But the writer goes on to speak of one person who "is entered into his rest," having finished his work. At Easter 2011, we saw that this verse refers to our Lord Jesus. He finished his earthly work and has entered into his rest. Now The writer promises us that we in turn can "enter into that rest," echoing our Lord's words, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord."

What an encouragement this should be to us in our labor for the Lord. We are called to share his sufferings, but the promise is that we shall one day share also in his joy.

22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.--The one with a lesser endowment, who produced a smaller result, receives the same praise as the more prominent servant.

24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man,--This is a serious accusation. The Greek word σκληρος (Strong 4642) is the consistent translation in the LXX³⁹ of the Hebrew root קשה (adjective 7186, verb 7185), and examining how this is used in the OT. The Hebrew word commonly means "cruel, hard, difficult." It is the standard expression for being stiffnecked. The adjective is never used of the Lord, and the verb only by the men of Ashdod, speaking of God's punishment (chart):

1Sa 5:7 And when the men of Ashdod saw that *it was* so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his **hand is sore** upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

39 Both dominant and dedicated

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Godly Israelites realize, like Nehemiah, that only wicked men are hard, while God is merciful:

Neh 9:17 [They] refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but **hardened their necks**, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou *art* a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

Only three times does the LXX say that a man is hard,⁴⁰ and in only one of them does the underlying Hebrew align with the expression:

1Sa 25:3 Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but **the man was churlish [hard]** and evil in his doings; ...

This servant is accusing his lord of being like Nabal—selfish, thoughtless of others, abusive.

reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:--If this were true, it would make the lord a breaker of the law:

Deu 23:25 When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

Alford compares this last parable with the first, that of the soils. The third servant blames the lack of productivity on the *master*, but the first parable traces it to defects in the *soil*.

25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.--Here we have a believer who will not exercise his endowment from the Lord. The reason he gives is that he is afraid he will not satisfy the unjust expectations of the Lord. There are two problems with his attitude: his fear, and his excuse.

First, he does not really fear the Lord. If he did, he would for that very reason obey him (chart).

Deu 13:4 Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

Second, he has not rendered to the master “that is thine,” for as a slave (δουλος Strong 1401 “bondslave”) he himself, his time, and his effort all belong to the master.

This last statement is a confession that he does not really consider himself a servant of the master. The attitude of the true believer toward God’s commands is one of love, not hatred:

Psa 1:2 **his delight is in the law of the LORD**; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Psa 119:97 **O how love I thy law!** it is my meditation all the day.⁴¹

40 The other two are Num 16:26 “wicked men” and Isa 19:4 “cruel lord,” which translates אֲדוֹנִים קָשָׁה as αὐθροπῶν κυριῶν σκληρῶν

41 Psa 119 is full of such testimonies: vv 24, 70, 77, 97, 113, 119, 163, 165, 167, 174. See also Ps. 19.

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Rom 7:22 For **I delight in the law of God** after the inward man:

Where there is difficulty, it lies with us. The true believer is saddened, not by God's commands and his nature, but by our own weakness.

Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

26 His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou wicked and slothful servant*,--Contrast his description of the first two servants. They were "good," morally upright; this servant is "wicked" for his false accusations against the master. They were "faithful" to the task given them; this one is "slothful," the true motivation behind his lack of action.

thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.--If the third servant had really believed his own characterization of the master, he would have acted in a different way than he actually did.

Here is the second, and most direct, clue that the master expected his servants to be dealing with Gentiles. Under the law of Moses, Jews were forbidden to lend upon interest to other Jews, but could do so toward Gentiles:

Deu 23:19 Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury: 20 Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury:

Do "the exchangers" have a counterpart in our imagery of spiritual endowment? Perhaps we have here the believer who outsources his ministry to various charitable and mission organizations, but is not directly involved himself.⁴² These do indeed return benefit to the Lord, but giving to them is a poor substitute for the direct involvement of each believer in the work of the Lord.

28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents.--This talent becomes part of the "many things" (v. 21) over which he is made ruler.

29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.--This statement appears here and at the end of the similar parable of the pounds in Lk 19:26. There also the money originally entrusted to the slothful servant is given to the most successful one. It is also used in two other settings. Let's first try to understand it here, then look at how it is applied elsewhere.

The saying may be inspired by a common feature of capitalistic economies, that "the rich get richer," often at the expense of the poor. People with access to capital can more readily get more

⁴² Alford: "The *machinery of religious and charitable societies in our day* is very much in the place of the *τραπέζιται*."

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capital, leading to the widely-decried “wealth gap.”⁴³

But there is an important difference. In economics, there is often little that the poor can do to improve their lot, and the rich often exploit them. In this parable, the third servant deliberately rejects the bountiful endowment that the master gave him. A talent is a lot of money. And there is no hint that the first two servants did anything to keep the third one from making progress.

The first two servants illustrate the first part of the proverb:

unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance

But the second part is puzzling, for three reasons.

How can someone lose what he does not have? Matthew Henry suggests that the key to this enigma may lie in a Roman proverb from the first century BC,⁴⁴

The miser lacks what he has as much as what he does not have.

His greed keeps him from using even what he has. The third slave behaved as though he did not have the talent, and so it was taken from him.

What does this loss mean spiritually? Not only true believers, but many professors in the church, have access to opportunities of service. If they engaged in them, they might be confronted with their own need, and lay hold on the Lord. But if they hold back, their initial interest will fade.

What does it mean for what he loses to be given to others? God’s endowment to his church will not be wasted. He will see that his work is accomplished, his vineyard tended, his talents invested profitably. The failure of an unfaithful servant does not set back the kingdom of God.

This proverb is also found in two gospel episodes that deal, not with money, but with understanding. Here the insight follows a proverb of Solomon,

Pro 9:8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.
9 Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning.

The first of the two episodes dealing with understanding is the Lord’s explanation to his disciples of why he speaks in parables:

Mat 13:10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. 12 **For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.**

43 The economic insight is not new. The first century Roman poet Martial wrote to one of his friends (Epigrams 5.81), “You will always be poor, Aemilianus, if you are poor; nowadays wealth comes to no one but the rich.”

44 Publilius Syrus, Sentences 927: Tam deest avaro quod habet, quam quod non habet. Translation at https://books.google.ca/books?id=_QQSAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

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When we studied this passage, we saw that the parables, far from simplifying the truth, actually hide it from those who do not value it. Up to this point, he has been teaching openly to the multitudes (4:23; 9:35; 11:1). His message in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4) is an example of this early teaching: it is literal and straightforward. It was after the second of these three announcements that he set apart the twelve (10:1-5), no doubt in part because of their responsiveness to his teaching. Many others heard, and perhaps flocked to him for the spectacle and to be healed, but did not follow what he said. So now he begins to teach in parables, cloaking the truth from those who show that they will not use it (taking from those who have not), and by means of the interpretations, giving it to those who have already responded (the disciples).

Like Matt 13:12, the third setting, recorded by both Mark and Luke, deals with understanding rather than with talents. But where Matt 13:12 *describes* to the disciples what is happening to *others*, in this third setting the saying *warns* the disciples of the consequences of *their own* conduct. They must take heed what (Mark) and how (Luke) they hear.

Mar 4:24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. 25 **For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.** *cf. Lk 8:18*

The economy of heaven is very much “use it or lose it.” If we truly love the Lord, we will strive to use the gifts and revelation he gives us to their full. To neglect them betrays a faulty relationship with him, and will lead to our loss.

30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.--As in 24:51; 8:12; 22:13. As we have seen, the third servant is a servant in name only. He does not truly submit himself to the master, and as a result is cast out. His fate reflects what the Lord has already declared to the chief priests and elders in the parable of the wicked tenants in ch. 21,

Mat 21:43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you [the Jewish leaders who reject him], and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

25:31-46, Judgment of the Nations

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:--This verse forms an external inclusio with 24:30-31 (Table 17, chart). At that point the Lord suspended the chronological presentation for the six parables about readiness for his return. Now he picks up the narrative once more.

Mat 24:30 they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory . 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet,...	Mat 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory , and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:
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Table 17: External Inclusio resuming the narrative

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Matt 19:28	Rev 20:4-6
ye which have followed me , in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory , ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones , judging the twelve tribes of Israel.	4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them , and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands ; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection . 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.
Table 18: Matthew 19 and Revelation 20	

The Lord has previously spoken of “the throne of his glory” in 19:28. It will help us to compare this verse with Revelation 20 (Table 18). In both cases

- those who have been faithful to the Lord (“followed,” endured persecution)
- are enthroned with the Messiah
- at the time of resurrection and renewal of all things⁴⁵
- and are engaged in judgment.

Judgment is a major theme at the Lord’s return. With some caution, we can distinguish three phases (Table 19, chart).

	Anti-christ	Second Coming			Judgment of Nations	Millennium	Satan’s Rebellion	Judgment of Wicked Dead
		Rapture	Judgment of Saints	Descent to Earth				
Rev 13-20	13-18			19:6-21	20:4-5	20:6	20:7-10	20:11-15
Matthew	24:15-28	24:29-31	7:21-23 24:45-25:30		19:28; 25:31-46			
Other		1 Thes 4:13-17	Psa 50:1-6 Rom 14:10 2 Cor 5:10		Joel 3:1; Zeph 3:8; Dan 7:22; 1 Cor 6:2; Ezek 20:33	Isaiah 60		

Table 19: End-Time Judgments

The *first judgment*, not explicit in the Revelation, is implied by the three parables we have just finished, and corresponds to what Paul calls “the judgment seat of Christ.” In each case the Lord distinguishes professors in the church from true disciples, and the false professors are cast out.

⁴⁵ Scholars debate the meaning of “the regeneration” (Matt 19:28), a term that appears in the Greek Bible only here and in Tit 3:5 in reference to the new birth. Derrett (*JSNT* 20 (1984) 51-58) insists that it refers simply to the resurrection; Trench argues that it encompasses the coming kingdom. The doctrine of the first resurrection in Rev 20:4-6 may well grow out of this; the first resurrection initiates the rebirth of the world.

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This may take place concurrent with the rapture, when only true believers are taken into the presence of the Lord, there to be rewarded according to their works.

Both Matthew (in our present passage) and Rev 20:4 describe the *second judgment*, which deals with the living people who enter the Millennium. The only ones who have been raised from the dead at this point, in the first resurrection, are righteous, and they are participating in the judgment, not being judged.

Rev 20:11-15 describes the *third judgment*, the Great White Throne, which is focused on those who are not raised at the first resurrection, but participate in the second resurrection. It is at the end of the millennial kingdom, rather than the beginning.

Many scholars (including the chiliast Henry Alford) understand our passage to describe the Great White Throne, but the strongest clue that the two are different is that the Great White Throne comes at the end of the earthly kingdom, just before the dissolution of the heavens and earth, while the judgment in Matthew 25 determines who will enter into the kingdom (v. 34).

32 And before him shall be gathered συναγω 4863 all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:--Many passages in both the OT and the NT describe this gathering and judging of the nations (chart).⁴⁶

Joe 3:1 For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, 2 I will also **gather** all **nations** [1471 גוים], and will bring them down into the valley of **Jehoshaphat** [YHWH has Judged], and will **plead** [שפט judge 8199] with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. . . . 12 Let the **heathen** [גוים nations 1471] be wakened, and come up to the valley of **Jehoshaphat**: for there will I sit to **judge** all the **heathen** round about.

He describes both the gathering⁴⁷ and the judging of the nations. These verses are the only reference to “the valley of Jehoshaphat,” whose name is chosen to reflect what happens there. An open rural setting is envisioned where all nations can be gathered.

The date of Joel is uncertain, but a tentative case can be made for the seventh century, just before the Babylonian captivity.⁴⁸ Next we turn to Ezekiel, who was taken captive in the second wave of the captivity, in 597 BC. He focuses on the judgment of Israel,

Eze 20:33 *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: 34 And I will bring you out from the people עמים, and will **gather 6908 קבץ** you out of the countries ארצות wherein ye are

46 The Greek word συναγω (Strong 4863) is the dominant translation of two Hebrew words, אסף and קבץ. The distinction between the two is not clear, and in fact they often appear in parallel (e.g., Zeph 3:8). See my lexical studies.

47 Isa 66:18, “I will gather קבץ all nations and tongues,” and Zeph 3:8, “for my determination is to gather אסף the nations, to assemble קבץ the kingdoms,” also emphasize the gathering of the nations.

48 Garrett (New American Commentary). This would be consistent with the gathering of the nations in Isaiah and Zeph, who also prophesied in the seventh century.

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scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. 35 And I will bring you into the **wilderness of the people עממים**, and there will I **plead [שפט judge 8199]** with you face to face. 36 Like as I **pleaded שפט** with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I **plead שפט** with you, saith the Lord GOD. 37 And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: 38 And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

This judgment of Israel is part of the broader judgment of the nations described in Matthew 25. It is true that the Hebrew word גוי 1471 that lies behind the word “nations” εθνος 1484 often means “gentiles” in contrast to Israel, but Israel itself is often called a nation,⁴⁹ for example,

Gen 18:18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty **nation**, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

Also during the captivity, Daniel describes the judgment that will take place when the kingdom is inaugurated:

Dan 7:22 Until the Ancient of days came, and **judgment was given to the saints of the most High**; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

The wording here, “judgment was given to the saints of the most High,” is the same that we saw in Rev 20:4, reflecting the Lord’s promise to the disciples in Matt 19:28. Finally, Paul picks up this theme of the role of the saints, in rebuking the Corinthians for their penchant for going to law before Gentile courts:

1Co 6:2 Do ye not know that the **saints shall judge the world?** and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

So the overall picture is that the kingdom will begin with a judgment on those who live on the earth, to determine who shall be allowed to enter it. The church is not part of that judgment. She has already been received to the Lord, to be part of his triumphal entourage described in Revelation 19, and in fact other scriptures make clear that the saints will be helping to execute this judgment.

It is sometimes claimed that the objects of judgments are nations as units, not individual people, but it is important to note that the pronoun “them” is masculine, while “nation” is neuter. The word “nation” is used as a collective to refer to the people that make it up.

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.--The right hand, throughout the Bible, is the place of honor. The locations in which he places the people anticipates the outcome.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:--The gospel of the

49 Aelred Cody, *Vetus Testamentum*, 14 no 1 Jan 1964, p 1-6.

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kingdom is that men must repent, for the kingdom is at hand, but this passage makes clear that there is a future aspect to it as well.

This verse also makes clear that the judgment here is in preparation to enter the kingdom that has been the object of the Lord's teaching throughout Matthew.

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.--The judgment is based on acts of kindness that the sheep have shown. The Lord explains that these acts of kindness were directed to him.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.--The righteous here are unaware that they have been ministering to the Lord, but he describes those who have received their care as "my brethren." Throughout Matthew, this term is reserved for his disciples, those who are truly following him (chart):

Mat 12:49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and **my brethren!**

Mat 12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is **my brother**, and sister, and mother.

Mat 28:10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell **my brethren** that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

The last verse of this passage indicates that this judgment leads to heaven or hell. We are accustomed to emphasize that our faith, not our works, is what determines our eternal destiny. Paul clearly teaches that it is "not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5). Yet here the Lord is admitting or rejecting people based on their acts of kindness.

We can understand the link between these two perspectives if we recall the overall chronology anticipated in these chapters (Tables 4 and 19, chart). After the beginning of sorrows, he described the appearance of the abomination of desolation, set up by the antichrist, and accompanied by vicious persecution of the people of God. "Immediately after" that time of tribulation, the Lord returns and this judgment takes place. During that tribulation, there are believers and unbelievers. The believers, as always, are bearing witness.

The new birth, like a physical birth, follows a period of gestation. People move from hostility, to curiosity, to interest, and then to faith and spiritual growth. As a person moves along this path, he becomes more and more friendly to the believers. At the moment the Lord returns, some of those on earth who have not become believers will be moving along this path. The Lord discerns the inclination of their hearts by their kindness to the believers—often at great risk to themselves,

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given the opposition of the Antichrist.

The idea that kindness to Christ's people reflects one's inner attitude toward him is common in Matthew. We saw it when he originally sent the Twelve out to teach, preach, and heal:

Matt 10:42 He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. 41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

And in discussing the need to care for the "little ones which believe in me" in the church, he taught,

Mat 18:5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

So the Lord discerns those who are responding to the gospel by their kind treatment of the believers in the time of great tribulation.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.--The cursed have omitted the very deeds that the blessed performed.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me.--Compare the judgment in 7:21, where also the wicked are surprised to learn of their defects. However, there the wicked thought they were serving Christ. Here, even the righteous do not think they are serving him (vv. 37-38). The judgment in chapter 7 is more likely to reflect the judgment of the church (represented here by the three great parables describing our responsibility).

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.--The conduct of the righteous and the wicked determines not only their entry into the kingdom (v. 34), but their eternal destiny as well.

As we noted at the outset, it is likely that this judgment is distinct from both the judgment of believers reflected in the parables of the stewards, the virgins, and the talents, and the Great White Throne of Revelation 20. It differs from the judgment of believers because believers are now acting as judges, and the basis of judgment is how the defendants have treated them. It differs from the Great White Throne, which deals with those who experience the second resurrection, because it includes righteous people, who were raised at the first resurrection.

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Review of the Lord's Discourses

We have finished the five great discourses in Matthew, as well as the end of the third passion prediction. Before we enter the last three chapters, let's survey where we are.

The main structural marker in Matthew is the statement at 4:17, and again at 16:21, that "from that time forth Jesus began to" do something (Figure 21, chart).

Before the first of these, we have the description of the Lord's birth, baptism, and temptation—what we have called his Preparation for ministry.

The center section, from the middle of chapter 4 to the middle of chapter 16, describes his Proclamation, the great cycle of *Figure 21: Overall Structure of Matthew* preaching, teaching, and healing that leads to growing opposition from the ecclesiastical establishment.

The section from 16:21 on is marked by four announcements of his coming Passion. He begins in the far north, at Caesarea Philippi at the base of Mount Hermon (16:13), and moves steadily southward toward Jerusalem. The first part, at the mount of Transfiguration, is occupied with principles of discipleship. The second part begins with his final stay in Galilee, then (19:1) turns to the trip south to Jerusalem. We have just finished the third part, describing his final controversy with the Jews in Jerusalem. Next week, we turn our attention to the record of his death and resurrection.

On Figure 21, I have added five references in brackets. These are the five great discourses: the Sermon on the Mount, the Missionary Discourse, the Parables, the Church Discourse, and the Olivet Discourse. The Lord says a great deal in Matthew that falls outside of these discourses, but these are marked by a common concluding expression of the form, "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished [ended these sayings, made an end of commanding his disciples, finished these parables, finished these sayings, finished all these sayings]."

Let's take a few moments to review these discourses. First, we'll consider how they fit into the overall flow of the book. Then we'll see how the final discourse draws together important themes from the previous four.

Consider first the alignment of the discourses with the three major sections (Table 20, chart). None of them falls in the opening section about the Lord's preparation, and in fact we hear no

Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom	
1:1-4:16 The Person of Jesus the Messiah	
1:1 "The book of the Generation of Jesus Christ"	
• 1:1-17 Genealogy	
• 1:18-25 Birth	
• 2:1-23 Recognition & Preservation	
• 3:1-17 Baptism	
• 4:1-11 Temptation	
• 4:12-16 Move to Capernaum (transition)	
4:17-16:20 The Proclamation of Jesus the Messiah	
4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, ..."	
• 4:18-11:30 Preparation of the Twelve [5-7] [10]	
• 12:1-13:58 The Great Schism [13]	
• 14:1-16:20 Growing Opposition	
16:21-28:20 The Passion of Jesus the Messiah	
16:21 "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, ..."	
• 16:21-17:21 Principles of Discipleship	
• 17:22-20:16 Life in the Kingdom [18]	
• 20:17-25:46 Controversy in Jerusalem [24-25]	
• 26:1-28:20 Death & Resurrection	

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Context	Discourse	Summary	Length	Audience	Fit to Context
4-16, teaching- preaching- healing	5-7 Sermon on the Mount	7:28	109	Disciples, joined by multitudes	Foundation teachings
	10 Missionary Discourse	11:1	38	Disciples	Engages the disciples to join his ministry
	13 Parables Discourse	13:53	52	Multitudes in parables, explanations to disciples	Reflects growing opposition (ch. 12)
16-25, preparation for the passion	18 Church Life Discourse	19:1	35	Disciples	After his departure, they need to care for one another.
	24-25 Olivet Discourse	26:1	93	Disciples	Promise of his return, and what to expect until then

Table 20: Summary of the Five Discourses

teaching from the Lord in these chapters. His voice appears only in his request to John for baptism (3:15) and his response to the tempter in the wilderness (4:3-10). Similarly, in the last subsection of the book, ch. 26-28, Matthew records no organized teaching. We hear him commending Mary for anointing him in Bethany, predicting Judas' betrayal and instituting the memorial of the bread and the cup, praying in the garden, and remonstrating with Judas and the Romans, and finally commissioning the disciples, but there is nothing here like John's Upper Room Discourse. For Matthew's purposes, the discourses bracket our Lord's teaching.

Note the appropriateness of each discourse to the context.

During the period of the Lord's teaching, the first discourse is a comprehensive summary of the principles of the kingdom that he is preaching. In the second he engages the disciples to promote the message. In the third discourse, the parables, he begins to focus on those who are truly receptive in the face of growing opposition to his Lord's teaching (ch. 12).

As we enter the portion of the book marked by the announcements of his coming passion, the Lord's discourses shift in their theme. The fourth deals with how the believers in the church should care for one another, after he is no longer physically present to lead them. The fifth outlines what they should expect between his departure and his return.

When comparing different sections in the Bible, it is always worthwhile to note their length. Table 20 shows the number of verses in each discourse. Clearly the first and last receive much more emphasis than the three in the middle. In addition, these two are delivered on mountains, reminding us that the Lord Jesus is the "prophet like unto" Moses (Deut 18:18). Moses also brought God's people his law from a mountain, Mount Sinai.

We have commented from time to time on similarities in content between the Sermon on the Mount and the Olivet Discourse. It will be useful to summarize these, and at the same time recognize that the other three discourses also feed into the Olivet Discourse. Just as the Sermon

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on the Mount lays the foundation for all of the Lord's teaching throughout the gospel, so the Olivet Discourse summarizes it. Tables 21 - 24 summarize some of the more salient parallels.

The Sermon on the Mount (Table 21, chart) emphasizes the objective of entering the kingdom. It tells disciples how to respond to the persecutions that the Lord describes in the beginning of sorrows and the time of great tribulation in Matthew 24. The contrasts (ch. 5, 6) describe how the Jewish leaders of the Lord's day were dishonoring God's commandments in a way that anticipates the desolation of the Holy Place under the Antichrist. The certainty of our Lord's words in 24:35 is expressed in terms used of God's law in 5:18. The Lord describes his return in 24:30-31 in terms of a throne, power, and glory, ascribed to God in 6:13. And the rejection of the foolish bridesmaids in 25:11-12 echoes the judgment of false professors in 7:22-23.

The description of the church's responsibility to spread the gospel through the Beginning of Sorrows in 24:9-14 strongly echoes the Lord's instructions to the disciples in the Missionary

Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7	Olivet Discourse
5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 5:5 Blessed <i>are</i> the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. 5:20 ... ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.	25:34 Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:
5:10 Blessed <i>are</i> they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when <i>men</i> shall revile you, and persecute <i>you</i> , and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great <i>is</i> your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.	24:3-13 (the beginning of sorrows) 24:15-28 (great tribulation)
5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: (5:20-6:18, Contrasts with teaching of Jewish leaders)	24:15-28 (desolation of the Holy Place)
5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass , one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law , till all be fulfilled.	24:35 Heaven and earth shall pass away , but my words shall not pass away .
6:13 For thine is the kingdom , and the power , and the glory , for ever.	24:30 they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory , and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory :
7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord , have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity.	25:11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord , open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not .

Table 21: Parallels from the Sermon on the Mount (ch. 5-7)

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Missionary Discourse, Matthew 10	Olivet Discourse
<p>17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; 18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: ... 21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against <i>their</i> parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. 23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.</p>	<p>24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.</p>
<p>40 He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.</p>	<p>25:40 Inasmuch as ye have done <i>it</i> unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done <i>it</i> unto me. ... 45 ... Inasmuch as ye did <i>it</i> not to one of the least of these, ye did <i>it</i> not to me.</p>

Table 22: Parallels from the Missionary Discourse, chapter 10

Discourse in 10:16-23 (Table 22, chart), though without the restriction to Israel imposed in that earlier discourse. And the basis for judging the nation in 25:40, 45 is anticipated in 10:40.

Parables Discourse, Matthew 13	Olivet Discourse
ch. 13 (concentration of parables)	24:32-25:30 (six parables)
12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.	25:29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.
36-43 (parable of wheat and tares) 47-50 (parable of good and bad fish)	24:45-25:30 (within the church) 25:31-46 (judgment of the nations)
41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels , and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;	24:30 they shall see the Son of man ... 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
52 Therefore every scribe <i>which is</i> instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man <i>that is</i> an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure <i>things</i> new and old.	24:45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

Table 23: Parallels from the Parables Discourse (chapter 13)

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Church Life Discourse, Matthew 18	Olivet Discourse
5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.	25:40 Inasmuch as ye have done <i>it</i> unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done <i>it</i> unto me. ... 45 ... Inasmuch as ye did <i>it</i> not to one of the least of these, ye did <i>it</i> not to me.
23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. ...	24:45-51 (parable of the good and evil stewards) 25:14-30 (parable of the talents)

Table 24: Parallels from the Church Life discourse (chapter 18)

The collection of parables in 24:32-25:30 recalls the parables discourse in chapter 13 (Table 23, chart). In addition, 13:12 introduces the proverb about taking from him who has not and giving to him who has that features in the parable of the talents in 25:29, the parables of the wheat and tares (13:36-43) and the good and bad fish (13:47-50) anticipate the separation of false and true professors in the last three parables of the Olivet Discourse (24:45-25:30) and the judgment separating the righteous and the wicked at the start of the Millennium (25:31-46). Both discourses (13:41; 24:30-31) describe the Son of Man sending his angels to gather people together, though in chapter 13 the gathering is of the wicked while in chapter 24 it is of the righteous at the rapture. Finally, the image of the scribe as a householder managing his stores in the last parable of chapter 13 (13:52) may anticipate the faithful steward in 24:45 as an image of the duty of teachers in the church.

The Olivet Discourse echoes the discourse on church life (chapter 18) in at least two ways. The basis of judgment in 25:40, 45, in particular its emphasis on the *least* of the Lord's brethren, recalls the Lord's statement in 18:5 that our conduct toward the little ones in the church is reckoned as our treatment of him, and the parables of the two stewards (24:45-51) and the talents (25:14-30) recall the depiction of people in the church as servants of a great king (18:23).

So the Olivet Discourse pulls together strands from the other four discourses. As the Lord prepares to leave his disciples, he wants not only to encourage them with the promise of his return, but also to impress on them the importance of all that he has revealed to them during his earthly ministry. Together with the first Sermon on the Mount, this second Sermon on the Mount gives us the revelation of the prophet like Moses, which should guide the church as the law that Moses received on Sinai was intended to guide Israel throughout its history. Like Israel, we will prosper spiritually to the degree that we heed these teachings, and we will disappoint our Lord to the degree that we neglect them.

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Notes

The Two Questions and Daniel

I argue that the one to whom Daniel and the others address their questions in Dan 12, the “man clothed in linen” and introduced in Daniel 10, is a theophany, the Angel of the Lord, a pre-incarnate appearance of the one “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). Some (Leon Wood; K&D cite Hengstenberg, though I cannot find the reference in his *Christology*, and the rabbis) think he is an angel; H. and the rabbis apparently identify him with Michael. Wood’s argument is that if this figure is divine, he would not be hindered by combat with pagan nations and need angelic help to overcome them.

The figure is unlikely to be an ordinary angel. Twice Daniel sees Gabriel (8:16; 9:21), and he describes him simply “as the appearance of a man” (8:15). But the elements of this figure are seen elsewhere, in the vision of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7, the vision of God upon his chariot in Ezekiel 1, and the vision of the Lord Jesus in Revelation 1, which is clearly a composite of these. The table in the body of the notes identifies the parallels.

Walvoord, K&D, Young, Miller in NAC, disagree, based on the verbal parallels we have observed with Ezekiel 1 and the distinction between the description of this figure and Gabriel elsewhere in Daniel. But this group then is divided on how to handle the aid that the angels give him later in the chapter. Miller and Walvoord hold that a new character, an angel, appears in v. 10 and is the vehicle for the revelation through 12:4, so that it is this character, not the Lord, who is hindered by political forces and aided by Michael. But K&D point out instances in the OT people are said to help עזר the Lord (Zech 1:15) or where the verb means to rally behind a king (1 Chr 12:21f). I’ve followed this latter approach.

The Beginning of Sorrows and the First Five Seals

Matthew 24: Beginning of Sorrows	Revelation 6: Seals
5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ ; and shall deceive many.	1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. 2 And I saw, and behold a white horse : and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. Cf. Rev 19:11
6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars : see that ye be not troubled: for all <i>these things</i> must come to pass, but the end is not yet.	3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. 4 And there went out another horse <i>that was</i> red: and <i>power</i> was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth , and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.
7 ...there shall be famines ...	5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and

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	see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.
7 For nation shall rise against nation , and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines , and pestilences , and earthquakes , in divers places. 8 All these <i>are</i> the beginning of sorrows.	7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword , and with hunger , and with death , and with the beasts of the earth.
9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.	9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they <i>were</i> , should be fulfilled.

Matthew 10 and the Beginning of Sorrows

Matthew 10	Matthew 24
16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. 17 But beware of men: for they will deliver παραδιδωμι you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; 18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver παραδιδωμι you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. 21 And the brother shall deliver up παραδιδωμι the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against <i>their</i> parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake:	9 Then shall they deliver παραδιδωμι you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray παραδιδωμι one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.
but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.	13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.	14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

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Eθvoς in the Discourse

Matt. 24:7; 9; 14 “gospel preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations”; 25:32

Mk 13:8, 10 “the gospel must first be preached among all nations”

Lk 21:10, 24 “times of Gentiles,” 25 “distress of nations”

Look at alignment of Beginning of Sorrows:

Matt 24:4-13	Mar 13:5-13	Luke 21:8-19
<p>4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.</p> <p>5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.</p> <p>6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all <i>these things</i> must come to pass, but the end is not yet.</p> <p>7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:</p> <p>and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these <i>are</i> the beginning of sorrows.</p> <p>9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you:</p> <p>and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.</p>	<p>5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any <i>man</i> deceive you:</p> <p>6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am <i>Christ</i>; and shall deceive many.</p> <p>7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for <i>such things</i> must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.</p> <p>8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:</p> <p>and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these <i>are</i> the beginnings of sorrows.</p> <p>9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten:</p> <p>and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.</p> <p>10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.²</p> <p>11 But when they shall lead <i>you</i>, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but</p>	<p>8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived:</p> <p>for many shall come in my name, saying, I am <i>Christ</i>; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.</p> <p>9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.</p> <p>10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:</p> <p>11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences;</p> <p>and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.</p> <p>12 But before¹ all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute <i>you</i>, delivering <i>you</i> up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.</p> <p>13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.</p> <p>14 Settle <i>it</i> therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: 15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to</p>

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Matt 24:4-13	Mar 13:5-13	Luke 21:8-19
<p>10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another,</p> <p>and shall hate one another.</p> <p>11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.</p> <p>13 But he that shall endure υπομενω unto the end, the same shall be saved.</p> <p>14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.</p>	<p>whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.</p> <p>12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against <i>their</i> parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.</p> <p>13 And ye shall be hated of all <i>men</i> for my name's sake.</p> <p>but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.</p>	<p>gainsay nor resist.</p> <p>16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and <i>some</i> of you shall they cause to be put to death.</p> <p>17 And ye shall be hated of all <i>men</i> for my name's sake.</p> <p>18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish. 19 In your patience υπομονη possess ye your souls.</p>

Notes:

1. Luke's "before all these" contrasts with Matthew's "then," and must be restricted to the "fearful sights and great signs ... from heaven."
2. Seems to correspond to Matt 24:14. This pulls the latter verse firmly into the Beginning of Sorrows, but the fall of Jerusalem, predicted by Luke, is clearly continuous with this period as well.

Comparison of Suffering Sections

Mat 24:15-28	Luk 21:20-24	Notes
<p>15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)</p>	<p>20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.</p>	<p>Different sign: abomination in the holy place (cf. Paul's understanding in 2 Thes 2:3-4)</p>
<p>16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: 17 Let him which is on the housetop not come</p>	<p>21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out;</p>	<p>Luke, but not Matt-Mark, characterize this as "days of vengeance," uniquely focused on the Jews for their</p>

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<p>down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:</p>	<p>and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. 22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days!</p>	<p>rejection of Christ.</p>
<p>21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.</p>	<p>for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations:</p>	
<p>22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.</p>	<p>and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.</p>	<p>Matt-Mark expect a shortening of the time; Luke emphasizes its age-long duration.</p>
<p>23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here <i>is</i> Christ, or there; believe <i>it</i> not. 24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if <i>it were</i> possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25 Behold, I have told you before. 26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, <i>he is</i> in the secret chambers; believe <i>it</i> not. 27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.</p>		<p>Curious that this is in Matt-Mark but not Luke. But see Luke 17:23-24, 37.</p>

The βδελυγμα της ερημωσης

The expression comes from Daniel, who uses it three times:

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In the prophecy of the 70 weeks

The βτε appears as part of the last week:

Dan 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and **for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate**, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

The Hebrew is obscure:

Dan 9:27 וְעַל כַּנְף שְׂקוּצִים מְשֻׁמָּם

the disjunctive *pashta* on שְׂקוּצִים separates it from מְשֻׁמָּם, leading a translation like KJV. One could also render "upon the wing of abominations is desolation." LXX treats the two as in construct, "abominations of desolation," (though making the first singular and the second plural), and interprets כַּנְף as an architectural term:

Dan 9:27 καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ ἱερόν βδέλυγμα τῶν ἐρημώσεων ἔσται ἕως συντελείας

LXX: "and upon the temple there will be a βτε until the consummation"

In the description of Antiochus

Here, the two terms are clearly joined. The lack of article on מְשֻׁמָּם shows that it is neither construct nor an attributive adjective (as in LXX), but a predicate adjective, thus forming a subordinate clause.

Dan 11:31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily *sacrifice*, and they shall place **the abomination that maketh desolate**.

Dan 11:31 וְנִתְּנוּ הַשְּׂקוּץ מְשֻׁמָּם:

Dan 11:31 καὶ δώσουσι βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως

In the Final Summary

Since the focus has been on Antichrist, down to the time of the resurrection in ch. 12, this likely refers to Antichrist also.

Dan 12:11 And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, *there shall be* a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

Dan 12:11 וּמֵעַת הַיּוֹסֵר הַתְּמִיד וְלִתְּת שְׂקוּץ שָׂמָם

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Dan 12:11 ἀφ' οὗ ἂν ἀποσταθῇ ἡ θυσία διὰ παντός καὶ ἐτοιμασθῇ δοθῆναι τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως

A variant, 8:13

In the description of the fourth little horn, Antiochus

Dan 8:13 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain *saint* which spake, How long *shall be* the vision *concerning* the daily *sacrifice*, and the **transgression of desolation**, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?

Dan 8:13 עַד-מָתַי הִתְחַזַּק הַתְּמִיד וְהַפְּשַׁע שְׁמַיִם

Dan 8:13 ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐρημώσεως

KD on the relation between Antiochus and Antichrist in 11:36-45: “In the prophetic contemplation there is comprehended in the image of *one* king what has been historically fulfilled in its beginnings by Antiochus Epiphanes, but shall only meet its complete fulfilment by the Antichrist in the time of the end.⁵⁰”

In Maccabees

1Ma 1:54 Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side;

Time Periods in Daniel

Several periods of time are mentioned, and it's not always clear which refer to Antiochus, and which to the Antichrist.

Dan 7:24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom *are* ten kings *that* shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak *great* words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until **a time and times and the dividing of time**.

Dan 8:13 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain *saint* which spake, How long *shall be* the vision *concerning* the daily *sacrifice*, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto

50 Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (1996). *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Vol. 9, p. 803). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

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me, Unto **two thousand and three hundred days [evenings and mornings]**; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Dan 12:7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for **a time, times, and an half**; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

Dan 12:11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be **a thousand two hundred and ninety days**.

Dan 12:12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the **thousand three hundred and five and thirty days**.

Rejoicing in Persecution

Mat 5:10 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 **Rejoice, and be exceeding glad**: [Luke 6:23 “leap for joy”] for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Act 5:40 and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 And they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy** to suffer shame for his name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Act 16:23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: 24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. 25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and **sang praises unto God**:

2Co 12:10 Therefore I **take pleasure** in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Jam 1:2 My brethren, **count it all joy** when ye fall into divers temptations;

1Pe 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But **rejoice**, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, **happy are ye**; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. 16 Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but **let him glorify God** on this behalf.

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Luke's Little Apocalypse

Luke records that the Lord said many things similar to the Olivet Discourse during his final trip toward Jerusalem, in 17:20-37. His comments there do not overlap with Luke 21, but they do have numerous points of parallel with Matthew 24 and Mark 13. In ch. 17, the discussion starts with a question from the Pharisees, and continues with clarification to the disciples, and focuses (unlike Luke 21) on the return of Christ.

Structural Analysis

The high-level division is a response to the Pharisees, followed by further instruction to the disciples, a common pattern in the gospels (e.g., Matt 15:1-11, 12-20; Stein in NAC gives several examples in Luke; Howard in NIGTC calls it “common in Mark” but gives no examples).

Within the portion addressed to the disciples (22-37), the Lord here separates sayings that in Matthew he brings together: The sayings about the universal obviousness of his coming in 17:22-25, 37 are combined in Matt 24:26-28, while the sayings about separating the righteous and unrighteous in 17:26-30, 31-32 are combined in Matt 24:37-41. This alignments reveal that in Luke, he is organizing his material chiastically, setting off 17:31-33 as the unbalanced and therefore focused center.

Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of **the Pharisees**, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

22 And he said unto **the disciples**, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the **days of the Son of man**, and ye shall not see *it*. 23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after *them*, nor follow *them*. 24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the **Son of man be in his day**. *In Matt 24:26-28, this section is combined with Luke 17:37.*

25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

26 And as it was in the **days of Noe**, so shall it be also in the **days of the Son of man**. 27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise also as it was in the **days of Lot**; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all. 30 Even thus shall it be in **the day when the Son of man is revealed** **αποκαλυπτω**. *Note how this section and vv. 34-36 are combined in Matt 24:37-41, showing their unity of theme.*

31 **In that day**, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come

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down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

34 I tell you, **in that night** there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35 Two *women* shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 36 Two *men* shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body *is*, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

Alignment with Matthew 24

Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of the **Pharisees**, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

22 And he said unto the **disciples**, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see *it*.

23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after *them*, nor follow *them*. 24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. --compare Matt 24:23, 26-27

25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all. 30 Even thus shall it be **in the day** when the Son of man is revealed *αποκαλυπτεται*. – cf. 24:27-39; *in close proximity to the Lord's return*.

31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. – 24:17-18; *in Matthew, associated with the time of Great Tribulation. But what does it mean here, "in the day when the Son of man is revealed"? Are people to flee the coming of the Son of Man? But there is no command to flee here. Or is the instruction focused, as it is in Matthew, on their response to the false Christs? Relation to Isa 52:11, departing from Babylon while touching no unclean thing? Stein, NAC, relates this to verses in Jer exhorting people to flee from the city. Here, it can only mean that when the Lord returns for his own, people must not hesitate over their belongings, but be ready to forsake*

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everything for him; v. 33 underlies this instruction. Perhaps we should understand that same sense in Matt 24.

32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35 Two *women* shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 36 Two *men* shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. – 24:40-41

37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body *is*, thither will the eagles be gathered together. - 24:28

The passage in Luke 17 is focused on the time of great tribulation—it is associated with many of the exhortations to watchfulness that Matthew includes after describing the Lord's coming. Source-critical approaches assume that Q had a collection of eschatological sayings that Matthew put into ch. 24, while Luke distributed between ch. 17 and ch. 21. Our methodology a) insists on following the contexts stated in the gospels and b) recognizes that any prolific teacher is likely to repeat material in similar terms in different settings. Seen through this lens, the Lord addressed eschatological concerns on at least two separate occasions, one during his final trip to Jerusalem (strongly warning against false Christs) and one after his contention with the Jewish leaders and shortly before his death. The earlier discourse focused on his return, while the later one was more wide-reaching. Luke, having covered the material about false Christs earlier, omits it from his record of the Olivet discourse; Matthew chooses to focus on the supreme false Christ, the Antichrist,

Alignment of Flight Instructions in Matthew and Luke

Matt 24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:	Luk 21:21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains;
	and let them which are in the midst of it depart out;
17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:	(17:31a In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away:)
18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.	and let not them that are in the countries [χωραις fields] enter thereinto . (17:31b and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.)
	22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.
19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!	23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days!

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20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:	
21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.	for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

1. Luke mentions being in the midst of “it” and not returning from the fields into “it.” The reference appears to be to Jerusalem, from v. 20 (one does not return from the fields into Judaea, but rather, into a city).
2. Matthew mentions only a house, and says nothing about the city of Jerusalem. His point is a more general one, about fleeing persecution, which is in line with the instructions in Mat 10:14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.
3. Luke 21 is missing the reference to the housetop, but it is in Luke 17:31, which appears to refer to the final time of tribulation, and is also cited later in Matthew in the exhortations to watchfulness.

24:16 εἰς τὰ ὄρη

Nestle-Aland 26 have εἰς τὰ ὄρη, which follows Mark and Luke. The MT reading is attested in the fourth century (א), then in the 7th (Wsupp) and 8th (L019, E07), and frequently from the 9th on. The critical reading is in the fourth (B), fifth (D05), and then not until the 9th. In view of the early witnesses and possibility of harmonization with Mark and Luke, I can’t understand why anyone would reject the MT at this point! Metzger doesn’t comment on the verse.

εἰς τὰ ὄρη is a nice echo of 1 Macc 2:28. But it is rare in the LXX—besides 1 Macc, twice in Tobit (also of fleeing somewhere), and Psa 120:1. εἰς τὰ ὄρη is much more frequent (usually representing עַל הַהָרִים), though not in the context of fleeing. But it does recall 18:12,

Mat 18:12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth **into the mountains εἰς τὰ ὄρη**, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

LXX does frequently say εἰς τὸ ὄρος, for אֶל הָהָר. But the few times we have אֶל with the plural of הָר (Ezek. 6:2, 19:9, 34:13, 14, 36:1), LXX always renders it εἰς.

I suspect that the idiom simply reflects the strongly Hebrew background of Matthew.

OT Vocabulary for Coming, Revelation, and Appearing

The NT uses three terms for the Lord’s return. What are the Hebrew terms that these usually translate?

Ἐρχομαι (710): with εἰσερχομαι (546), both dominant and dedicated for בּוֹא.

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Αποκαλυψις: only 1x, for ערוה in 1 Sam 20:30, but the verb αποκαλυπτω is dominant and dedicated (76x) for גלה.

Παρουσια does not occur.

The OT passages use פגש and קרא.

Darkening of Solar Bodies in Ezek 32:7, 8

Is this eschatological, or historical? 32:11 relates it to a conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, which has been questioned historically, but is documented in a contemporary inscription (P. Thomson, Expositor Series 1, 10, December 1879, 397-403, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/expositor/series1/10_397.pdf) during the reign of Pharaoh Hophra, according to Wikipedia, 587-570 BC. There was a total eclipse of the sun on 1 Nov 556 BC at 21.4°N 33.3°E with a path width of 157 km (98 mi), just south of the current border between Egypt and Sudan, the only solar eclipse in the region in the sixth century. A much later one, 15 Jan 532 in the Libyan desert (22.3 N, 23.1 E) is probably too far away to be useful here. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_solar_eclipses_in_the_6th_century_BC#cite_ref-nasa_catalog_list_1-116)

Consider another reading. KJV:

Eze 32:7 And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.

The initial clause, Eze 32:7 וְכִסִּיתִי בְּכַבֹּודִי שָׁמַיִם, is more than just “when I shall extinguish you.” It identifies the covering of heaven with the extinguishing of Pharaoh: “In extinguishing you, I will cover the heavens” This reading invites us to see the heavenly bodies, at least in this passage, as metaphorical for the king and his court, perhaps in response to the boast of the king of Babylon earlier in Isaiah,

Isa 14:13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, **I will exalt my throne** above the stars of God:

Other examples of this construction:

Jos 22:19 but rebel not against the LORD, nor rebel against us, **in building** you an altar beside the altar of the LORD our God.

Ezr 3:11 And they **sang** together by course **in praising and giving thanks** unto the LORD;

Psa 17:15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. *My satisfaction consists in awakening in your presence*

Psa 51:4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be **justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.**

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Psa 69:3 I am **weary of my crying**: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.

Psa 87:6 The LORD shall **count, when he writeth up the people**, *that this man was born there.*

Pro 30:32 If thou hast **done foolishly in lifting up thyself**, or if thou hast thought evil, *lay* thine hand upon thy mouth.

Isa 30:15 For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; **in quietness** and in confidence **shall be your strength**: and ye would not.

Eze 6:8 **Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some** that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries.

Eze 13:19 And **will ye pollute me** among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, **by your lying** to my people that hear *your* lies?

Eze 16:21 That thou hast **slain** my children, and **delivered** them **to cause them to pass through the fire** for them?

Mal 1:7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we **polluted** thee? **In that ye say**, The table of the LORD *is* contemptible.

Where else are people compared to heavenly bodies?

Gen 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

Gen 22:17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven,

Gen 37:9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

Dan 8:9-10 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant *land*. 10 And it waxed great, *even* to the host of heaven; and it cast down *some* of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.

Dan 12:3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

Παντα ταυτα vs. ταυτα παντα

Is there a difference in these phrases? Here are the instances in Matthew:

παντα ταυτα 44x in BGT

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Matt. 19:20 The young man saith unto him, **All these things** have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Mk, Lk some mss ταυτα παντα

Matt. 23:36 Verily I say unto you, **All these things** shall come upon this generation. BGT ταυτα παντα

Matt. 24:2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not **all these things**? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. BGT ταυτα παντα, Mk and Lk ταυτα

Matt. 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till **all these things** be fulfilled. Mk 13:30 BYT ok, BGT ταυτα παντα, Lk 21:32 παντα

Mat 6:32 (For after all these things παντα γαρ ταυτα do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Lk parallel Luk 12:30 Ταυτα γαρ παντα

ταυτα παντα 31x in BGT

Matt. 4:9 And saith unto him, **All these things** will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. BGT Mat 4:9 ταυτά σοι πάντα, Lk Luk 4:6 την εξουσιαν ταυτην απασαν

Matt. 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and **all these things** shall be added unto you.

Matt. 13:34 **All these things** spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

Matt. 13:51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood **all these things**? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

Matt. 13:56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man **all these things**?

Matt. 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see **all these things**, know that it is near, even at the doors. BGT παντα ταυτα, Mk, Lk ταυτα

παντα δε ταυτα BGT 2, none for the reverse

παντα γαρ ταυτα 4, reverse 1

The wide variation, even for the same text in different synoptics or in different mss traditions, suggests that these really are interchangeable in this period.

Gatherings of God's People in the OT (v. 31)

Gen 49:10 is commonly cited, but spuriously:

Gen 49:10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet,

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until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the **gathering** of the people *be*.

The word translated “gathering” in the KJV, יקָהּ, means “obedience.”

The chain of manifold fulfillment involving the gathering of God’s people has at least these links:

Foundation

Moses’ warning in Deuteronomy:

Deu 30:1 And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call *them* to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, 2 And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; 3 That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and **gather** thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. 4 If *any* of thine be driven out unto the outmost *parts* of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God **gather** thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:

Psalm of Asaph, contemporary of David:

Psa 50:1 The mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. 2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. 3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. 4 He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. 5 **Gather** my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. 6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God *is* judge himself. Selah.

Associated with the coming of God. Note that the saints are being called to account for their conduct. Perhaps best aligned with Matt 25:31-46.

Return from the captivities

Isaiah promises this, using the image of a trumpet that we see in our Lord’s promise as well:

Isa 27:12 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and **ye shall be gathered** one by one, O ye children of Israel. 13 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the great **trumpet** shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Psalm 107 describes this gathering as having already occurred. Hengstenberg puts this Psalm at

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the celebration of Ezra 3, after the return but before the reconstruction of the temple.

Psa 107:2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; 3 And **gathered** them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. 4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. 5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. 6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he delivered them out of their distresses. 7 And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

But this did not exhaust the return. Most Jews did not come back from captivity, as the story of Esther in Persia (480 BC, 84 years after Cyrus' decree and 66 years after the completion of the temple) shows. Zechariah, writing after the return, still anticipates a future gathering, introducing the image of the "four winds of heaven" that we find in our Lord's words:

Zec 2:6 Ho, ho, *come forth*, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. 7 Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest *with* the daughter of Babylon.

This is a command for the people still in exile to return, and in fact the LXX translates the second half of v. 6 as a promise, "for I will gather you from the four winds of heaven."

Evangelism

France wants us to understand v. 31 as typological language for the evangelistic mission of the church, bringing in the Gentiles. This is difficult for two reasons: first, in Matthew *αγγελοι* are always supernatural beings, not just messengers (as France himself recognizes in his Matthew commentary, though in his dissertation he advocated understanding them as human messengers). Second, "gathering" language (here, *επισυναγω*; in the OT passages, *συναγω*) is never used of evangelism (see next note). Nevertheless, we can see evangelistic outreach as at least anticipatory of the final ingathering.

Rapture

This is clearly the focus in 1 Thes 4:16-17 and 2 Thes 2:1. But the gathering here is of a mixed church (Thessalonica was primarily Gentile) to the Lord, not a return of repentant Jews to Israel as anticipated in Deuteronomy.

Restoration of Israel in the Millennium

Here is the final fulfillment of Moses' promise. Importantly, the agents are not angels, but the Gentile nations:

Isa 11:12 And he shall set up an **ensign** **⚔** for the nations, and shall **assemble** the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

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Isa 49:18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these **gather** themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. ... 22 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my **standard** **⚔** to the people: and **they shall bring** thy sons in *their* arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders.

Isa 60:3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. ... 9 Surely **the isles** shall wait for me, and the ships of **Tarshish** first, **to bring** thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

It is interesting that the last chapter of Isaiah predicts the outreach of Jewish missionaries (like Paul and Thomas) to the Gentiles as a precursor to the return of Jews to the land, led by those Gentiles:

Isa 66:19 And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, *to* Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, *to* Tubal, and Javan, *to* the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. 20 And **they shall bring** all your brethren *for* an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.

Uses of επισυναγω and συναγω in the NT

I can find no evidence that the NT ever uses these terms, or the underlying concept, to describe the evangelistic mission of the church. There is no evidence to support this contention. The word always has a spatial reference, and the mission outreach did not draw converts back to a single geographic center, but rather established local churches in every place. People are indeed joined to the one head, the Lord Jesus, but these words are never used in describing that process. The terms that are deal with physiology (καταρτιζω) and architecture (οικοδομω), and even these are always used within the context of a single church. There are many exhortations to believers to be of one mind, but never that all believers throughout all the world should come together to one place, before the Day of the Lord.

Επισυναγω

The verb appears only in the synoptic gospels, twice of physical assemblies of people (Mark 1:33; Luke 12:1), in two accounts of the Lord's desire to gather Jerusalem (Matt 23:37; Lk 13:34), and in our passage (Matt 24:31; Mark 13:27).

The noun επισυναγωγη appears twice: once to describe a local gathering of believers (Heb 10:25), and once in a clearly eschatological context that probably depends on our passage:

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2Th 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming παρουσία of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

None of these gives any basis for applying the term to the evangelistic outreach of the church.

Συναγω

This is a much more common word (61x in the NT). It refers often to local gatherings of God's people and other assemblies, but never to the evangelistic program of the church.

The noun συναγωγή appears exclusively as a name for a Jewish place of worship.

Aorist Subjunctive of γινομαι (24:34)

I argue from the semantics of γινομαι that the reference is to prophetic chains in the process of unfolding, but the use of the aorist might seem to mitigate against this.

Wallace suggests an ingressive use for the aorist (p. 558) that would work very well here, but I wonder whether the presence of the subjunctive mood may affect things.

The expression εως αν with the subjunctive aorist of γινομαι appears four times in the Greek Bible, two of which are this verse and Luke's parallel, 21:32. Here are the other two.

Job 14:14 εαν γαρ αποθανη ανθρωπος ζησεται συντελέσας ημέρας του βίου αυτού υπομενω εως αν παλιν γένωμαι

In the LXX, this is clearly a reference to resurrection, the time when Job comes into being again after death.

Matt. 5:18 αμην γαρ λέγω υμιν· εως αν παρελθη ο ουρανός και η γη, ιωτα εν η μία κεραία ου μη παρελθη απο του νόμου, εως αν πάντα γένηται.

Strikingly similar to 24:34-35! Luz and Meyer note this striking parallel, but do not make much of it:

5:18 αμην γαρ λέγω υμιν· εως αν παρελθη ο ουρανός και η γη, ιωτα εν η μία κεραία ου μη παρελθη απο του νόμου, εως αν πάντα γένηται	24:34 Αμην λέγω υμιν, ου μη παρελθη η γενεά αὕτη, εως αν πάντα ταῦτα γένηται. 35 Ὁ ουρανός και η γη παρελεύσονται, οί δε λόγοι μου ου μη παρέλθωσιν.
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It is striking that “this generation” in 24:34 occupies the same role in 24:34 that “heaven and earth” does in 5:18, and is parallel to “heaven and earth” in 24:35 as something that will persist until what has been promised takes place. Is this evidence that γενεα is to be understood as an αιων, after all? But this parallel has no basis in usage.

It's better to understand the construction in vv. 34-35 as ascensive, moving from a shorter

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horizon (this generation) to a much longer one (the duration of heaven and earth), and emphasizing that within both, the word of the Lord will endure. The *παντα* in both cases concern the signs of the coming kingdom, including the preparatory persecutions. 5:18 guarantees that the law will be in force throughout this time but leaves open the possibility that the time may be coextensive with heaven and earth, while 24:34-35 promises a more immediate visibility of these events.

Note parallel of *γινομαι* in 5:18 to *πληρωω* in v. 17, and *ποιεω* in v. 19. Here's the whole context:

Mat 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy *καταλυω* the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy *καταλυω*, but to fulfil *πληρωω*. **18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled γινομαι.** 19 Whosoever therefore shall break *λυω* one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do *ποιεω* and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Thiessen in *Biblica*, 93 no 4 2012, p 543-556, argues that the “abolishing of the law” in v. 17 (*καταλυω*) and 19 (*λυω*) is a reference to the Antiochean defilement of the temple, which would bring this passage into even closer alignment with the role of the Antichrist in ch. 24! Then in both places the Lord is setting himself in opposition to those who defile the temple of God: His teaching in the contrasts opposes the false teaching of the scribes and Pharisees in ch. 5-7, while his presence overturns the abomination of desolation set up by the ultimate Antichrist in ch. 24.

Broader parallels of the Olivet Discourse with the Sermon on the Mount?

	Matt 5-7	Matt 24-25
Enduring persecution	5:10 Blessed <i>are</i> they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when <i>men</i> shall revile you, and persecute <i>you</i> , and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great <i>is</i> your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.	Beginning of sorrows, great tribulation
Entering the kingdom	5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 5:5 Blessed <i>are</i> the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. 5:20 except your righteousness shall exceed <i>the righteousness</i> of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.	Mat 25:34 Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

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Protests from the rejected	7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.	25:34-46 25:44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did <i>it</i> not to one of the least of these, ye did <i>it</i> not to me.
Promise verse	5:18	24:34-35
Power and glory of kingdom	6:13 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.	24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Both sections emphasize the kingdom (Figure 22). In addition, the contrasts of 5:20-6:18 align very well with ch. 23.

But these emphases are hardly unique to these two sections. “Kingdom” is even more prominent in ch. 13; persecution is highlighted in ch. 10; the protests of those being judged sound like the ruler who claimed to have done all from his youth up.

Perhaps the function of the close parallel between 5:18 and 24:34-35 is to emphasize the link between two bodies of divine revelation: the ethical demands of the law in 5-7, and the coming of the judge (James 5:9) to call people to account for their response to that law. Both the requirement and the enforcement are certain.

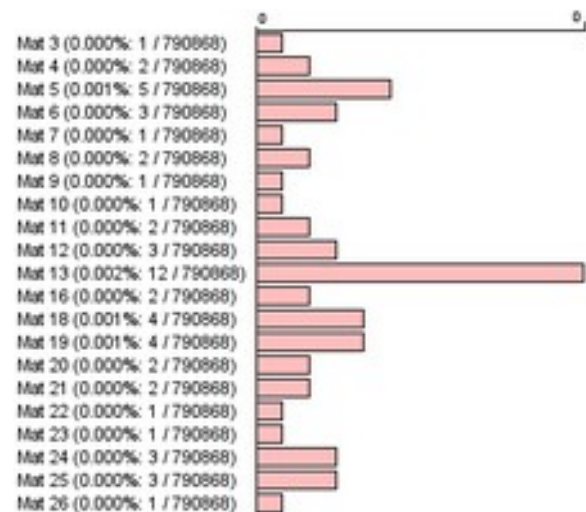


Figure 22: "Kingdom" in Matthew

Parallels with Luke 11-12

Following Edersheim (Book 4, ch. 4), we can discern in 9:44-18:30 two trips to Jerusalem, corresponding to the trips that John records in ch. 7-10 and 10:22-24, respectively, before the final journey that Matthew records. Luke records a number of things during this period before the final journey that the Lord also presents in Matthew 23-25. We have already observed the warnings of imminency in 17:20-37, a chiasmic structure that is folded in Matthew. Even earlier, in 11:37-54, at a private dinner in the home of a Pharisee, the Lord delivers woes that anticipate

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Matthew 23, and in 12:35-48 he gives three parables about his return, two of which Matthew repeats, and a third that has some overlap with the wise and foolish virgins.

- 12:35-38, servants waiting with lamps for their master's return from a wedding feast, looks like a sequel to the parable of the wise and foolish virgins.
- 12:39-40, the parable of the thief.
- 12:42-46, the faithful and unfaithful stewards (extended in vv. 47-48 with a meditation on degrees of punishment)

It is helpful to note that between the parables of the thief and the stewards, Luke records a question by Peter:

Luk 12:41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

So as originally given, the parable of the stewards takes the general message of servants and particularizes it to one steward, the one responsible for feeding the household. In view of Peter's responsibilities as an apostle, it is reasonable that we should see the steward in this parable as representing a teacher in the church, held accountable for how he ministers to the other believers.

Can παραλαμβάνω have a negative sense? (24:40-41)

As the examples in John 1:11 and Col 2:6 show, the usual use of the verb is positive. Matthew uses παραλαμβάνω in 2:13, 14, 20, 21 to describe Joseph's protective care of Mary and the infant Jesus in taking them to Egypt, away from Herod.

Some commentators (Gill, Barnes, Blomberg, France citing 27:27 and Jer 6:11, Walvoord citing John 19:16) plead from the parallel with v. 39 that it should also mean "taken to judgment," but if it means "taken to deliverance," those who are "left" are in the same condition as those who are "swept away" in v. 39—in both cases, shut out of the means of salvation. Barnes notes that in Luke 17:28-29, Lot was led out of Sodom to escape judgment, though this verb is not used.

France cites 27:27 as a negative example:

Mat 27:26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered παραδίδωμι *him* to be crucified. 27 Then the soldiers of the governor took παραλαμβάνω Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of *soldiers*. 28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. 29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

But the following context suggests that the verb is part of the mockery, receiving him as the proclaimed king before moving on to torture him. The Lord's kingship has been in focus in the preceding context (27:11), and in John (19:15), Pilate raises this publicly. We can easily imagine a battle-scarred soldier uttering between guffaws, "Right this way, your Majesty. Your court

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awaits you,” and the soldiers’ subsequent mockery certainly builds on the Lord’s royal claims. John uses the same two verbs in describing this incident:

Joh 19:16 Then delivered παραδίδωμι he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took παραλαμάνω Jesus, and led *him* away

But the subject is unclear. “Led him away” and the following reference to crucifixion suggest where the soldiers receive Christ into their custody to torture and then execute. But in v. 15, Pilate is talking with the Jewish people, and the Cambridge NT notes,

The word for ‘took’ should rather be rendered received, as in the only other places in which it occurs in this Gospel, Joh_1:11, Joh_14:3. It means to ‘accept what is offered, receive from the hands of another.’ A comparison of the three texts is instructive. The eternal Son is given by the Father, comes to his own inheritance, and His own people received Him not (Joh_1:11). The Incarnate Son is given up by Pilate to His own people, and they received Him to crucify Him (Joh_19:16). The glorified Son comes again to His own people, to receive them unto Himself (Joh_14:3).

In this case, the word is again used ironically—the only way that they will receive him is to destroy him.

France also cites Jer 6:11, referring to taking into captivity, but the verb there is συλλαμβάνω, and Rahlfs notes no variants.

BDAG cite another negative example, also parallel to παραδίδωμι, at Appian, Bell. Civ. 6, 76 §310f, but I am unable to confirm this online.

Wedding Parables

The parable of the ten virgins is one of five that the Lord builds around the image of marriage. All portray him as the bridegroom, which is a bold statement, since in the OT, it is the Lord who is the bridegroom of his people in the coming kingdom:

Isa 62:4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

Hos 2:19 And **I will betroth thee unto me** for ever; yea, **I will betroth thee unto me** in righteousness צדק, and in judgment משפט, and in lovingkindness חסד, and in mercies רחמים
. 20 **I will even betroth thee unto me** in faithfulness אמת: and thou shalt know the LORD. *The five-fold brideprice*

Five uses of this illustration in the gospels, all with reference to the Lord Jesus → He corresponds to YHWH in the OT. Consider them in chronological order. The first two remind us of the basis of our salvation in the Lord’s sacrifice for us. The third tells us what attitude we are to take in the body of which his sacrifice has made us a part. The last two tell us of two things that distinguish true disciples from false ones—outward conduct, and inward salvation.

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Basis in the Messiah's Sacrifice

Matt 9:15 = Mark 2:19, rejoicing vs. mourning at the presence vs. absence of the bridegroom. When?

- The time of his absence? But “I am with you always.”
- Nolland: “In focus is not the situation of the post-Easter church, but the Passion period.”

Thus the first reference to Messiah as the bridegroom reminds us that he must suffer.

Luke 12:35-38, waiting for the Lord returning from a wedding. Focus on the Lord feeding the servants, which is most unusual; but based on his passion. (Is the Lord the bridegroom here? Are these watchers the ones who announce his coming in Matt 25? If so, the “wedding” [plural] must be an earlier part of the events that lead up to the banquet. But the plural is regularly used for the wedding feast itself.)

Our Place in the Body

Luke 14:7-11, invitation to a wedding: take the lowest place. Compare the whole message of Matthew 18 and 23:5-12. In the fellowship of God's people, we are to follow the Lord's example and take the place of a servant.

True vs. False Disciples

Mat 22:1-14, the wedding feast. Judgment on two classes of people:

- Those who refuse the invitation
- Those who come, but without the required garment (clean clothes--righteousness)

Matt 25:1-13, the ten virgins. Focuses on the internal preparation.

The Parables of the Talents and the Pounds

Comparison with talent of the pounds (Lk 19:12-27), delivered on the way to Jerusalem:

Feature	Luke 19	Matt 25
Audience	Multitude, on the way to Jerusalem	Apostles, in Jerusalem
Unit of currency	Pound, μνα	Talent = 60 minas
Distribution	Same to all	Different amounts “according to his several ability,” v. 15
Purpose of the Lord's Journey	To receive a kingdom	Not stated
Opposition	v. 14 citizens refused to receive him	No such character

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# of servants	Ten, but only three described	Three, all described
Results	Different, from the same investment	Proportional to the investment
Commendation	Different, reflecting results: responsibility over cities	Same: "joy of thy lord"
Description of servants	Good vs. wicked	Good and faithful; wicked and slothful / unprofitable
Judgment	On the rebellious citizens; the unperforming servant loses his pound but nothing else	On the unperforming servant, who is cast into outer darkness

Good and Faithful αγαθος και πιστος

The Greek couplet appears only here and (separated) in Luke 19:7. The Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot* 16b (http://www.come-and-hear.com/berakoth/berakoth_16.html#PARTb) describes appropriate mourning for a good slave:

R. Jose said: If he was a good slave, they can say over him, Alas for a good and faithful אִישׁ אֲמוּנָה man, who worked for his living!

Interpretations of 25:31-46

Luz:

- Universal: Objects of judgment are all people; the Lord's brethren are all needy people, Christian and non-christian.
- Classical: objects of judgment are all people, or perhaps all Christians; the Lord's brethren are needy Christians.
- Exclusive: objects of judgment are nonChristians; Lord's brethren are Christians.

25:31 "Throne of Glory" θρονος δοξης

Instances of the expression in the OT:

1 Sam. 2:8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the **throne of glory**: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them. = Ode 3:8

Prov. 11:16 A gracious woman retaineth honour [LXX raises up for a man a **throne of glory**]: and strong men retain riches.

Isa. 22:23 And I will fasten him [Eliakim the son of Hilkiah] as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a **glorious throne** to his father's house.

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Jer. 14:21 Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the **throne of thy glory**: remember, break not thy covenant with us.

Jer. 17:12 A **glorious** high **throne** from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.

Sir 47:11 The Lord took away his [David's] sins, and exalted his horn for ever: he gave him a covenant of kings, and a **throne of glory** in Israel.

Pss 2:19 For the gentiles insulted Jerusalem, trampling *her* down, her beauty was dragged from the **throne of glory**.

Matt. 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the **throne of his glory**, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Matt. 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the **throne of his glory**:

Most of the references in the OT and the Apocrypha refer to Jerusalem and the house of David. Compare

Isa 24:23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously

Vocabulary for Gathering

	קבץ	אסף
συναγω	71	125

N. Mendecki did a dissertation in Vienna in 1980 on these two words, which is reflected in two articles:

Mendecki, N., 'Die Sammlung und der Neue Exodus in Micha 2.12-13', *Kairos* 23 (1981), pp. 96-99. —'Die Sammlung der Zerstreuten in Mi 4, 6-7', *BZ* 27 (1983), pp. 218-21.