

Exegetical Analysis – Matthew 24:1-51

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1-2 – Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. [2] And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."¹ (1. Καὶ ἐξελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἐπορεύετο, καὶ προσῆλθον οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπιδεῖξαι αὐτῷ τὰς οἰκοδομὰς τοῦ ἱεροῦ. 2. ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· οὐ βλέπετε ταῦτα πάντα; ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ ἀφεθῇ ὥδε λίθος ἐπὶ λίθον ὃς οὐ καταλυθήσεται)

The Olivet Discourse has been known to cause a lot of discussion amongst Christians. It is a very difficult passage to harmonize for anyone who genuinely desires to seek the truth of these passages. My attempt here will be to examine the passages in question to the best of my ability and provide an understanding that best harmonizes with the futuristic position of the text.

Matthew 24 cannot be introduced without first looking briefly at Matthew 23.

At the end of Matthew 23 we see a strong rebuke from Jesus towards the Pharisees. Jesus has rebuked the generation that stands before him for perpetually killing those who are sent to the people of Israel. This evil and wicked *generation* has been perpetually at odds with the seed of the woman from the very start, just as it was foretold in Genesis 3:15. The fathers of the evil and wicked generation repeatedly killed righteous ones sent to Israel, this included Adam down to Zechariah the prophet.

Matthew 23:29-36 LSB

29 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30 and say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ 31 So you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? 34 “On account of this, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will flog in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, 35 so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. 36 Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

This strong rebuke would then be followed by Jesus' lament over Jerusalem in vs. 37-38 and the prediction that their house (i.e., the temple) would be destroyed (or left desolate).

Matthew 23:37-38 LSB

37 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted

¹ The NASB has been used for the main heading verses, the LSB has been used and marked throughout.

to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you did not want it.
 38 Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

As a consequence of their rebellion and rejection of their Messiah (cf. Matthew 12-13), Jesus was clearly alluding to a time in the near future that would result in the destruction of what the Pharisees and scribes held so dear.

After the Lord's *rebuke*, and his *lament*, Jesus says a striking statement in vs.39.

Matthew 23:39 LSB

39 For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Jesus says to the Pharisees (*Jews*) that they will not see their Lord again *until* they say, "blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" At this present juncture in time the Jews are hardened (Rom. 11:25-27) and blinded to the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:4) and have no desire for anything that relates to Christ, except seen in the remnant who continue to come to faith in Christ Jesus. When the Lord returns and removes their blindness, then will they confess the name of the Lord (cf. Zep. 3:9,15; Zec. 12:10-14).

After this striking statement at the end of Matthew 23, we now move into chapter 24 where we see the disciples pointing the temple structure out to Jesus "His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him" (24:1). The Jews were always proud of their work on the temple, many knew the final temple as a marvel in the Augustan world. After pointing out the temple Jesus says something startling, he says, "not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down," a clear connection back to (23:38). You can be sure the disciples were startled and confused by his statement. Why would this glorious structure be torn down? If the structure is going to be torn down, is that the fulfillment of what the prophet Zechariah spoke of in Zechariah 14? In the eyes of the disciples they would have likely grouped the temple destruction with the coming of the Lord Jesus and the end of the age. This misunderstanding will lead to their questions as they approach Jesus on the Mount of Olives.

3 – As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (3. Καθημένου δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄρους τῶν Ἐλαιῶν προσῆλθον αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ κατ' ιδίαν λέγοντες Εἰπόν / εἰπὲ ἡμῖν πότε ταῦτα ἔσται, καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας καὶ συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος)

Puzzled by what Jesus said, the disciples came him privately. They asked him two very particular questions:

1. *When will these things happen?*
2. *What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?*

The first question "when will these things happen?" must be understood by what was just said before in vs.2 ("not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down,"). They must be asking when the destruction of the temple will occur. The second question must be understood as answering the events that pertain to the coming of the Lord Jesus and the end of the age. Now, it is imperative that we understand which of the synoptics are answering which questions. It is my position that the first question

is answered only by Luke (i.e., Luke is the only one that discusses the temple destruction), and the second question is distinguished by the first and is spoken of by Matthew, Mark, and Luke.²

The reason that there are two questions and not three (as it might appear at first glance) is quite simple according to Craig Blomberg,

“The sign of your coming and of the end of the age” in Greek reads, more literally, the sign of your coming and end of the age. By not repeating the definite article (“the”) before “end of the age,” Matthew’s rendering of Jesus’ words is most likely linking the coming of Christ and the end of the age together as one event (Granville Sharp’s rule).³

Stanley Toussaint agrees,

“While many see three questions here, the disciples are really asking two. The words “coming” ($\pi\alpha\rho\sigma\tau\alpha\zeta$) and “end” ($\sigma\mu\nu\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\zeta$) are joined together by one article and the conjunction “and” ($\kappa\alpha\iota$); therefore, these two words actually are two parts of one question.”⁴

Having established that there are *two* questions, how do we now understand which synoptic gospel is answering the two questions? From the formation of the question asked by the disciples we can tell that they had assumed that *three* things went together into one event; (a) the destruction of the temple (b) the sign of the coming, (c) the end of the age, this likely came from an understanding Zechariah 14⁵, however, Jesus breaks the events apart to show that there are actually *two separate desolations and one coming*. Randall Price notes that,

“The Gospel of Luke alone records Jesus’ answer to the disciples’ question as to when the destruction of the Temple (“these things”) would occur.”⁶

² Thomas Ice states, “Clearly the first question relates to the destruction of the Temple, which was fulfilled in the Roman invasion and destruction of A.D. 70. It is equally clear that the two aspects of the second question have yet to occur in history, even though some want to see in this passage Christ’s second coming.” Thomas Ice, *Understanding the Olivet Discourse: A Futurist Interpretation of Matthew 24-25*, (Stone Tower Press, Middletown, RI, 2021), 5.

³ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 353, f.n. 37.

⁴ Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, (Kregel Academic & Professional, 2005), 269.

⁵ “They were thinking, no doubt, of Zechariah 14:1-2.” Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., *Matthew, The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Editors John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, Victor Books, 1988 (8th printing), 76.

⁶ Randall Price, *Jerusalem in Prophecy: God’s Stage for the Final Drama* (Harvest House, Eugene, OR, 1998), 251. Toussaint agrees when he states, “This sequence is so clearly in view that Luke records the question concerning the destruction of Jerusalem only (Luke 21:7). That is, the disciples took the destruction of Jerusalem to be completely eschatological. Therefore, Luke records this question only, as though Jerusalem’s destruction would make the coming of the King to reign.” Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, 269-270. Despite the emphasis on three questions John F. Walvoord also agrees, “Matthew’s gospel does not answer the first question, which relates to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This is given more in detail in Luke, while Matthew and Mark answer the second and third questions....” John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* (Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, 1974), 182. Merrill Unger likewise notes, “The King’s answer to the first question, which concerns the destruction of the temple (and the city) in A.D. 70 by the Romans, was not recorded by Matthew but by Luke (21:20-24). The apparent reason the Holy Spirit did not include this part of the King’s reply to the query of His disciples in Matthew’s gospel is that it does not fit into the scope of this great prophetic discourses (chaps. 24 and 25). Matthew’s perspective deals solely with the resumption of the offer of the kingdom after its official rejection by the nation (23:37-39) ...Failure to note this important fact and the reason for it has been one of the most prolific causes of erratic interpretations of the Olivet discourse.” Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Gospels*, (AMG Publishers, Chattanooga TE, 2014), 164. Messianic Jew Arnold Fruchtenbaum makes the same remark, “The first question is not answered in the Matthew account of the Olivet Discourse, but the answer is found in the parallel passage of Luke 21:20-24.” Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, (Ariel Ministries, San Antonio, TX, 2021 (4th Edition)), 93. J. Carl Laney and Robert B. Hughes agree, “The first question had to do with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and was answered in Luke 21:20-24. The second question concerned the end of the age as it related to Israel’s prophetic history.” J. Carl Laney and Robert B. Hughes, *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* (Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Wheaton, Ill, 2001), 419.

Matthew's account is focused upon a future desolation made in the holy place, but not the destruction of the temple as well as the rescue of Israel not its demise. When placing these two accounts (Luke & Matthew/Mark) side-by-side it becomes apparent that they are not fixated upon exactly the same events. Though there are overlaps, it must be maintained that they are not exactly the same. In making a table (*see below*) of the two texts, this distinction will become apparent.

Similarities are marked with: **Green**

Differences are marked with: **Red**

Luke 21	Event	Matthew 24	Event
Luke 21:8-11 And He said, “See to it that you are not deceived; for many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and, ‘The time is at hand.’ Do not go after them. 9 And when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately.” 10 Then He continued saying to them, “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, 11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.	<i>Future Tribulation</i>	Matthew 24:4-8 And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. 6 And you are going to hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8 But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pains.	<i>Future Tribulation</i> Birth Pangs (Day of the Lord language)
Luke 21:12 “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake.	<i>Before All These Things</i>	Matthew 24:9 “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.	<i>After These Things</i>
Luke 21:13-19 It will result in an opportunity for your testimony. 14 So set in your hearts not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. 16 But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, 17 and you will be hated by all because of My name. 18 Yet not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By your perseverance you will gain your lives.	<i>Leading Up to AD 70</i>	Matthew 24:10-14 And at that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11 Many false prophets will arise and will deceive many. 12 And because lawlessness is multiplied, most people’s love will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in the whole world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.	<i>Future Tribulation</i>
Luke 21:20	<i>Desolation of Jerusalem in AD 70</i>	Matthew 24:15 Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of	<i>Abomination of Desolation</i>

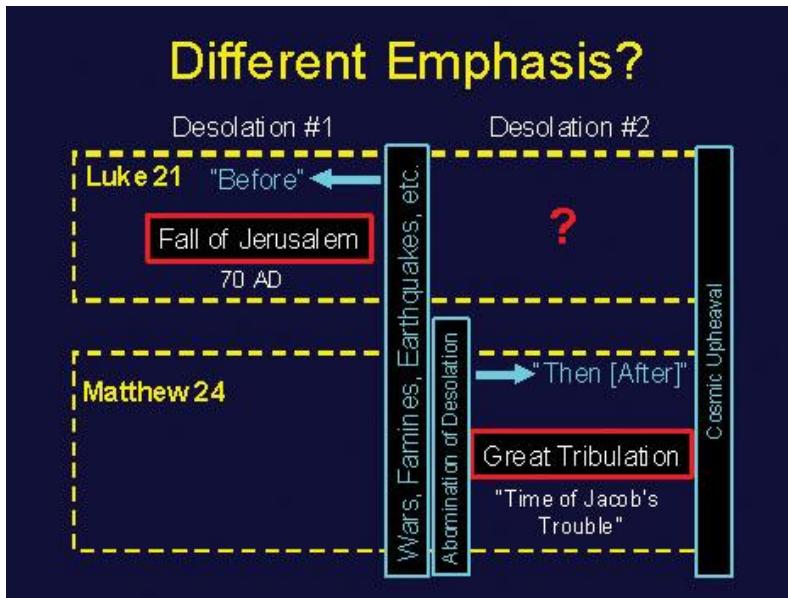
<p>But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand.</p>		<p>through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)</p>	
<p>Luke 21:21-24a</p> <p>Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the countryside must not enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. 23 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath against this people, 24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations.</p>	<p><i>Desolation of Jerusalem in AD 70 Fallout</i></p>	<p>Matthew 24:16-26</p> <p>then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17 Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18 And whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his garment. 19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. 21 For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22 And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 Behold, I have told you in advance. 26 Therefore, if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them.</p>	<p><i>Abomination of Desolation Fallout</i></p>
<p>Luke 24b</p> <p>Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.</p>	<p><i>AD 70 Until Second Coming</i></p>	<p><i>No Parallel</i></p>	
<p>Luke 21:25-28</p> <p>"And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth anguish among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."</p>	<p><i>Second Coming</i></p>	<p>Matthew 24:27-31</p> <p>For just as the lightning comes from the east and appears even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. 29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. 31 And He will send forth His angels with a great</p>	<p><i>Second Coming</i></p>

		trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.	
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As you can see above, despite the fact they are synoptics there are quite a few discrepancies in the texts, and a lot of red highlighting. How do we know that Luke and Matthew aren't explaining the same things? Luke has a key chronological indicator in verse 12 which states, "**But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.**" Which means that the events that were just mentioned in Luke 21:8-10 are future events and the events that occur from Luke 21:12-24a are events that were coming near during the time of the disciples. Michael Vlach states,

"It may seem strange at first to claim that Luke 21:12-24 is about first century events after saying Luke 21:8-11 is about the future Tribulation Period. But this is easily answered when we notice the words of Luke 21:12a— "but before all these things" (21:12a). Thus, Jesus is telling us that what He discusses in Luke 21:12 and following occurs "before" what He just explained in Luke 21:8-11. I believe these events of 21:12-24a were fulfilled in the first century A.D."⁷

Chuck Missler has made an excellent graphic that displays where the different emphasis lies⁸:



Price has also noted the dissimilarities when he states,

"During this time Jesus speaks of a signal event connected with the Temple-its desecration by an abomination which was prophesied by the Prophet Daniel (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). What Temple is being spoken of here by Jesus? Was the Temple that was to be desecrated the same Temple as the one

⁷ Michael Vlach, *My Understanding of the Olivet Discourse in Luke 21:5-28*, 2017.

<http://mikevlach.blogspot.com/2017/02/my-understanding-of-olivet-discourse-in.html>

⁸ Chuck Missler, Resolving the Olivet Discourse, May 1, 2005,

https://khouse.org/images/arpics/differentemphasis_467x360.jpg

predicted to be destroyed? There are a number of contrasts within this text that indicate that Jesus was talking about two different Temples:

- (1) The Temple described in Matthew 24:15 is not said to be destroyed, only desecrated (see Revelation 11:2). By contrast, the Temple in Jesus' day (or Matthew 24:2) was to be completely leveled: "not one stone would be left standing on another" (Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 19:44).
- (2) The Temple's desecration would be a signal for Jews to escape destruction (Matthew 24:16-18), "be saved" (Matthew 24:22) and experience the promised "redemption" (Luke 21:28). By contrast the destruction of the Temple in Matthew 24:2 was a judgment "because you did not recognize the time of your visitation [Messiah's first advent]" (Luke 19:44b) and resulted in the Temple being level[ed] to the ground and your children [the Jews] within you" (Luke 19:44a).
- (3) The generation of Jews that are alive at the time that the Temple is desecrated will expect Messiah's coming "immediately after" (Matthew 24:29), and are predicted to not pass away until they have experienced it (Matthew 24:34). By contrast, the generation of Jews who saw the Temple destroyed would pass away and 2,000 years (to date) would pass without redemption.
- (4) The text Jesus cited concerning the Temple's desecration, Daniel 9:27, predicts that the one who desecrates this Temple will himself be destroyed. By contrast, those who destroyed the Temple in A.D.70 (in fulfillment of Jesus' prediction)-the Roman emperor Vespasian and his son Titus-were not destroyed but returned to Rome in triumph carrying vessels from the destroyed Temple.
- (5) The time "immediately after" (Matthew 24:29) the time of the Temple's desecration would see Israel's repentance (Matthew 24:30), followed by, as Matthew 23:29 implies a restoration of the Temple. By contrast, the time following the destruction of the Temple only saw a "hardening" happen "to Israel," which is to last "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Romans 11:25)-still 2,000 years and counting.
- (6) For the Temple that is desecrated, the scope is of a worldwide tribulation "coming upon the world" (Luke 21:26; compare Matthew 24:21-22; Mark 13:19-20), a global regathering of the Jewish people "from one end of the sky to the other" (Matthew 24:31; Mark 13:27), and a universal revelation of the Messiah at Israel's rescue (Matthew 24:30-31; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:26-27). This scope accords with the prophesied end-time battle for Jerusalem recorded in Zechariah 12-14, where "all nations of the earth will be gathered against it" (Zechariah 12:3). By contrast the A.D. 70 assault on Jerusalem predicted in Luke 21:20 is by the armies of one empire (Rome). Therefore, if there are two different attacks on Jerusalem, separated by more than 2,000 years, then two distinct Temples are considered in Matthew 24:1-2 and Matthew 24:15.⁹

It is clear then that we must acknowledge that the two accounts are not identical and that Luke's account is the only account that actually addresses the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 by Titus.

What then do we make of the words, "*sign, coming, and consummation of the age?*"

1. **τὸ σημεῖον (the sign)** — This sign would refer to something visible, something that enable a conclusion to be drawn from the sign to enable those viewing the sign to conclude the coming of the Lord. This was something to be expected. This word is also in the "singular" (N-NNS) in the Greek. What precedes the word sign is "the" which is the definite article (Art-NNS). When the Singular and the

⁹ Price, *Jerusalem in Prophecy: God's Stage for the Final Drama*, 253-255.

Definite Article are brought together, we know that there will be only one sign for the coming of Christ and the end of the age, not many signs. I believe that the sign here is the *Shechinah glory*.¹⁰

2. παρουσίας (coming) — Cleon L. Rogers Jr., and Cleon L. Rogers III note that the word (παρουσίας) means “presence, arrival, coming (TDNT; NIDNTT; NTW)”¹¹ This presence and arrival has to do with the coming of Christ, which is directly tied to the “sign” which would accompany his appearance.

3. συντελείας τοῦ αἰώνος (of the consummation of the age) — The disciples understood the promise of the Messiah, in accordance with the Hebrew scriptures, that we would rule this earth during the last age of history, and that the world history would be subdivided into two ages. This two-age model is present throughout the NT (cf. Gal 1:4, 2 Cor 4:4, 1 Cor 2:6, Lk 20:34, etc.). This present era could be called the pre-Messianic age, and the age to come the Messianic era or age.

To summarize the questions: What visible sign will we see Lord that will be distinct and will announce with certainty the imminent nature of your coming as the Messiah and the end of this age? The questions that pertain to the Lord’s coming and the events that are tied to the consummation of the age will be now unpacked from the perspective of Matthew’s Gospel.

4-6 – And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. [5] For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. [6] You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. (4 Καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· βλέπετε μὴ τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ· 5 πολλοὶ γὰρ ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὄνόματι μου λέγοντες· ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ χριστός, καὶ πολλοὺς πλανήσουσιν. 6 μελλήσετε δὲ ἀκούειν πολέμους καὶ ἀκοὰς πολέμων· ὄρατε μὴ θροεῖσθε· δεῖ γὰρ γενέσθαι, ἀλλ’ οὕπω ἐστὶν τὸ τέλος)

Jesus begins vs.4 in a very interesting way. He says, “see to it” (Βλέπετε) and then gives the warning that they are not to be misled. The disciples thought that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple would usher in the end of the age. The Lord separates the two ideas and tells them not to be deceived by thinking the coming of the Lord is linked to the temple destruction. The destruction of the temple and the wars and rumors of wars do not necessarily signify the end or any proximity to the end of the age. If the disciples got too fixated on linking the temple destruction with his coming, they could be deceived and misled by false messiahs “I am the Christ”. Jesus says to them that many (πολλοὶ) will come in his name. This was not something we saw in the 1st century. There weren’t (πολλοὶ) coming in the name of the Lord proclaiming to be the Messiah. Even Gary DeMar (a Partial-Preterist) only narrows in on Simon, Theudas, and Dositheus, as his examples. Narrowing in on a couple examples is no more relevant than us using the same argument today.

¹⁰ “At this point, the sign of the Son of Man will appear (Mt. 24:30a). As this sign is coupled with God’s glory, it is obviously the Shechinah light that will signal the second coming of the Messiah. Suddenly, the darkness enveloping the world will be dispersed by the light of the Shechinah. The Bible says, the whole world will see the second coming; they will see the brightness of Yeshua’s glory dispersing the worldwide darkness. Thus, the answer to the second question, “What is the sign of the second coming?” is that the earth will be enveloped by blackness, and suddenly this darkness is dispersed by the light of the Shechinah glory.” Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, 613-614.

¹¹ Cleon L. Rogers Jr., and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1998), 53.

The words “those things must take place” demonstrate the prophetic nature of the discourse. This clause ($\deltaει γενέσθαι$) is characteristically linked to apocalyptic literature (Rev. 1:1). These events “those things must take place” do not mark out the end of time. Cranfield notes,

“These things do not constitute a sign that the end is just round the corner; and the disciples of Jesus are warned against giving heed to sensational rumors that the parousia is upon them.”¹²

William Hendriksen further validates the point that although these events were present around the time of the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, they cannot be restricted to that time period,

“It is not necessary to name any of the false prophets. They were present in connection with Jerusalem’s fall, but they did not cease to be in evidence after that great catastrophe of A.D. 70....Moreover, the very fact that they never vanish from the earth during this entire dispensation clearly shows that their appearance and work can never constitute a sign in the restricted sense of the term.”¹³

The key to understanding what follows is that the disciples were not to confuse the Lord’s coming (*parousia*) with the temple destruction (which he had mentioned). What Jesus is going to do is explain what will come “before” his parousia. If we understand this correctly, we will understand why Jesus didn’t address the temple destruction as the central tenant of the passage, but rather the signs that are linked to his parousia and the end of the age.

There is also something extremely important to understand in studying this passage. There are clear parallels to Revelation 6 and the first 6 seals that are opened. These clear connections will be important in making our way through the text. It is my belief that Matthew 24:4-14 characterize the first half of Daniel’s 70th week, which is termed the “birth pangs/pains” in Matthew 24:8.

Image paralleling Matthew 24 and Revelation 6:¹⁴

The Olivet Discourse and the First 6 Seals

Olivet Discourse		The First 6 Seals	
24:4-5	False Christs	6:1-2	White Horse
24:6-7	War	6:3-4	Red Horse
24:7	Famine	6:5-6	Black Horse
24:9	Death	6:7-8	Pale Horse
24:9-13	Martyrdom	6:9-11	5th Seal
Luke 21:11	Signs	6:12-17	6th Seal

7-8 – For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. [8] But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.
(7. ἐγερθήσεται γὰρ ἔθνος ἐπὶ ἔθνος καὶ βασιλεία ἐπὶ βασιλείαν καὶ ἔσονται λιμοὶ καὶ σεισμοὶ κατὰ

¹² C.E.B. Cranfield, *St. Mark 13*, Scottish Journal of Theology, 6 (July 1953), 289.

¹³ William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew* in the New Testament Commentary, (Baker Publishing Group, 1981), 852.

¹⁴ Image taken from: <https://www.credocourses.com/2015/05/11/the-first-6-seal-judgments-of-revelation/>

τόπους· 8. πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἀρχὴ ὁδίνων)

After Jesus had warned his disciples not to be shaken by false messiah's and rumors of wars, he begins to explain the events that precede his coming. The conjunction “for” (γὰρ) links together the thoughts from vs.4-6 with vs.7. Matthew is going to explain why these events (i.e. false messiah's, wars and rumors of wars, nations rising against nations, famines, and earthquakes) do not mark the end of time but merely the beginning of these *birth pangs*. When we get to vs.7, we quickly see that there are extensive wars that are going to break out preceding the coming of the Lord. These wars, however, are not described as local wars, but rather universal (*worldwide*) wars amongst the nations. Numerous commentators point out the universal nature of these wars. Peter Pett states,

“There were plenty of such events in 1st century AD before the destruction of Jerusalem, and indeed have been ever since. For the dreadful famine in the time of Claudius (around 40 AD) see Acts 11:27-30, and in 61 AD Laodicea, for example, was destroyed by a terrible earthquake which shook the whole of Phrygia, while Pompeii and Herculaneum were destroyed by volcanic action not long after. Tacitus, a first century Roman historian, after referring to the horrors and calamities, and disasters and portents, of the period, went on to say ‘never has it been better proved, by such terrible disasters to Rome, or by such clear evidence, that the gods were concerned, not with our safety but with vengeance on our sins.’ Jesus’ point is not that this will be a unique period but that these are but the beginning of what must come on the world, not signs of the end, although at the same time being seen as reminders that one day He is coming. They are indications of the start of what is to come (like initial birth pains).”¹⁵

Philip Schaff also notes,

“Matthew 24:7. Nation shall rise against nation, etc. Primarily, national uprisings of the Jews; then, wars of races, political revolutions, migrations, etc. Even the times preceding the dissolution of the Roman Empire have not exhausted this prediction. Famines, and earthquakes in diverse places. A famine is prophesied in Acts 11:28; others are mentioned by Latin historians. Five great earthquakes occurred in thirteen years. The best authorities omit: ‘and pestilences.’ See Luke 21:11, from which it is taken. As regards the wider fulfilment: ‘The passage combines in one view the whole of the various social, physical, and climatic crises of development in the whole New Testament dispensation’ (Lange).”¹⁶

Never have wars to this degree occurred in church history. These are not minor squabbles in and around Jerusalem prior to its destruction, this will be wars against nations and kingdoms warring against other kingdoms. M' Neile states,

¹⁵ Pett, Peter. "Commentary on Matthew 24". "Pett's Commentary on the Bible".

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/pet/matthew-24.html>.

¹⁶ Schaff, Philip. "Commentary on Matthew 24". "Schaff's Popular Commentary on the New Testament".

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/scn/matthew-24.html>. William Hendriksen also notes, “It is true that during the period A.D. 60-80 famine, pestilence, fire, hurricane, and earthquake ravaged the empire, as Renan points out in l’Antichrist... But, as already clear from the preceding sentence, these catastrophes were not limited to the decade preceding the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70. Moreover, throughout the centuries there have been violent earthquakes...A certain author has counted no less than seven hundred disturbances of this nature, great and small, which had occurred in the nineteenth century.” Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 853. Toussaint also observes, “Verse six evidently has reference to local situations, but verse seven looks at a worldwide conflict.” Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, 271.

“The horrors described are not local disturbances, but are spread over the known world; nations and kingdoms are in hostility with one another (not divided against itself, as in xii. 25, Is. xix. 2).”¹⁷

As we begin to piece together the entire section, we slowly see that the Preteristic interpretation of Matthew 24 doesn’t hold water. Brock Hollett summarizes,

“...it should be noted that such catastrophic events have and do occur in *every* period of history... Jesus warned against a premature identification of these initial signs, most likely because these types of events occur *to a lesser degree* in every period of time. Nevertheless, the Scriptures predict *a particular intensification* of these labour pains in the years leading up to the end of the age.”¹⁸

Let’s now discuss what Jesus calls the “birth pangs/pains” in vs.8. The birth pains or pangs clearly originate in the Old Testament [OT]. The OT prophets (cf. Isa. 13:6-9 Jer. 30:7, Mic. 4:10), described a period that preceded the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the Messianic age. It was also known as “the birth pangs of the Messiah” or the “Messianic Woes.” The expression is directly tied to a period of suffering that would come upon the Jewish people followed by a period of redemption. Millar Burrows remarks:

“A prominent feature of Jewish eschatology, as represented especially by the rabbinic literature, was the time of trouble preceding Messiah’s coming. It was called “the birth pangs of the Messiah.”¹⁹

The birth pangs are reminiscent of a woman giving birth and the contractions that she would experience up until the birth. The contractions are a judgment, which will increase in severity, but there will be an end to the contractions, which ceases with the coming of the Messiah. Eric Michael Teitelman states,

“However, at the end of this tribulation, at the moment of Israel’s imminent destruction when all the powers of Satan have been unleashed, the Lord will birth a miracle child. His anointed one, the Messiah Yeshua, the King of all kings, will midwife the birth of His great nation—Israel.”²⁰

Rabbi Gavin Broder agrees,

“The period leading to the coming of the Mashiach (Messiah) is referred to as *chevlei Mashiach* - ‘birth pangs of the Messiah’ - and is compared to the period leading up to the birth of a child. In the same way that the expectant mother’s pain increases as she gets closer to giving birth, so the period leading to the arrival of Mashiach may be a difficult one for the Jewish People.”²¹

Rabbi Baron, Chevlei Moshiach states,

“As is known, the advent of Mashiach will be preceded by exceedingly difficult hardships, known as “the pains of Mashiach”. It was due to these hardships that R. Yochanan, Ulla and Rabba all wished, “Let him come, but let me not see it!” (Sanhedrin 98b). They were willing to forgo the opportunity to greet Mashiach, due to their great fear of the terrible afflictions that will accompany his advent. The Yad Rama”h explains that the choice of words to describe these pains – *חישם ילבח* – alludes to the pangs of labor (הדייל)

¹⁷ Alan H M’Neile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, (London: MacMillan 1915), 345. Taken from Thomas Ice, Understanding the Olivet Discourse.

¹⁸ Brock Hollett, *Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy*, Kindle, (Morris Publishing, 2018), Location 628.

¹⁹ Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, (London, Secker & Warburg, 1956), 343-344.

²⁰ Eric Michael Teitelman, *Birth Pangs and the Time of Sorrows from House of David*, (Nov 22, 2017), 5.

²¹ Rabbi Gavin Broder, *The Birth Pangs of the Mashiach (Messiah)*, <https://www.theus.org.uk/article/birth-pangs-mashiach-messiah>

ילבָּה) that precede the birth of a baby. (Indeed, the discussion immediately preceding this Talmudic passage compares the period preceding Mashiach's coming to the process of gestation and birth.).”²²

Notice that the prophets spoke of *redemption* linked directly with the *birth pangs and the return of Messiah*. Messiah will come and redeem Israel from the hand of the enemy (Zech. 14:1-9, Rev. 19:11-21). This never occurred in A.D. 70. Instead Israel was decimated, not rescued. Preterist's have incorrectly understood the “*birth pangs*” in the Olivet Discourse. There must be both judgment and rescue in order for there to be proof of an earlier fulfillment. J. Immanuel Schochet states,

“These are the birthpangs of Mashiach, bearable only in anticipation of the bliss that follows them.”²³

The Jews understand that the remaining 7 years before the Messiah comes to rescue his people they must go through this period of “birth pangs” and what is known as “Jacob’s Trouble”. These two periods account for 3.5 + 3.5 years making up the final period before the coming of the Messiah. The 7 years are easily traceable to Daniel 9:24-27.²⁴ In Matthew 24:15, as we will see shortly, we are asked to go back to Daniel to understand what will be coming upon the world. Luke never tells us to go to Daniel, and it is irresponsible to go from Matthew to Luke to understand that passage.

Daniel 9:27a speaks about the beginning of the birth pains. The prince of the people (Antichrist, Man-of-Lawlessness, Little Horn, Beast from the Sea), will make a firm covenant for one week (7-years). These 7 years are split clearly into two phases. The first phase is split into 3.5 years and is what Jesus is describing in Matthew 24 as the “beginning of the birth pangs”. Renald Showers states this clearly when he writes,

“Jesus presented things in chronological order in His overview of the seven-year tribulation. He presented the beginning of the birth pangs first, placing them in the first three and a half years. There is also more biblical evidence that the beginning of birth pangs will take place during the first half of the Tribulation, nor before it or during the second half. If you compare Christ’s description of the beginning of birth pangs in Matthew 24:5-8 with the first four seal judgments of Revelation 6:1-8, you can see they are the same thing.”²⁵

Clearly, the birth pangs should be understood in connection with the first half of the final week. The week is subdivided because the prince of the people puts a stop to the sacrifices and grain offerings in the temple during the middle of the week: “but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate” (Daniel 9:27). We can conclude then that the final week is broken into the 2 sections which includes the beginning of the birth pangs, and an increased severity of pain in the second half of the final week (Jacob’s trouble).

So, let’s summarize what we have right now.

First half of the Week (3.5 years) – Beginning of Birth Pains	
Daniel 9:27a	Prince of the People

²² Rabbi Baron, *Chevlei Mashiach*, website: <https://www.baranovich.org/shiurim/rabbi-baron-writings/01-chevlei-moshiach.html>

²³ J. Immanuel Schochet, *Ikvot Meshicha: The Time Immediately Before Mashiach*, website: https://www.sie.org/templates/sie/article_cdo/aid/2348432/jewish/The-Time-Before-Mashiach.htm

²⁴ See my study on Daniel 9:24-27 solidifying a future 7 years (70th week) <https://sakeofthetruth.wordpress.com/2020/10/20/daniels-70-weeks-an-exegetical-analysis-of-daniel-924-27/>

²⁵ Renald Showers, *The Sign of His Coming, Understanding the Olivet Discourse*, (The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 2016), 17.

Matthew 24:4-8	Beginning of the Birth Pains
Revelation 6:1-8	Seal Judgments

9-13 – “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. [10] At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. [11] Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. [12] Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. [13] But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved (9. Τότε παραδώσουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς θλῖψιν καὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔθνῶν διὰ τὸ ὄνομα μου. 10. καὶ τότε σκανδαλισθήσονται πολλοὶ καὶ ἀλλήλους παραδώσουσιν καὶ μισήσουσιν ἀλλήλους· 11. καὶ πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐγερθήσονται καὶ πλανήσουσιν πολλούς· 12. καὶ διὰ τὸ πληθυνθῆναι τὴν ἀνομίαν ψυγήσεται ἡ ἀγάπη τῶν πολλῶν. 13. ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος οὗτος σωθήσεται.

The words “then” and “at that time” indicate a further description of the end of time and connect us with the previous verses. In vs.9 we see that there will be those delivered over to severe tribulation. This is a reference to Jewish believers who will be saved during the time of the Tribulation. These Jewish believers will face the persecution from “the beasts” of the sea and earth in Revelation 13. The woman of Revelation 12 is properly understood as Israel, not the Church.

Revelation 12:6 LSB

6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for 1,260 days.

This period of tribulation was also predicted by the OT saints for Israel and the world, but not for the Church.²⁶ This hatred was expected as is seen in Matthew chapter 10:21-22.

Matthew 10:21-22 LSB

21 “And brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. 22 And you will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

In vs.10 we see that this period will be marked by extreme hatred, falling away, and betrayal. The verb “fall away” carries this idea of “causing one to sin”. Because “fall away” (σκανδαλισθήσονται) is in the passive voice (V-FIP-3P) it means the letting of oneself to fall into sin. Ergo, the falling away from the truth into error (see also 2 Thess 2:3). The ones who fall away are not the believers here, but rather the seed which fell on stony ground. These events could not have occurred in A.D. 70. There was never recorded a mass falling away. If we are to believe the Preteristic understanding several questions need to be unpacked:

1. When did many of the brothers fall away?
2. When did many of the brothers betray one another?
3. When did many of the brothers hate one another?

²⁶ Jeremiah 30:3,7,10-11,18; Daniel 9:24-27, 12:1-4; Joel 2:11, 30-32; Obadiah 1:15-17, 21.

In vs.11 we see that false prophets are going to arise and mislead many. There has never been a time in Church history where we have seen *many* false prophets rise. Preterists often conflate the term false prophet and false teachers when attempting to state that these events occurred in A.D. 70. The usage of the term “false prophet” (ψευδοπροφῆται) further illustrates the Hebrew centered language in the discourse.

“Here [2 Pet. 2:1] false prophets are distinguished from pseudodidaskalos, “false teachers.” The implication is clear: False prophets were Israel’s trouble; false teachers are the church’s problem. Jesus’ use of pesudoprophetes, then, in the Olivet Discourse calls for a Jewish understanding of the term unless some contrary internal contextual evidence can be advanced to show that the word has taken on some different and rare meaning. Since there is no such evidence contextually, it is best to understand the word to refer to false prophets in Judaism. Again this “Jewish element” in the discourse remains Jewish and does not relate to the church.”²⁷

Arno C. Gaebelein concurs:

“The Jewish age has false prophets; the Christian age has false teachers. “But there were false prophets also among the people, as there shall be also among you false teachers, who shall bring in by the bye destructive heresies, etc.” (2 Pet. ii:1). These false prophets who come in the end of the Jewish age will be possessed by evil spirits. Such was the case during the great apostasy of Israel under the reign of Ahab. The Lord permitted then a lying spirit to take possession of the false prophets as revealed by the prophet Messiah (2 Chronicles xviii:18-22).”²⁸

In terms of evaluating vs.12 a couple clear statements need to be made. Lawlessness is going to prevail, it won’t simply be a mark of some as Preterists would like, it will be the undergirded principle of society during this time of birth pains.

“Lawlessness shall prevail;” that is, complete anarchy will hold sway. This too is clearly seen in the breaking of the sixth seal (Rev. vi:12-17). The earthquake, the darkened sun, the blood-red moon, the falling stars, the rolled up heavens and the removal of mountains and island are all great symbols of startling political events, which will take place in the first three and one-half years. . . . the reign of terror and anarchy, worse than that of the French revolution and the Russian revolution of today, all classes of men, the kings, the wealthy, the rich and the poor, the bondman and the free, will be seized with terror. . . . This is the sixth seal, and it is precisely what the Lord saith: “Lawlessness shall prevail!””²⁹

The abundance of lawlessness will be multiplied (πληθυνθῆναι) exponentially. This will result in peoples love growing cold. There is a direct correlation between lawlessness increasing and the love of man growing colder. What does it mean that love would grow cold? Thomas Ice states that it will be the “loss of love”³⁰ Thomas Ice notes that the statement here is a building up to vs.15 when he says,

“It is in just such an environment that will facilitate the man of lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2 to set up his image in God’s rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. And, it is to just such an act that Jesus’s current discourse is moving (24:15).”³¹

²⁷ Bruce A. Ware, *Is the Church in View in Matthew 24-25?* *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April-June 1981; Vol. 138, No. 550), 169.

²⁸ Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Gospel of Matthew: An Exposition* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, [1910] 1961), 484.

²⁹ Ibid., 484-485.

³⁰ Thomas Ice, *Understanding the Olivet Discourse: A Futurist Interpretation of Matthew 24-25*, 81.

³¹ Ibid.

It's important to note in vs.13 the context of who is enduring to the end and whether (σώζω) is that of salvation, or deliverance? John Walvoord notes,

"The age in general, climaxing with the second coming of Christ, has the promise that those that endure to the end (Mt 24:13), that is, survive the tribulation and are still alive, will be saved, or delivered, by Christ at His second coming. This is not a reference to salvation from sin, but rather the deliverance of survivors at the end of the age as stated, for instance, in Romans 11:26, where the Deliverer will save the nation Israel from its persecutors."³²

The believing Jews will be rescued from this period of tribulation, testing, lawlessness, and cold behaviour. Brock Hollett once again hits the nail on the head when he summarizes this section,

"This portion of the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:9-13; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-19) should be understood as a warning of abiding persecutions and tribulations that Christians will experience during the inter-advent period. This understanding is strengthened by Jesus' temporal indicator "before all this" (Luke 21:12), which prohibits the reader from equating this earlier tribulation with the unprecedented and unequalled tribulation that will occur at the end of the age (Matt. 24:21ff; Luke 21:22-23; cf. Dan. 12:1-2). The apostle John also differentiated between general tribulation experienced by believers (Rev. 1:9; cf. 2:9-10) and the future period of "great tribulation" (Rev. 2:22; 7:14; 12:7-17; 13:5-8). He related that early Christian martyrs were instructed to "rest a little longer" until their fellow saints experience martyrdom (Rev. 6:9, 11) during "the great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14; cf. Rev. 20:4). The biblical evidence indicates that the initial labor pains, including the persecution of the saints, will intensify and reach a crescendo as the end approaches, consistent with the Lord's statement that "the end will not be at once" (Luke 21:9)."³³

14 – This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (14. καὶ κηρυχθήσεται τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ εἰς μαρτύριον πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τότε ἥξει τὸ τέλος)

The passage here is another passage that is often debated by scholars as to the timing. What is meant by the "gospel of the kingdom"? Well, we know that Jesus and John both spoke of this gospel of the kingdom in Matthew 3-4.

Matthew 3:2 LSB

2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 4:17 LSB

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The gospel of the kingdom (εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας) has two significant meanings. It is (1) soteriological and (2) eschatological in nature. This passage speaks of a time when the soteriological gospel "good news" will be spoken of in the end times. J. Dwight Pentecost notes,

"The gospel of the kingdom as preached in Tribulation will have two emphases. On the one hand it will announce the good news that Messiah's advent is near, at which time He will introduce the messianic age of

³² John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come*, 184. William Kelly agrees, "It is evident that the language is only applicable in its full force to Jews-believing ones, no doubt, but still Jews in the midst of a nation judicially chastised for their apostacy from God and rejection of their own Messiah. . ." William Kelly, *Lectures on The Gospel of Matthew* (Sunbury, PA: Believers Bookshelf, 1971 [1868]), 484.

³³ Brock Hollett, *Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy*, Kindle Location 665.

blessing. On the other hand it will also offer men salvation by grace through faith based upon the blood of Christ.”³⁴

Toussaint agrees,

“What is this “gospel of the kingdom?” It must be the same good news as was described in 3:2; 4:17, 23; and 9:35. Entrance into the coming kingdom was based on repentance; that was and is the gospel of the kingdom. In the context, however, it would also portray the nearness of the kingdom during the Tribulation period.”³⁵

Remember that the kingdom message that had been spoken to Israel came with rejection, and good news will once again go out during this period of distress announcing the coming kingdom of the Messiah.

The next question we should ask is how does one understand the “*whole world*” if this passage is limited to a Jewish audience? Well a different word is used here for world (*oikouménη*), which means the inhabited earth.

Thayers Greek Lexicon recognizes that that (*oikouménη*) is the whole inhabited earth:

“c. the whole inhabited earth, the world (so in (Hyperides, Eux. 42 (probably Liddell and Scott)) the Sept. for לְבָנָה and γῆ): Luke 4:5; Luke 21:26; Acts 24:5; Romans 10:18; Revelation 16:14; Hebrews 1:6 (πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη, Josephus, b. j. 7, 3, 3) ὅλη ἡ οἰκουμένη, Matthew 24:14; Acts 11:28 (in the same sense Josephus, Antiquities 8, 13, 4 πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη; cf. Bleek, Erklär. d. drei ersten Evv. i., p. 68); by metonymy, the inhabitants of the earth, men: Acts 17:6, 31 (Psalm 9:9); ; ἡ οἰκουμένη ὅλη, all mankind, Revelation 3:10; Revelation 12:9.”³⁶

Often it is argued by Preterists that the Roman Empire is in view here in this verse, and that this was fulfilled in A.D. 70. The only way to come to this conclusion is to simply ignore the context and fail recognize the delineation between the events that occur in A.D. 70 and the events that occur prior to the second coming of the Messiah. The parallel passage that is used is Rev. 14:6-7. We know that this eternal gospel will be preached to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people which demonstrates the universal scope.

Revelation 14:6-7 LSB

6 Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who inhabit the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. 7 And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.”³⁷

Preterist's will often attempt to counter these claims above by saying the whole world (*ὅλη τῆς οἰκουμένης*) is found in these passages (below) and proves that the Gospel had already been spread to the whole world

³⁴ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ: A Study of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 400-401.

³⁵ Stanley D. Toussaint, “The Kingdom and Matthew’s Gospel,” in Stanley D. Toussaint and Charles H. Dyer, *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 33. Taken from Thomas Ice, *Understanding the Olivet Discourse: A Futurist Interpretation of Matthew 24-25*, 88.

³⁶ οἰκουμένη <https://biblehub.com/greek/3625.htm>

³⁷ Thomas Ice notes, “Because Matthew 24:14 is a future event, the gospel will be preached across the globe as described in Revelation 14:6-7. Both passages are set in contexts that tell us that this global evangelization will take place just before the middle of the seven-year tribulation.” Thomas Ice, *Understanding the Olivet Discourse: A Futurist Interpretation of Matthew 24-25*, 92.

by 70AD. Brock Hollett has addressed several of these assertions in his book *Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy*. Brock notes,

“Several objections can be made to this preterist interpretation of these passages. First, unlike the verse under consideration (Matt. 24:14), these Pauline passages simply cannot be understood literally and should be taken figuratively. The apostle Paul utilized hyperbole or exaggeration in these verses to emphasize the evangelistic success of the gospel. Luke also used such figurative expressions. For example, he explained that devout Jews “from every nation under heaven” were staying in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5). Certainly, the reader should not think that Jews from Germania or Armenia were in town for the festival! Luke also wrote about unbelieving Jews who accused Paul and his traveling companions of turning “the world upside down” with the gospel (Acts 17:6). In each of these cases, it is simply inappropriate to render these Pauline and Lukan expressions literally. The apostle Paul used hyperbole in the above verses, a point that becomes more apparent when we consider that he employed the term κόσμος (not οἰκουμένη as in Matthew 24:14!) in all but one of these references.”³⁸

1. Colossians 1:5-6 NASB

because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel [6] which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

“First, Colossians 1:5-6 substitutes κόσμῳ (“world”) for γῆς (“earth”/“land”) and is an allusion to Genesis 1:28 (LXX), a verse that speaks of God’s command for mankind to multiply and subdue the entire created world (i.e., the earth). In other words, this term is not limited to a geographical region such as a territory, empire, or kingdom. The apostle alluded to this text in the Colossians passage to show that the gospel was spreading vastly and successfully wherever it was being proclaimed.”³⁹

2. Romans 16:26 NASB

but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;

“Second, New Testament scholars dispute the meaning of the phrase that is often translated “to all the nations” in Romans 16:26. Many suggest that the preposition εἰς in this verse, often translated “to”, expresses purpose or intent and more accurately conveys the meaning “for all the nations.” The idea is that the gospel is not limited “to” the nation of Israel or to a particular group of nations. This suggests that the intended scope of the gospel is “all nations,” and it does not suggest that it had already accomplished this purpose in the first century.”⁴⁰

3. Romans 10:18 NASB

But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; “Their VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.”

“Third, while the term οἰκουμένη can refer to the Roman Empire (e.g., Luke 2:1; Acts 11:28; 17:6; 19:27; 24:5), it does not denote such a limited geographical region in Romans 10:18. This verse is an allusion to Psalm 19:4 (LXX) which was written during the reign of King David, hardly during the time of a civilized empire. In addition, this psalm speaks of “the heavens” and its celestial bodies declaring God’s glory to “all

³⁸ Brock Hollett, *Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy*, Kindle, Location 684.

³⁹ Ibid., Location 684, 711.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Location 711.

the earth" and to "the end of the world." This strongly suggests that Paul borrowed the language of this psalm to express the idea that the heavenly message--the gospel--is intended for Jews and gentiles alike without distinction (Rom. 10:18; cf. 10:12)."⁴¹

4. Colossians 1:23 NASB

if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

"Fourth, the phrase usually translated "which has been proclaimed" in Colossians 1:23 is in the aorist tense, which often carries a continuous aspect (i.e., "which is proclaimed")."⁴²

Piper affirms what Hollett has noted here as well,

"The fact that the [substantival] participle "proclaimed" is aorist tense does not mean the proclamation has already happened in the past. That is not the way aorists in substantival participles work, as Daniel Wallace makes clear in Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics (note 8, 615). The aorist tense in such uses denotes no specific time. . . So the simplest reading of Colossians 1:23 is that Paul is defining the gospel as the kind of gospel that is unbounded and global in scope, and therefore is preached, by definition, in all the creation. There is no statement here that it has already happened. So I would translate it . . . the gospel which is proclaimed in all creation under heaven. I happily note that N.T. Wright suggests the same interpretation."⁴³

As we study all the Preteristic proof texts we can see why there is no good reason to accept the Preteristic interpretation.

"There is no compelling reason to interpret the Master's words in Matthew 24:14 in a figurative manner. Instead, the gospel will be proclaimed "to all nations" (i.e., "to all ethnic groups," *πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν*) throughout the entire world to provide them with a testimony (Matt. 24:14) prior to the judgment at the end of the age, a judgment that will include "all the nations" (*πάντα τὰ ἔθνη* in Matt. 25:32). The book of Revelation also conveys the concept that the everlasting gospel must be proclaimed to "every nation and tribe and language and people" (Rev. 14:6) prior to the glorious revelation of Jesus."⁴⁴

What is "the end" (*τέλος*)?

"Earlier Jesus said, "for these things must take place, but that is not yet the end" (Matt. 24:6). Now He says, that after the successful preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to the entire planet, "then the end shall come." "In the background is the OT motif of the nations' end-time conversion to Yahweh (Cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 45:20-22; 49:6; 55:5; 56:6-8; Mic. 4:1-3). Here that conversion heralds the end."⁴⁵

As we conclude the bracketed section of vs.4-14 it is my belief that these events occur at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week in the first 3.5 years. Although an argument can be made that vs.4-8 have been occurring throughout church history (inter-advent age view) it makes better sense to see these confined to the beginning of the birth pangs. If there are parallels to Revelation 6 (as we have seen) then it must

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ John Piper, "Has the Gospel Been Preached to the Whole Creation Already?" On March 14, 2017. Desiring God. <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/has-the-gospel-been-preached-to-the-whole-creation-already>

⁴⁴ Brock Hollett, *Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy*, Kindle 737.

⁴⁵ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), vol. 3, 344.

follow as futurists that the events are still future to us and are not presently occurring in some manner. Arno Gaebelein is correct when he states,

“If this is the correct interpretation, if Matthew 24:4-14 refers to the beginning of that coming end of the age and if Revelation 6 refers to the same beginning of the end and that which follows the sixth chapter leads us on into the great tribulation, then there must be a perfect harmony between that part of the Olivet discourse contained in Matthew 24 and the part of Revelation beginning with the sixth chapter. And such is indeed the case.”⁴⁶

15 – Therefore when you see the abomination OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) (15. Ὄταν οὖν ἴδητε τὸ Βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἀγίῳ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω)

“Therefore” (οὖν) links our Lord’s previous comments together with what he is going to say here. This large event is the standing of the abomination of desolation in the holy place. It is my belief that the abomination of desolation is clearly tied to Daniel’s teaching, which is why Jesus wants us to clearly understand Daniel’s words. This verse marks a transition from the first half of the tribulation (beginning of the birth pangs) to what will be called the great tribulation (vs.21).

What then is the “Abomination of Desolation” (Τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως)? This term is very clearly depicted in Daniel’s prophecy (Daniel 9:27, 11:31, 12:11). Daniel 12:1 uses the exact same formulation in the Septuagint, which shows us the “singular” use of the word.

Septuagint Text (LXX)
καὶ ἀπὸ καιροῦ παραλλάξεως τοῦ ἐνδελεχισμοῦ καὶ τοῦ δοθῆναι βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως ἡμέραι
χίλιαι διακόσιαι ἐνενήκοντα

As Cranfield notes,

“The significance of the use of τῆς ἐρημώσεως (equivalent to the Hebrew participle shomem) to qualify it is that the abominable thing causes the Temple to be deserted, the pious worshippers avoiding the Temple on its account.”⁴⁷

The word “abomination” (βδέλυγμα) is used as a term by God to show his detest for specific people, actions, or things. This abomination is an idol setup in the Temple by the man of sin/lawlessness who opposes Jesus. Who is the “man of sin”? Paul clearly connects the man of sin with the abomination of desolation stating clearly that he is a future man who will be revealed and will oppose himself above every so-called god. There has never been any man in history who has set himself up in the temple and proclaimed that he is God.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 LSB

3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it has not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of

⁴⁶ Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Gospel of Matthew: An Exposition*, 476.

⁴⁷ C.E.B. Cranfield, *St. Mark 13*, 289-299.

lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the sanctuary of God, exhibiting himself as being God.

As we can see here the man of lawlessness opposes God and exalts himself above every name and any object of worship. He takes his seat in the temple and displays himself as being God. Did you notice the direct correlation between the falling away (vs.10) and the abomination of desolation (vs.15)? The two passages parallel quite nicely. Thomas Ice lays out quite nicely for us the events which will be included:

- “1. It occurs in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 11:31; 2 Thessalonians 2:4).
- 2. It involves a person setting up a statue in place of the regular sacrifice in the holy of holies (Daniel 11:31; 12:11; Revelation 13:14-14).
- 3. This results in the cessation of the regular sacrifice (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).
- 4. There will be a time of about three-and-a-half years between this event and another event and the end of the time period (Daniel 9:27; 12:11).
- 5. It involves an individual setting up a statue or image of himself so that he may be worshipped in place of God (Daniel 11:31; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:14-15).
- 6. The image is made to come to life (Revelation 13:14).
- 7. A worship system of this false god is thus inaugurated (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:14-15).
- 8. At the end of this time period the individual who commits the act will himself be cut off (Daniel 9:27).⁴⁸

Gary DeMar admits that there is no real consensus in the Preteristic Community as to what the Abomination of Desolation is. There are at least 4 possible solutions:

1. The Zealots

2. The Idumeans

3. The Romans

4. The Jews

Most Preterists seem to lean into it either being the *Zealots* or the *Romans*. However, there are issues with all 4 views. None of the options that are suggested by Preterists account for the time indicators found in Daniel or Revelation. Brock Hollett points out a couple of these issues, he says regarding the Zealots,

“However, the actions associated with the Zealots, as they pertained to the Second Temple, occurred too late to allow for the specified period of at least 3.5 years of unprecedented tribulation. Chilton suggested that the abomination “seems to be the occasion when the Edomites (Idumeans), the age-long enemies of Israel, attacked Jerusalem. . . . One evening in A.D. 68 the Edomites surrounded the holy city with 20,000 soldiers.” The problem with this view is that this event in AD 68 also took place much too late to allow for the specified 3.5 years of the unequalled tribulation. These events occurred only two years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. In addition, both of these preterist views are at odds with most other

⁴⁸ Thomas Ice, *Understanding the Olivet Discourse: A Futurist Interpretation of Matthew 24-25*, 97.

preterists, who see the abomination as referring to the actions of Vespasian and Titus and their Roman legions.”⁴⁹

In terms of the argument for the Roman army, Brock states,

“This view suggests that the graven and molten images of Caesar and the legionary eagles atop the Roman standards constituted a desecration of Jerusalem’s holiness. One weakness of this preterist position is that it removes the abomination from the temple complex, whereas the abomination in Daniel’s prophecies is specifically concerned with the desecration of the temple sanctuary and the removal of the regular burnt offerings (Dan. 8:12-14; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). This preterist view also places the abomination far too late chronologically. General Vespasian and his Roman armies arrived to begin their initial assault on Jerusalem in the late spring of AD 68, and General Titus resumed this assault in the spring of AD 69. General Titus and his Roman forces eventually entered the Jerusalem temple, but this occurred even later in the late summer of AD 70.”⁵⁰

Thomas Ice has also noted several problems with this view,

“In the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem there was …

- No image set up in the holy place.
- No worship of the image was required.
- No three-and-a-half-year period of time between that event and the coming of Christ. This is especially true since the destruction of Jerusalem occurred at the end of the siege by Rome. It was over in a matter of days. D.A. Carson notes, “By the time the Romans had actually desecrated the temple in A.D. 70, it was too late for anyone in the city to flee.”
- No image came to life and beckoned men to worship it.”⁵¹

To attempt to find fulfillment in A.D. 70 for the Abomination of Desolation is utterly impossible and this is why Preterists are divided as to what could possibly fulfill the conditions outlined in Matthew 24:15. In order to fulfill the requirements of Matthew 24:15 we need,

1. The Image Constructed in the Holy Place

Matthew 24:15 LSB - “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place.

Revelation 13:14 LSB - And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which were given to him to do in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.

2. The Profaning of the Sanctuary (mirroring the work of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in Daniel 11:31).

Daniel 11:31 LSB - Mighty forces from him will stand, profane the sanctuary fortress, and abolish the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.

2 Maccabees 5:15 NCB - Not content with this, the king had the audacity to enter the holiest temple in the entire world, with Menelaus, who had become a traitor to the laws and to his country, serving as his guide.

⁴⁹ Brock Hollett, *Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy*, Kindle, Location 816.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Location 816, 840.

⁵¹ Thomas Ice, *Understanding the Olivet Discourse: A Futurist Interpretation of Matthew 24-25*, 98-99.

16 The king laid his unclean hands on the sacred vessels, and with his profane hands he gathered up the votive offerings that other kings had made to enhance the glory and the honor of the holy place.

2 Maccabees 6:2 NCB - He was also instructed to profane the temple in Jerusalem and dedicate it to Olympian Zeus, and to dedicate the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim to Zeus the Hospitable, as had been requested by the people who inhabited that place.

3. Breath and Worship to the Unholy Image

Revelation 13:15 LSB - And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

4. The Cessation of the Tamid Offering (3.5 Years)

Daniel 7:25 LSB - He will speak words against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make changes in seasons and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

Daniel 9:27 LSB - And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will make sacrifice and grain offering cease; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

Daniel 12:11 LSB - But from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

5. The Declaration of Being God in the Sanctuary

Daniel 11:36 LSB - “Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak astonishing things against the God of gods; and he will succeed until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.

2 Thessalonians 2:4 LSB - who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the sanctuary of God, exhibiting himself as being God.

Revelation 13:5 LSB - And there was given to him a mouth speaking great boasts and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

Despite the numerous preteristic attempts to tie together the Abomination of Desolation with the events of A.D. 70, no good explanation exists. Even Flavius Josephus demonstrates to us that the events observed do not comport with the biblical expectation, as Thomas Ice notes,

“First-century historian Flavius Josephus tells us that Titus did not want the Temple burned. However, the Roman soldiers [sic] were so upset with the Jews that they disobeyed his orders and burned the temple anyway. All Titus was able to do was to go in and tour the holy place shortly before it was burned. This does not comport with the biblical picture of the image to be set up on the altar in the middle of Daniel’s

seventieth week, resulting in cessation of the regular sacrifice and a rival worship system set up in its place for three-and-a-half years.”⁵²

16-22 – then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. [17] Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. [18] Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. [19] But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! [20] But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. [21] For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. [22] Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. (16. τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη, 17. ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ δώματος μὴ καταβάτω ἄραι τὰ ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ. 18. καὶ ὁ ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ μὴ ἐπιστρεψάτω ὀπίσω ἄραι τὸ ἴματιον αὐτοῦ. 19. οὐαὶ δὲ ταῖς ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχούσαις καὶ ταῖς θηλαζούσαις ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις. 20. προσεύχεσθε δὲ ἵνα μὴ γένηται ἡ φυγὴ ὑμῶν χειμῶνος μηδὲ σαββάτῳ. 21. ἔσται γὰρ τότε θλῖψις μεγάλη οἵα οὐ γέγονεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κοσμοῦ ἔως τοῦ νῦν οὐδέ οὐ μὴ γένηται. 22. καὶ εἰ μὴ ἐκολοβώθησαν αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι, οὐκ ἄν ἐσώθῃ πᾶσα σάρξ· διὰ δὲ τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς κολοβωθήσονται αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι)

In vs.16 we see the word “then” (τότε) connecting the events of vs.15 and vs.16 together. After the events of the “Abomination of Desolation” those who are in Judea—another indication of the Hebrew significance—will need to flee immediately to the mountains.

Preterist’s attempt to try and make all the details of the text fit into the time of the temple destruction in A.D. 70 simply doesn’t work. Two preteristic scholars have shown how the A.D. 70 interpretation of the text does not work.

Carson states,

“But to what event does Jesus make this text from Daniel refer? Some have suggested Caligula's plan to set up a pagan altar and standards in the temple precincts (A.D. 40), a plan never carried out; but the description in the following verses cannot apply to that. The obvious occasion, in general terms, is A.D. 70, though certain difficulties must be faced. Although *topos* ("place") can refer to the city of Jerusalem (cf. BAGD, p. 822), the normal meaning of *hagios topos* ("holy place") is the temple complex (cf. BAGD; Isa 60:13; 2 Mace 1:29; 2:18; Acts 6:13; 21:28). But by the time the Romans had actually desecrated the temple in A. D. 70, it was too late for anyone in the city to flee.”⁵³

Wright notes,

“This is scarcely to be taken as a reference, after the event, to the actual happenings of AD 66-70. For a start, Titus and his legions were occupying the Mount of Olives and Mount Scopus, the two highest hills overlooking Jerusalem; fleeing to the hills would mean surrender and/or death. For another thing, by the time the Romans took the sanctuary itself it was too late to do anything about running away. Thirdly, the tradition of the Christians getting out of Jerusalem and going to Pella hardly counts as fleeing ‘to the hills’; to get to Pella they would have had to descend 3,000 feet to the Jordan valley and then travel north for

⁵² Ibid., 99.

⁵³ D.A. Carson, *Matthew, The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 500.

about thirty miles (Pella itself is about three miles east of the Jordan, and twenty miles south of the sea of Galilee). No one in their right mind would describe a flight to Pella as ‘to the hills’.”⁵⁴

The fleeing here, seen in Matthew 24:16, is directly tied to the events described in Revelation 12:

Revelation 12:13-14 LSB

13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. 14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, *so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place*, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

The woman (Israel) would be given the ability to escape the situation and flee to the wilderness where the Lord would protect and nourish her for 3.5 years. Notice the *timing* indicators again. At the mid-point of the 3.5 years Satan proceeds to go after Israel to attack her, but she is protected for the remainder of the tribulation in the wilderness. Israel was not protected in A.D. 70, she was slaughtered, not protected or delivered. Also, note the timing of the fleeing. When the Abomination of Desolation (vs. 15) is setup THEN they are to flee. No historical statements exist that show that Israel fled when Titus had reached the temple holy place. Israel needs to flee at the time the Abomination is setup in the Holy Place. This means that they see the Abomination they are to flee, immediately as Matthew 24:16-20 states, “*then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. [17] Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. [18] Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. [19] But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! [20] But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.*” There is no time to go down and get things out from inside the house, if you’re working in the field, you cannot go back to even get your cloak. If these events occur during the winter or Sabbath, they will make conditions more difficult for fleeing.

Stanley Toussaint further nails home the problem with the preteristic interpretation when he says,

“Because Christ specifically related the prophecy of the abomination of desolation to Daniel’s prophecy, it seems best to see some correspondence between the abomination of desolation committed by Antiochus Epiphanes and that predicted by Christ. If this is so it would entail not only defilement on the altar by sacrifices offered with impure hearts, but also an actual worship of another god using the Temple as a means for such a dastardly act. Those preterists who agree with this take it to be the worship of the Roman standards in the Temple precincts. However, if this interpretation is taken, Matthew 24:16-20 is difficult if not impossible to explain. By then it would be too late for the followers of the Lord Jesus to escape; the Romans had already taken the city by this time. If the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel 9:27 and 12:11 is foreshadowed by Antiochus Epiphanes (11:31), it would be best to say it is a desecration carried out by a person who sacrilegiously uses the Temple to promote the worship of a god other than Jehovah. This is what is anticipated in 2 Thessalonians 2.”⁵⁵

Let’s briefly discuss the time period (great tribulation in vs.21) and its connection to Daniel 9:27.

Daniel 9:27 LSB

And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will make

⁵⁴ N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 353.

⁵⁵ Stanley D. Toussaint, *A Critique of The Preterist View of The Olivet Discourse*, an unpublished paper presented to the Pre-Trib Study Group, Dallas, Texas, 1996, n.p.

sacrifice and grain offering cease; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

The “he” here is the “prince” (vs.26) or the “man of lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2:4-6). He will come into the Temple as we saw in Matthew 24:15 making it desolate. In vs.21 we are now situated at the middle of this period of (tribulation).

Let's get a sense of how we should be defining this period, Pentecost notes,

“the term tribulation is used in several different ways in Scripture. It is used in a non-technical, non-eschatological sense in reference to any time of suffering or testing into which one goes. It is so used in Matthew 13:21; Mark 4:17; John 16:33; Romans 5:3; 12:12; 2 Corinthians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; Revelation 1:9. It is used in its technical or eschatological sense in reference to the whole period of the seven years of tribulation, as in Revelation 2:22 or Matthew 24:29. It is also used in reference to the last half of this seven year period, as in Mathew 24.”⁵⁶

Walvoord agrees when he states,

“The great tribulation, accordingly, is a specific period of time beginning with the abomination of desolation and closing with the second coming of Christ, in the light of Daniel's prophecies and confirmed by reference to forty-two months. In Revelation 11:2 and 13:5, the great tribulation is a specific three-and-a-half-year period leading up to the second coming . . . That the period would be a time of unprecedented trouble is brought out clearly in Revelation 6-19. . . . Putting all these Scriptures together, it indicates that the great tribulation will mark the death of hundreds of millions of people in a comparatively short period of time.”⁵⁷

This awful period (*Great Tribulation*) will be recognized as the worst period in history.⁵⁸

In vs.22 we see the significance of this day: “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.” God promises hope to those who go through this period of distress. The days of tribulation will be cut short so there will be deliverance. This deliverance is promised repeatedly to Israel.⁵⁹

The Lord makes the following promise which perfectly aligns with the passage of Matthew 24:22:

Jeremiah 30:10-11 LSB

10 Fear not, O Jacob My servant,’ declares Yahweh, ‘And do not be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar And your seed from the land of their captivity. And Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease, And no one will make him tremble.11 For I am with you,’ declares Yahweh, ‘to save you; For I will make a complete destruction of all the nations where I have scattered you, Only I will not make a complete destruction of you. But I will chasten you justly And will by no means leave you unpunished.

There has no point in history where we have seen these events transpire. A.D. 70 doesn't fit this period, neither does the holocaust. This period of great distress (great tribulation) will be unlike anything that has ever been seen in history.

⁵⁶ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 170.

⁵⁷ John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 188.

⁵⁸ Deut. 4:30; Dan. 12:1; Joel 2:1-2; Jer. 30:5-7.

⁵⁹ Isa. 2:2-4; Jer. 30:3; Zech. 8:3-8, 12:10; Rom. 11:26-27.

The next important question that we need to address, is who are the *elect* here? Are they the *Church? Israel?* Should we see a categorical distinction here? I believe that the context is clearly Jewish and the Church should not be read into the passage. Renald Showers notes,

“The elect are the faithful, believing Israelite remnant in contrast with the unbelieving sinners within the nation. In Isaiah 65:7-16 God drew a contrast between these two groups and their destinies. In Isaiah 65:9 He called the believing remnant “mine Elect,” and in Isaiah 65:17-25 He indicated that in the future Millennium His elect remnant of the nation will be blessed greatly on the earth. The elect are the faithful, believing Israelite remnant in contrast with the unbelieving sinners within the nation. In Isaiah 65:7-16 God drew a contrast between these two groups and their destinies. In Isaiah 65:9 He called the believing remnant “mine Elect,” and in Isaiah 65:17-25 He indicated that in the future Millennium His elect remnant of the nation will be blessed greatly on the earth.”⁶⁰

Toussaint agrees,

“Such terms as the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 24:14), the holy place (Matthew 24:15), the Sabbath (Matthew 24:20), and the Messiah (Matthew 24:23-24) indicate that Israel as a nation is in view.”⁶¹

It seems most likely that the usage of the word “elect” refers to a Jewish remnant, one which will be preserved throughout the advent of the tribulation. This comports with the Jewish nature of the Gospel, this comports with the Jewish nature of the preceding chapter, this comports with the identification of the Jews as the focal point in Daniel 9, and it comports with the Jewish terms used in Matthew 24.

23-28 – Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. [24] For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. [25] Behold, I have told you in advance. [26] So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. [27] For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. [28] Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. (23. Τότε έάν τις ήμιν εἴπῃ· ίδού ὁδε ὁ χριστός, ή· ὁδε, μὴ πιστεύσητε. 24. ἐγερθήσονται γὰρ ψευδόχριστοι

⁶⁰ Renald Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord, Come!* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel, 1995), 182.

⁶¹ Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, 277. Others have agreed with this assessment, McAvoy states, “The rule of context precludes understanding ‘elect’ in Matthew 24:22, 24 as referring to Israel and then nine verses later as referring to the church. Without some indication of transition from one intended meaning to another ‘elect’ in Matthew 24:31 must mean the same as it does in Matthew 24:22, 24.” McAvoy, *Critique of Gundry*, 140-141. Paul Lee Tan states, “This text [Matthew 24:29-30], when read as is may prove posttribulationism. It says that Christ will come for the saints “immediately after” the tribulation. However, a text apart from its context is only a pretext. The proper context of the passage under consideration is the Olivet Discourse of Christ (Matthew 24). The discourse is given during our Lord’s lament over Jerusalem and the nation Israel which had rejected Him. The entire cast and context of the discourse is therefore with reference to the nation Israel; the church is nowhere referred to. The harmony of passages elsewhere in Scripture combines to teach that Christ will come for the church before the tribulation, while this passage and its context do teach that for the nation Israel the second coming of Christ will be after the tribulation.” Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, (Rockville, Md., Assurance, 1984), 109. [Brackets added by me]. Warren Wiersbe states, “This entire paragraph [Matthew 24:15-22] relates only to Jews, for no Christian believer would worry about breaking a Sabbath law.” Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Vol. 1, 88. Thomas Ice states, “The term “the elect” is uttered three times by Jesus in the Olivet discourse (Matthew 14:22, 24, 31; also in Mark 13:20, 22, 27). I believe that all three uses must refer to the same entity in each instance. They clearly refer, in context, to some group of believers during the tribulation. Since the church has been raptured, it cannot refer to her. Thus, does “the elect” reference saved Jews and Gentiles, or only the Jewish remnant? I believe that this term refers to the Jewish remnant, primarily because of contextual factors.... The term “the elect” is most likely used because Christ looks forward to those belonging to the Jewish remnant, though not yet saved, they are chosen to such a destiny—the elect. Maranatha!” Thomas Ice, *An Interpretation of Matthew 24-25, Part 17: Matthew 24:22 The Cutting Short of Days*, https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/ice_thomas/Mat24-25/Mat24-25_Part17.cfm

καὶ ψευδοπροφῆται καὶ δώσουσιν σημεῖα μεγάλα καὶ τέρατα ὥστε πλανᾶσθαι, εἰ δυνατόν, καὶ τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς. 25. ίδοὺ προείρηκα ύμῖν. 26. ἐὰν οὖν εἰπωσιν ύμῖν· ίδοὺ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἐστιν, μὴ ἐξέλθητε· ίδοὺ ἐν τοῖς ταμείοις, μὴ πιστεύσητε· 27. ὕσπερ γάρ ἡ ἀστραπὴ ἐξέρχεται ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν καὶ φαίνεται ἔως δυσμῶν, οὕτως ἔσται ἡ παρουσία τοῦ νιοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· 28 ὅπου ἐὰν ἡ τὸ πτῶμα, ἐκεῖ συναχθήσονται οἱ ἀετοί)

During this period of Great Tribulation many will rise up to deceive. We know of one who assists the “Beast from the Sea” of Rev. 13 during this period of Tribulation. That is the “Beast of the Earth”.

Revelation 13:12-15 LSB

12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. 13 And he does great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which were given to him to do in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. 15 And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

This false prophet will attempt to mislead many with his signs and wonders. Jesus warns that many will rise-up, but that those present during this period of intense tribulation should not fall for these signs and wonders because they will be so convincing. In A.D. 70 there was no flurry of false prophets and false Christ's that arose. It is impossible to link this event to A.D. 70, though attempts have been made.

Thomas Ice rightly notes,

“Preterists contend that these verses were fulfilled through events leading up to, and including, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans in A.D. 70. They can cite a few examples of false prophets since there have been false prophets since the writing of the New Testament (2 Pet. 2:1). However, there is consensus that there were not false Messiah's or Christs until till [sic] around A.D. 130. In fact, preterists do not even attempt to cite examples of false Christs.”⁶²

In vs.27 we are reminded of the nature of Christ's return (his coming). This coming will be “just as the lightning comes from east and appears even to the west.” Marvin Vincent states,

“Shineth [φαίνεται]. Rev., better, is seen. The coming of the Lord will be a plain, unmistakable fact, like the lightning which lightens both ends of the heaven at once, and is seen of all. It will not be connected with some particular place, but will manifest itself and be recognized over the whole world.”⁶³

This event is not localized, it is seen over the entire world (Rev 1:7). Note the word φαίνεται (shines) is used here and means to “become evident, to be brought forth into light, come to view, appear.”⁶⁴ This is exactly tied to the “sign” which was stated in Matthew 24:3. The sign is the Shechinah glory which will burst forth from darkness creating a brilliant light that will be seen in the sky. The glorious second

⁶² Thomas Ice, *Understanding the Olivet Discourse: A Futurist Interpretation of Matthew 24-25*, 138. Ice also quote H.A.W. Meyer who says that “we possess no historical record of any false Messiahs having appeared previous to the destruction of Jerusalem.”

⁶³ Vincent, Marvin R. DD. "Commentary on Matthew 24". "Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament".

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/vnt/matthew-24.html>.

⁶⁴ Thayer's Greek Lexicon, φαίνεται, <https://biblehub.com/greek/5316.htm>

coming of Christ. This is not some “mystical” coming in judgment as proposed by Preterists. Greek exegete H. Alford notes,

“The coming of the Lord in the end, even as that in the type was, shall be a plain unmistakable fact, understood of all; and like that also, sudden and all-pervading. But here again the full meaning of the words is only to be found in the final fulfilment of them. The lightning, lighting both ends of heaven at once, seen of all beneath it, can only find its full similitude in [166] IS Personal coming, Whom every eye shall see, Revelation 1:7.”⁶⁵

There is no sense in which the *parousia* of the Lord is *invisible* and furthering nailing the coffin in the door of the preteristic interpretation is Lange when he notes,

“The lightning has indeed a place where it appears first; but it is universal in its shining, visible from the eastern to the western horizon. So will Christ at His appearing manifest Himself by an unmistakeable brightness, irradiating the whole earth. It is not here, then, the mere suddenness that is meant, but rather the omnipresent, unmistakeable, and fearful visibility. The majestic glory of the lightning, and its effect in purifying the air, are here silent concomitants.”⁶⁶

The display of his glory, is “unmistakable.” It cannot be argued that this coming in judgment in A.D. 70 was the actual parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ. His coming is signalled by the glory of His coming, the true sign of his coming. Thayer also notes, that it is visible when he writes,

“In the N. T. especially of the advent, i.e. the future, visible, return from heaven of Jesus, the Messiah, to raise the dead, hold the last judgment, and set up formally and gloriously the kingdom of God: Matthew 24:3.”⁶⁷

The conjunction (*�αρ*) used in vs.27 brings us right back to the previous verses (vs.21-26) which demonstrates the linkage between the parousia (the visible coming of the Lord Jesus Christ) and the destruction of the future temple. Preterists are now stuck because they believe that the coming mentioned in vs. 29-31 is a symbolic reference to the Lord's coming in judgment. So now you have two separate comings, one that happens apart from A.D. 70, and one that happens at A.D. 70 in judgment, two verses later. Even J Marcellus Kik has acknowledged that the parousia of Christ refers to his personal second coming, yet he holds to a Preteristic interpretation of Matthew 24? How he doesn't see the contradiction with his own statement is beyond me because his *parousia* is spoken of several times in the passage.

“So far as we know, parousia, when used in connection with Christ, refers to his second personal coming.”⁶⁸

Kenneth Gentry, one of the leading Partial-Preterist's has admitted that he was in error on Matthew 24:27. He now believes that a “Second Advent intrusion appears in the near-term prophecy.”⁶⁹ Gentry continues,

⁶⁵ Alford, Henry. "Commentary on Matthew 24". Alford's Greek Testament Critical Exegetical Commentary. <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/hac/matthew-24.html>.

⁶⁶ Lange, Johann Peter. "Commentary on Matthew 24". "Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical". <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/lcc/matthew-24.html>.

⁶⁷ Thayer's Greek Lexicon, *παρουσία*. <https://biblehub.com/greek/3952.htm>

⁶⁸ J Marcellus Kik, *Eschatology of Victory*, (P & R Publishing, 1971), 124-125.

⁶⁹ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Coming as Lightning*, Nov. 14, 2014.

<https://postmillennialworldview.com/2014/11/14/coming-as-lightning/#more-5383>

“Though I previously held that Matt 24:27 spoke of his judgment-coming in AD 70, I have come to realize I was mistaken. Read carefully in its context, it refers to the Second Advent.”⁷⁰

As we look at vs.28, we will see the Lord’s coming and the eagle/vulture language is directly linked together with Rev. 12 & 19. Eagle language is found in both these chapters. One of them demonstrates that the eagle is protection for the woman in the wilderness, tying language of the fleeing in Rev. 12:14 & Matthew 24:16.

Matthew 24:26 LSB

26 Therefore, if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe them.

Revelation 12:14 LSB

14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

In the future, Israel will flee to the wilderness and be aided by the eagle. This allows the woman to be preserved. This is a symbol of preservation, not the banner of the Roman Empire, as Preterists teach.

Exodus 19:4 LSB

4 ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I lifted you up on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.

There is also parallel language used in Revelation 19 (as previously mentioned), commenting on the birds flying in midheaven (midair) waiting for the feast after the battle of Armageddon (see also Ezekiel 39:17:20).

Revelation 19:17-19 LSB

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of strong men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.” 19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war with Him who sits on the horse and with His army.

The parallels are impossible to miss⁷¹:

Matthew 24	Revelation 19
v.27 For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be	v.11, 14 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. [14] The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Thomas Ice states, “Revelation 19 clearly paints the picture of the birds coming to feast upon the corpuses [sic] of those who are about to be slaughtered by Christ at His return. This is a clear judgment use of this terminology.” Thomas Ice, *Understanding the Olivet Discourse: A Futurist Interpretation of Matthew 24-25*, 160.

v.28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.	v.17-18 And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair , “Come, gather together for the great supper of God , [18] so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small .”
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As we can see the Parousia is linked with the bloodshed which leaves the corpses all over the ground where the vultures (birds) gather. The second coming of Christ as depicted in Revelation 19 brings together the birds circling and the coming of the son of man. Jesus is describing the second coming, and not some coming in judgment in A.D. 70. This is further validated by 2 Thess. 2:8 “And then the lawless one will be revealed, *whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and annihilate by the majesty of His arrival.*” This man of lawlessness who has set himself up in the temple will be destroyed by Jesus at his second coming.

29-31 – But immediately after the tribulation of those days the SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND the STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. [30] And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. [31] And He will send forth His angels with a GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. (29. Εὐθέως δὲ μετὰ τὴν θλῖψιν τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκείνων ὁ ἥλιος σκοτισθήσεται καὶ, ἡ σελήνη οὐ δώσει τὸ φέγγος αὐτῆς, καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες πεσοῦνται ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν σαλευθήσονται. 30. καὶ τότε φανήσεται τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ νιοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ τότε κόψονται πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὄψονται τὸν νιὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς. 31. καὶ ἀποστελεῖ τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ μετὰ σάλπιγγος μεγάλης, καὶ ἐπισυνάξουσιν τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων ἀνέμων ἀπ’ ἄκρων οὐρανῶν ἔως [τῶν] ἄκρων αὐτῶν)

After giving such a negative admonition, Jesus provides for us a positive description of the hope of his coming. Εὐθέως (immediately) after the period of great tribulation (last 3½ years of the 70th Week) we see specific signs associated with the Second Coming of Christ. These signs are not associated with the temple destruction in A.D. 70. While it is true that cosmic language “can” refer to national entities collapsing, it certainly cannot here. The cosmic signs are tied to Rev. 6 which most commentators agree are interconnected.

Revelation 6:12-17 LSB

12 Then I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the

mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

The wrath of the Lamb, in Rev. 6:12-17 has nothing to do with a political collapse of a nation, or the destruction of a national entity. The terms in Rev. 6:15 denote a universal character of the events and do not at all, make this a localized event in A.D. 70.

I contend that Partial/Full Preterists must understand these as *figurative* because they do not fit the timescale of A.D. 70. As Thomas Ice rightly notes,

“The question must be raised: Did the sun literally not shine over the land of Egypt while at the same time shine in the land of Goshen during the ninth plague (Exodus 10:21-29)? Of course it did! Did the sun literally stand still for half a day in Joshua 10? You bet it did! Did the Lord cause the sun to go backward 10 degrees in the days of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 20)? It most surely did! Similarly, during the crucifixion of our Lord, did darkness really fall over the whole land of Israel about the sixth hour until the ninth hour (Luke 23:44- 45)? Sure it did! It was a pattern of the final darkness that will accompany the final judgment at the end of the world. “When He died, the sun refused to shine (Luke 23:45). When He comes again it will not shine (Matthew 24:29).” Why shouldn’t grandiose, supernatural phenomenon accompany the glorious return of our Lord? Only a naturalist mentality would say that a literal occurrence of Matthew 24:29 is impossible. After all, God said in Genesis 1:14 that one of His purposes for the sun, moon, and stars is to serve as “signs” in the heavens. It would be absurd to think that these references to the sun, moon, and stars are to be taken merely as symbols with no physical referent. Why should not the One who created the heaven and earth have the heavens reflect His global judgment upon a sinful world? Our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates His actual rule over all His creation upon His return to planet earth, including over the sun, moon, and stars. Delitzsch says, “when God is angry, the principle of anger is set in motion even in the natural world, and primarily in the stars that were created ‘for signs’ (compare Genesis 1:14 with Jeremiah 10:2).” There may be objections in the minds of men to such heavenly displays, but no such problem exists in Scripture.”⁷²

I.) SUN WILL BE DARKENED

II.) AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT,

III.) AND the STARS WILL FALL from the sky,

IV.) and the powers of the heavens will be shaken

I.) The sun being darkened - Clearly connects back to Isaiah 13:10 and the *Day of the Lord*. There is no issue here as seeing the sun darkened as a literal phenomenon. Clearly one’s view of the *Day of the Lord* will impact one’s perspective of these texts. Isaiah 13:10-13 clearly depicts a universal, worldwide event in the future as G.W. Grogan notes,

“Verse 13 seems to go even beyond v. 10 in depicting the effects of divine judgment on the natural universe. There is to be a general convulsion of the whole created order (cf. Isaiah 34:4). In this way the instability of the order of things since the Fall will be disclosed (as it is seen in so many of the signs of Christ’s coming in Mark 13), thus revealing the need for the eternally stable order of the kingdom of God that Christ’s coming will establish.”⁷³

⁷² Thomas Ice, *An Interpretation of Matthew 24-25, Part 23 - Matthew 24:29 Darkening of the Sun*.

https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/ice_thomas/Mat24-25/Mat24-25_Part23.cfm

⁷³ G.W. Grogan, *Isaiah, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 102.

As Robert B. Chisholm Jr., notes,

“Though this prophecy of Babylon’s fall was essentially fulfilled in 539 B.C., it does have an archetypal dimension that transcends that event. Babylon’s fall is just one event in the widespread judgment described in chapters 13-23. This judgment of the nations in turn foreshadows the culminating worldwide judgment depicted in chapters 24-27. Because the fall of the Babylonian Empire is associated with this final judgment (see 13:1-16; 14L26), it takes on typological potential that is developed in the Book of Revelation where John uses Babylon as an archetype of the hostile world powers that are destroyed by God (see Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2,10,21).”⁷⁴

As a Futurist, I believe these events have an eschatological perspective that simply cannot be ignored when seeing texts like Isaiah 13 in relation to Revelation. Brock Hollett is correct when he states,

“This preterist argument that the Old Testament prophecies about the day of the Lord pointed to national judgments in history simply begs the question. One reason for this is that the downfall of historical civilizations did not exhaustively fulfill the prophetic expectations regarding the day of the Lord. Rather, the prophets warned their immediate audience of coming judgment by employing language that was readily understood as pointing to the eschatological day of the Lord. Furthermore, only futurism accounts for the prophetic expectations of a multinational military invasion of the land of Israel that will occur prior to the day of the Lord (Ezek. 38:1-39:24; Joel 3:1-16; Zeph. 1:15-16; Zech. 14:1-5; 12-15; Rev. 16:12-16; cf. Isa. 13:4-6). Finally, the prophecies reveal that Judah and Jerusalem will be delivered while the nations who invade them will be destroyed on that day (Ezek. 38:21-23; 39:3- 20; Joel 3:1-16; Zech. 14:3, 11-19; cf. Isa. 13:14-16). The exact opposite scenario played itself out during the First Jewish-Roman War, that is, Judea and Jerusalem were destroyed while the invading armies, the Roman troops, were victorious in AD 70!”⁷⁵

II.) The moon will not give off light - Darkness is always present with the Day of the Lord, again there is no issue with understanding that the Moon will not give off light. The luminaries will not give off light, and it will be a dark day, literally. That is why the sign of the Son of Man’s coming will be so brilliant and noticeable to all (Rev. 1:7). The Son of Man in his glorious light will break forth through the darkness.

Isaiah 5:30 LSB

And it will growl over it in that day like the roaring of the sea. If one looks to the land, behold, there is darkness and distress; Even the light is darkened by its clouds.

Isaiah 24:23 LSB

Then the moon will be humiliated and the sun ashamed, For Yahweh of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, And His glory will be before His elders.

Isaiah 60:2 LSB

For behold, darkness will cover the earth And dense gloom the peoples; But Yahweh will rise upon you, And His glory will appear upon you.

Joel 2:1-2 LSB

Blow a trumpet in Zion, And make a loud shout on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of Yahweh is coming; Surely it is near, 2 A day of darkness and thick darkness, A day of clouds and dense gloom. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a numerous and mighty

⁷⁴ Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *Isaiah in Handbook on the Prophets* (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002), 53.

⁷⁵ Brock Hollett, *Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy*, Kindle, Location 1103.

people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it For the years from generation to generation.

Joel 2:31 LSB

The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of Yahweh comes.

Joel 3:15 LSB

The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars lose their brightness.

III & IV) The stars will fall from the sky and the heavens will be shaken - Again, typical of Day of the Lord language. There is no inconsistency seeing these as literally starts from the sky. These *stars* will likely be *meteorites*.

Isaiah 34:4 LSB

4 And all the host of heaven will rot away, And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; All their hosts will also wither away As a leaf withers from the vine, Or as one withers from the fig tree.

Brock Hollett again correctly notes,

“Revelation 6:13-14 also depicts the “stars” falling to the earth “as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale” and the sky vanishing “like a scroll that is being rolled up.” This is an allusion to Isaiah’s prophecy that “all the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree” (Isa. 34:4). However, John’s passage also appeals to the statement of the Lord Jesus that “the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Matt. 24:29). This motif is consistent with Luke’s unambiguous parallel account of literal cosmic and oceanic phenomena (“signs in the sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves” in Luke 21:25). This also strongly argues against any symbolic interpretation of the cosmic phenomena depicted in Jesus’ statement in Matthew 24:29.”⁷⁶

The events “sun will be darkened, moon not giving light, stars falling, and powers of heaven are shaken” are not events that have occurred in history, as these events are said to occur “immediately *after* the tribulation”, not during the tribulation. The best a Preterist could argue for is that after the tribulation of A.D. 70 these events occurred, yet we have no evidence after the great tribulation of something of these events occurring. James Coffman notes,

“These are the most difficult words in the whole discourse because they appear to link the second coming with the destruction of the Jewish state, yet we know that this was not the meaning. Christ’s reference to the prophecy through Daniel, a little earlier, indicates a long separation between the two events. Therefore, the words of this verse should be understood as a reference to the end of time and the final judgment, of which things the destruction of Jerusalem was only a type.”⁷⁷

In comparing the Olivet Discourse in Matthew and Luke we are able to quickly see the timing interval that separates the two events. The destruction of the temple, as previously mentioned appearing in Luke

⁷⁶ Ibid., Location 1022.

⁷⁷ Coffman, James Burton. “Commentary on Matthew 24”. “Coffman’s Commentaries on the Bible”.

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/bcc/matthew-24.html>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.

21:20-24a, is simply the first stage of these events (“before all these things”). Jerusalem will continue to be trampled until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Luke 21:24 LSB

and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The link between the period of hardening and the Jews repenting (Rom. 11:25-27; Mt. 23:39) helps us to understand the timing of these events. The times of the Gentiles were not fulfilled in A.D. 70. John Walvoord notes regarding the times of the Gentiles,

“When the two concepts, “the times of the Gentiles” and “the fullness of the Gentiles” are compared, it becomes evident that the times of the Gentiles is primarily a political term and has to do with the political overlordship of Jerusalem. By contrast, the term “the fullness of the Gentiles” refers to the present age in which Gentiles predominate in the church and far exceed Israel in present spiritual blessing. It becomes clear, therefore, that, while the two concepts may be contemporaneous at least for much of their fulfillment, the termini of the two periods are somewhat different. The times of the Gentiles will end only when Israel will permanently gain political control of Jerusalem at the second advent of Christ, whereas the fullness of the Gentiles will be completed when God’s present task of winning Jew and Gentile to Christ is completed.”⁷⁸

The times of the Gentiles are tied to Israel gaining political control of Jerusalem, which has not happened and will not happen until this period of judgment has concluded, and it will conclude with the Lord coming and reinstating Jerusalem to its rightful place again. Walvoord continues,

“With this as a background, the question now can fairly be faced. Is the present occupation of Jerusalem by Israel the terminus ad quem indicated in Luke 21:24? Has, as a matter of fact, the predicted sway of Gentiles over Israel ceased? A careful survey of the Scriptures indicates that the present occupation of Jerusalem must necessarily be temporary. Gentiles are still in a dominant position in world politics and the fullness of the Gentiles has not yet been brought in. The rapture of the church has not taken place.

According to the premillennial interpretation of the end of the age, there is a period still ahead, anticipated in Daniel 9:27, in which a future ruler in the Mediterranean area will make a covenant with the people of Israel for seven years. If this futuristic interpretation is correct, Israel, in the nature of this covenant, will still be under Gentile supervision in the broad sense of the term. As commonly interpreted, the period of peace introduced by the covenant will terminate after it has run half its course and the period of great tribulation will follow. According to the predictions of Christ Himself, Israel will then be forced to flee to the mountains (Matt 24:16) and Jerusalem will again come under the tramp of Gentile feet. It is also clear from Zechariah 14 that Jerusalem will become the bone of contention and the source of a great battle just before the second coming of Christ.”⁷⁹

In vs.30 the *sign* of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. Much disagreement exists as to what this sign is. I believe the most logical conclusion as I have previously stated is that this “sign” is the “Shechinah” glory. The glory of the Lord bursting forth and separating the darkness from the light will be the sign that he has come. Scripture repeatedly ties the glory of the Lord and His coming together,

Isaiah 60:1-2 LSB

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, And the glory of Yahweh has risen upon you. 2 For behold,

⁷⁸ John Walvoord, *The Times of the Gentiles*, Jan 1, 2008. <https://bible.org/article/times-gentiles>

⁷⁹ Ibid.

darkness will cover the earth And dense gloom the peoples; **But Yahweh will rise upon you, And His glory will appear upon you.**

Ezekiel 43:2 LSB

and behold, **the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east.** And His voice was like the sound of many waters; **and the earth shone with His glory.**

Matthew 16:27 LSB

For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay each one according to his deeds.

Titus 2:13 LSB

looking for the blessed hope and the **appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,**

Thomas Ice agrees when he states,

“...I believe that “the sign” will likely be some form of the Shekinah Glory that has been manifested throughout history. After all, it was the sign of Christ’s first coming—the Shekinah Glory—that flashed upon a darkened sky announcing His birth to the shepherds. It was the Shekinah Glory start that led the wise men from the East. So it is that His sign, the sign of the Son of Man will once again be His trademark, the Shekinah Glory cloud.”⁸⁰

Upon seeing such great a sign, the tribes of the earth (Judean Jews) will mourn.

Zechariah 12:10-12 LSB

“And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. 11 In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12 And the land will mourn, each family alone; the family of the house of David alone and their wives alone; the family of the house of Nathan alone and their wives alone.

Did such an event occur in A.D. 70? No, not at all, because this is second coming language as Brock Hollett notes,

“Another objection to the preterist view of Zechariah 12:10 is that the overwhelming majority of Judean Jews did not receive “a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy” at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. While the context includes a military invasion of the land (vv. 2-6, 11), it also contains the promise that God will “give salvation to the tents of Judah” (v. 7), “protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (v. 8), and “destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (v. 9; cf. vv. 3-9). These prophetic events did not occur at Jerusalem’s destruction in AD 70, despite preterists’ desperate attempts to allegorize the Scriptures to suggest otherwise. The weeping and “pleas of mercy” in Zechariah 12:10, and hence Matthew 24:30, should be understood as the humble pleading of national repentance in the presence of the Lord “whom they have pierced”—the glorified Jesus. This exact vocabulary is found in Jeremiah’s passage about God’s new covenant promise to regather the people of Israel back to their homeland; he states, “with weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back” (Jer. 31:9, emphasis added; cf. Jer. 50:4).”⁸¹

⁸⁰ Thomas Ice, *Understanding the Olivet Discourse: A Futurist Interpretation of Matthew 24-25*, 205.

⁸¹ Brock Hollett, *Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy*, Kindle, Location 1400.

When the trumpet or shofar is blown, we are about to commence an eschatological war, with the return of the Lamb of God. The problem with the Preteristic position is that it doesn't account for any of the details. The fact that an eschatological war breaks out with the return of the Lord, as seen in Revelation 19, is absent from their exegesis of the passage. The judgment of Jerusalem is key for the Preterist, but when evaluated against the backdrop of the return of the Lord in Revelation 19 to crush the Beasts and to setup his Kingdom on earth, it follows then that the Lord had to have returned "immediately after the tribulation" in A.D. 70. Craig Evans notes,

"Matthew's account continues, "He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call" (v. 31). Trumpets were expected to sound forth when the men of Qumran prepared to engage the enemy in the final eschatological war. The primary reference here, however, is to the shofar (the traditional Jewish horn) that will sound in the end time, when God's people will be regathered. The primary passage from the Old Testament is Isa 27:13: "And on that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem."⁸²

In vs.31 King Jesus will send forth his angels (ἄγγελος). Who are the ἄγγελος? Are these human messengers sent to share the Gospels? Or are these Divine beings? Thayer states,

"2. In the Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and of the New Testament, one of that host of heavenly spirits that, according alike to Jewish and Christian opinion, wait upon the monarch of the universe, and are sent by him to earth, now to execute his purposes (Matthew 4:6, 11; Matthew 28:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 16:22; Luke 22:43 (L brackets WH reject the passage); Acts 7:35; ; Galatians 3:19, cf. Hebrews 1:14), now to make them known to men (Luke 1:11, 26; Luke 2:9ff; Acts 10:3; Acts 27:23; Matthew 1:20; Matthew 2:13; Matthew 28:5; John 20:12f); hence, the frequent expressions ἄγγελος (angel, messenger of God, ἄγγελος) and ἄγγελοι κυρίου or ἄγγελοι τοῦ Θεοῦ. They are subject not only to God but also to Christ (Hebrews 1:4ff; 1 Peter 3:22, cf. Ephesians 1:21; Galatians 4:14), who is described as hereafter to return to judgment surrounded by a multitude of them as servants and attendants: Matthew 13:41, 49; Matthew 16:27; Matthew 24:31; Matthew 25:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7, cf. Jude 1:14. Single angels have the charge of separate elements; as fire, Revelation 14:18; waters, Revelation 16:5, cf. Revelation 7:1; John 5:4 (R L). Respecting the ἄγγελος τῆς ἀβύσσου, Revelation 9:11, see Ἀβαδδόν"⁸³

Thayer's Greek Lexicon helps us to identify that they are *angelic beings* and *not* general messengers (contrary to the preteristic interpretation). Walter Bauer's "A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature" states that these are "Angels at the Parousia" under the heading of "angels as messengers of God."⁸⁴

What is the purpose then of the ἄγγελος? To gather the (εκλεκτός) Israel, as it was predicted in Isaiah 11:11-12, 27:13. It has been wrongly assumed in the debate regarding the rapture to assume that Matthew 24:31 is talking about Paul's rapture of the church (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor 15:50-52). The text, as we've mentioned before is heavily weighted with Jewish language and customs. The Gospel of Matthew is also regarded as heavily Jewish. The 'elect' must be understood here as the elect Jews that are gathered by the Messiah. Stanley Toussaint notes,

⁸² Craig A. Evans, *Matthew* in the *New Cambridge Bible Commentary*, (Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 2012), 411.

⁸³ Thayer's Expanded Definition, ἄγγελος, <https://www.studylight.org/lexicons/eng/greek/32.html>

⁸⁴ Walter Bauer's, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (BAGD), (2nd Edition, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1958), 7.

“Many expositors take this to be a reference not to Israel but to the gathering of the church. For several important reasons it is evident that the faithful of Israel are in view. First if all, the word “elect” (εκλεκτός) is used in the OT of Israel (1 Chronicles 16:13; Psalm 105:6, 43; 106:5; Isaiah 41:8, 43:20; 45:4). It was not only used of Israel as a nation but also of the faithful ones in that nation (Isaiah 65:9, 15, 22). It is in the latter sense that Christ uses it here.”⁸⁵

Renald Showers correctly notes,

“The elect are the faithful, believing Israelite remnant in contrast with the unbelieving sinners within the nation. In Isaiah 65:7-16 God drew a contrast between these two groups and their destinies. In Isaiah 65:9 He called the believing remnant “mine Elect,” and in Isaiah 65:17-25 He indicated that in the future Millennium His elect remnant of the nation will be blessed greatly on the earth. The elect are the faithful, believing Israelite remnant in contrast with the unbelieving sinners within the nation. In Isaiah 65:7-16 God drew a contrast between these two groups and their destinies. In Isaiah 65:9 He called the believing remnant “mine Elect,” and in Isaiah 65:17-25 He indicated that in the future Millennium His elect remnant of the nation will be blessed greatly on the earth.”⁸⁶

We know that the *believing* Israelites will be gathered as this is predicted numerous times in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 30:3-4 LSB

then Yahweh your God will return you from captivity and return His compassion on you, and He will gather you again from all the peoples where Yahweh your God has scattered you. 4 If those of you who are banished are at the ends of the sky, from there Yahweh your God will gather you, and from there He will take you back.

Jeremiah 16:14-15 LSB

“Therefore behold, days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ 15 but, ‘As Yahweh lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had banished them.’ For I will return them to their own land which I gave to their fathers.

Isaiah 11:11-12 LSB

Then it will be in that day, that the Lord Will again acquire the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Ethiopia, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the coastlands of the sea. 12 And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the scattered of Judah From the four corners of the earth.

Isaiah 27:12-13 LSB

And it will be in that day, that Yahweh will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the River to the brook of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel. 13 And it will be in that day, that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were banished in the land of Egypt will come and worship Yahweh in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

Michael G. Vanlaningham notes regarding the gathering of the elect,

“The phrase [in Matt 24:31] will gather (episynago) is used in the LXX in Ps 105:47 (English translations 106:47) and 146:2 (English translations 147:2) for the regathering of the Jewish people to the Holy Land following God rescuing them (also the point of the sounding of the trumpet in Is 27:13, cited by Matthew in

⁸⁵ Stanley Toussaint, *The Kingdom and Matthew's Gospel*, 277.

⁸⁶ Renald Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord, Come!* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel, 1995), 182.

v. 31). In the OT, this regathering was not a “rapture” in which God’s people would receive their resurrected, glorified bodies, but appears to be an event experienced in natural bodies in which God gathers them into the millennial kingdom.”⁸⁷

There is nothing about Gentiles in this passage, to impose the Gentiles into the text is to make a categorical error. The passage is clearly Jewish as this presentation has demonstrated.

We also know that the *Church cannot be in view* in view because the Church does not go through this period of testing (cf. Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:9-10, 5:9-10; Rev. 3:10), which was decreed for Daniel’s people Israel (Daniel 9:24). Jesus will come with his glorified saints (Zec. 14:5, 1 Thess. 3:13, Rev. 19:14) and his angels, and will gather the remnant Jews after the 7-year tribulation. R.T. France summarizes,

“Apart from the opening declaration in v. 36 it is almost entirely independent of Mark. Matthew, following the same anthological principle as in the other discourses, has collected here a range of material, some of which has parallels in Luke’s eschatological sections in Luke 17:26-35 and 12:39-46, which speaks not now of striking events within history, but of the future and final visitation of the Son of Man, and of the fate of those who are and are not ready for his appearance.”⁸⁸

Sam Waldron correctly summarizes the problems with the preteristic interpretation of the text when he states,

“The preterist view has a similar problem with what appears to be a clear reference to the coming of Christ in glory in vv. 29-31. While the preterist view explains this language in terms of similar figurative language used for historical judgments in the Old Testament, it entangles itself in a number of difficulties in doing so. First, if such language as we have in the Olivet Discourse can be explained so as not to require a Second Coming of the Christ in glory, it seems hard to find any language in the New Testament which would not be capable of such explanation. Hence, the preterist interpretation endangers the orthodox doctrine of the Second Coming and is in danger of exegetically justifying its evil twin, Hyper-Preterism. Second, the reference to the end of the age in Matthew 24 clearly refers in a parallel passage to something more than the end of the Jewish dispensation. When the disciples ask about the coming of the end of the age in verse 3, this question sets the agenda for Jesus’ response to their questions in the rest of the passage. The language they use is precisely the same which Jesus used in Matthew 13:39, 40, 49 and 28:20. When he speaks in parallel language of “the end” in verses 6, 13, 14, he is responding to their question about the consummation of the age. The problem with the preterist interpretation is that Jesus’ comments about the end or consummation of this age cannot be adequately explained short of wholesale Hyper-Preterism. Once again the preterist interpretation leads directly to Hyper-Preterism (Luke 20:34-36). Finally, it appears to me that there is a direct refutation of the preterist view in Luke 21. In Luke 21:24-27 there is a description of the destruction of Jerusalem and the events which follow it including the exile of the Jews into all the nations and the times of the Gentiles. Only after these events does Christ return. This cannot be a coming of Christ in AD 70 at the destruction of Jerusalem.”⁸⁹

There can be no confusion over what was intended here in Matthew 24:4-31. There is a period of tribulation (birth pangs/pains) that will last 3.5 years up until the Abomination of Desolation in vs.15,

⁸⁷ Michael G. Vanlaningham, *Matthew*, in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 1501.

⁸⁸ R.T. France, *Matthew in The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (NICNT), (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan (2007)), 820.

⁸⁹ Sam Waldron, *The Meaning of Matthew 24*, Part 1, (Mar 4, 2013), <https://cbtseminary.org/meaning-of-matthew-24-1/>

which is the climax of the first period. After the Abomination of Desolation occurs then appears what is known as the *great tribulation*, a period of heightened tribulation, which culminates in the Lord's second coming and the rescue of Israel.

32-34 – Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; [33] so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. [34] Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. (32. Ἄπο δὲ τῆς συκῆς μάθετε τὴν παραβολήν· ὅταν ἥδη ὁ κλάδος αὐτῆς γένηται ἀπαλὸς καὶ τὰ φύλλα ἐκφύῃ, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγὺς τὸ θέρος· 33. οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ὅταν ἴδητε πάντα ταῦτα, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγύς ἐστιν ἐπὶ θύραις. 34. ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη ἔως [ἄν] πάντα ταῦτα γένηται)

Jesus tells his audience to “learn” the parable from the fig tree. One must understand the relation of the fig tree to the pronouncement of judgment as seen in chapter 24. The consistent usage of the fig tree representing Israel is present throughout the totality of scripture (c.f. Hosea 9:10, Jeremiah 24:2). There is no doubt here that the focus is upon Israel, as 3 chapters earlier the Lord pronounces judgment on the fig tree for being barren:

Matthew 21:19 LSB

And seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, “No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you.” And at once the fig tree withered.

Notice that the lone fig tree, which was cursed by the Lord Jesus, had “nothing on it except leaves only”. This marks the fact that the tree was unfruitful. It is a symbol of the state of Israel before the Lord. Israel had leaves but didn’t have fruit. They were spiritually barren. From their profession as seen throughout the book of Matthew one would expect to find fruit, but rather there is no fruit. Jesus curses the fig tree because it was deceptive in nature. All that it produced was the appearance that fruit would come, yet there was none. Jesus curses Israel due to its hypocrisy. this hypocrisy is spelled out toward the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23.

The imagery of the barren fig-tree is also found in Luke 13:6-9,

Luke 13:6-9 LSB

And He was telling this parable: “A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and did not find any. 7 And he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Behold, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’ 8 And he answered and said to him, ‘Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in manure, 9 and if it bears fruit next year, fine, but if not, cut it down.’

Here the Son of Man comes looking for three years to find fruit on this fig tree (Israel) and yet he sees none. The decision is to cut it down because it is barren. The same analogy is used of the Olive Tree in Romans 11. It is Israel that is cut-off for its unfruitfulness, no longer to partake in the covenantal blessings and promises that were given to them as a people (cf. Romans 9:1-5). Luke 3:7-9 tells us the importance of the decision to cut down the fig tree, but not to completely destroy it. This is why Israel remains at the center of prophecy. Israel was cut down but not completely removed. In connection with Matthew 24:32 it is clear that a new tree will spring from the root, one that will bring forth leaves AND fruit. Matthew 23:39 makes this emphatically clear. The sign to the people is the production of a new tree

with leaves, not the casting down of the old tree. This sign emphatically links itself to knowing that Christ's return is not far away. There will be a revival in Israel, and then she will bring forth fruit and their will be a national repentance (Romans 11:25-26).

Some will argue that the fig tree doesn't represent Israel based upon the parallel passage in Luke where other trees are mentioned alongside the fig tree.

Luke 21:29 LSB

Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees;

The reason that the fig tree is mentioned along with "all the trees" is simply to denote that the other trees function in the same way that the fig tree does. Luke doesn't intend to remove the centrality of the parable away from Israel onto the other trees, but rather simply to add a note that the other trees function similarly. The centrality of the parable remains locked in on Israel, which *is* the fig tree. Luke tells us that "all trees" take on the same characteristics of the fig tree, that as you see it putting forth its leaves that it is spring, and that summer is drawing near. When they see the signs – leaves – then they are to know that – fruit – is right around the corner, and so is harvest. A.T. Robertson notes,

"The fig tree, and all the trees ($\tauὴν συκὴν καὶ πάντα τὰ δένδρα$ — $tēn sukēn kai panta ta dendra$). This parable of the fig-tree (Mark 13:28-32; Matthew 24:32-35) Luke applies to "all the trees." It is true about all of them, but the fig tree was very common in Palestine."⁹⁰

In agreement, W. Robertson Nicoll states,

"Luke 21:29. $καὶ πάντα τὰ δένδρα$: added by Lk., generalising as in Luke 9:23: "take up his cross daily". — The lesson is taught by all the trees, but parabolic style demands special reference to one particular tree. — $προβάλωσιν$, put forth (their leaves, $τὰ φύλλα$ understood). Similar phrases in Greek authors. — $βλέποντες$, etc., when ye look (as who does not when spring returns!) ye know of yourselves, need no one to tell you."⁹¹

To summarize the parable:

1. The fig tree represents Israel throughout the scriptures and should be understood this way in Matthew 24.
2. The fig tree was found to be barren.
3. The fig tree was cursed by the Lord Jesus.
4. The fig tree was to be cut down, but not destroyed.
5. The fig tree will, in the future, bring forth leaves and fruit.
6. This (the leaves) will be the sign that the spring is upon them, and (fruit) will come in the summer, and such they would know that the Lord is drawing near and will return in the summer.

Let's now move on to one of the most debated terms in the Olivet Discourse. How are we to understand the term "this generation". Scholars often disagree on its usage, however, there does seem to be a clear understanding of how Jesus intended us to understand the phrase.

⁹⁰ Robertson, A.T. "Commentary on Luke 21". "Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament". <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/rwp/luke-21.html>. Broadman Press 1932,33. Renewal 1960.

⁹¹ Nicoll, William Robertson, M.A., L.L.D. "Commentary on Luke 21". The Expositor's Greek Testament. <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/egt/luke-21.html>. 1897-1910.

Preterists have long boasted that Matthew 24:34 is the *key* to unlocking the timing of the events in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21). They claim that the events of the Matthean discourse can be seen through the lens of (vs.34) and therefore utilize this text as the backdrop to their interpretation. Here is what leading partial-preterist Gary DeMar says:

“This generation” in Matthew 24:34 and the parallel passages in Mark 13 and Luke 21 refers to the generation of Jesus’ day. Following this biblical evidence, most Bible commentators have interpreted “this generation” in this way, understanding that all the signs in the Olivet Discourse referred to events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem that took place in AD 70. This interpretation is neither new nor unusual. Bible expositors throughout church history have held this same view.”⁹²

DeMar and other preterists have placed an incredible amount of weight on a singular phrase (this generation) and depend heavily on their understanding that “this generation” refers exclusively to the contemporaries of Jesus’ day. As a futurist, I have problems with this assertion. If it can be demonstrated that the preteristic assertion regarding “this generation” is correct, then it can be concluded that the events that surround the discourse and much of Revelation 6-19 could be argued for a first century fulfillment, and that is exactly what the preteristic interpretation is arguing for. However, in placing so much weight on a singular phrase, there is much that can be argued against the preteristic position. DeMar in another article states,

“There may be unbelief in the future among other generations, but Jesus clearly identifies the people of His day as being part of a present “perverted generation.”⁹³

In making this concession DeMar has allowed for the possibility that genea could speak to a future perverted generation. With that, an obvious question must be asked, could it not also speak to a generation that existed prior the contemporaries of Jesus? This question will be answered in more detail below.

I am convinced that the preteristic interpretation lacks consistency with the overall message of the scriptures and the backdrop of the genea in the Old Testament. From my perspective preterists have depended far too much on their assertion that “this generation” is exclusive to the contemporaries of Jesus. To prove this point, I want to show how Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. (partial preterist) relies heavily on Matthew 24:34 to make his case throughout his blogs.

Here are some examples:

“Did Christ come on the clouds in AD 70? This language certainly could be used of the second advent. But once again, just three verses later Jesus states very clearly and forcefully: “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (Matt 24:34). Thus, we must recognize this as referring to the AD 70 event.”⁹⁴

“Another confusing feature of Christ’s prophecy is found in Matthew 24:31: “And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” Is this speaking of the rapture? Did it occur in AD 70? Whatever this verse means, we

⁹² Taken from American Vision: <https://americanvision.org/posts/this-generation-and-brood-of-vipers/>, Dated: Dec 17, 2021.

⁹³ Taken from American Vision: <https://americanvision.org/7618/exegetical-this-generation-matthew-24/>, Dated: April 3, 2013.

⁹⁴ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Postmillennialism & The Great Tribulation (Part 7)* PMW 2020-053., <https://postmillennialworldview.com/2020/07/07/postmillennialism-the-great-tribulation-7/>

must recall once again that Jesus affirms only three verses later that “all these things” will take place in “this generation” (Matt 24:34).⁹⁵

“First, Matthew 24:34 states that “all these things” shall occur in “this generation.” We must notice that verse 34 appears just thirteen verses after verse 21. Therefore, “the great tribulation” must be one of “these things” to occur in “this generation.”⁹⁶

“Thus, a quick survey of the biblical and the historical records show that many of the prophecies in Matthew 24 come to pass in the first century. This fits perfectly with the time-frame of Matthew 24:34 where our Lord asserts: “this generation shall not pass until all these things take place.” Therefore, we see that postmillennialism is not negatively impacted by the great tribulation passage — thus far.”⁹⁷

“Thus, in Matthew 24:34, Jesus warns: “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” The ones to whom he is speaking (his first-century disciples, Matt 24:1–2) will recognize the judgments in the Lord’s great tribulation proclamation. This is a very clear and dogmatic statement. We must note that he states here that this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. That includes the great tribulation mentioned in Matthew 24:21. Matthew 24:34 employs virtually identical language to the Matthew 23:36 statement regarding the soon-coming persecution of Christians: “Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation.”⁹⁸

A blatantly clear trend begins to arise when reading preteristic material. Matthew 24:34 becomes the lens for their interpretation of the Olivet Discourse. No matter the challenges faced in the text, the preterist can rest assured that everything must have been fulfilled within the period of the 1st century, simply because they have assumed that this generation refers to the contemporaries of Jesus. However, is that really the case? Or are the preterists just reading everything through a singular text and assuming without warrant that it must fit the first century?

Now, let me be fair, Preterism (in both its forms) do not exclusively use this argument to defend their position, that is to say that this isn’t their only argument. I have read enough from the preteristic side to know that they can build other arguments (i.e. time texts, Neronic dating, the beast, the seven kings, and Nero, etc.) from the Scriptures to defend their position. However, I believe that none of these arguments (except for maybe the Neronic dating) is as heavily weighted as Matthew 24:34. In almost every conversation that I have had on this subject, Matthew 24:34 is the first place that the preterist starts. I genuinely believe that they think this is the strongest argument they have, not that it is the only argument they have. So, with that said, I want to start by addressing this pillar of Preterism, because I believe when you bring forward a charge against their interpretation of Matthew 24:34 the preteristic position starts to waiver.

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that the preterist has wrongly understood who the generation is that Jesus is focused on throughout the Gospels and have wrongly limited “this generation” to a singular group of people (i.e. the contemporaries of Jesus). I hope to demonstrate the qualitative nature of genea and that it is rooted in the themes of the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3), the flood narrative (Gen. 7),

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Postmillennialism & The Great Tribulation (Part 6)* PMW 2020-052., <https://postmillennialworldview.com/2020/07/03/postmillennialism-the-great-tribulation-6/>

⁹⁷ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Postmillennialism & The Great Tribulation (Part 4)* PMW 2020-050., <https://postmillennialworldview.com/2020/06/26/postmillennialism-the-great-tribulation-4/>

⁹⁸ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Postmillennialism & The Great Tribulation (Part 2)* PMW 2020-048., <https://postmillennialworldview.com/2020/06/19/postmillennialism-the-great-tribulation-2/>

the Song of Moses (Deut. 32), and refers to a trans-historical class of people used in the pejorative in almost all pertinent cases in the New Testament. I also hope to demonstrate that this trans-historical people includes (past generations) tied to Cain, through to the contemporaries of Jesus, and will extend down until the return of Christ. My view of genea is not limited to a singular group identified in the New Testament, my view extends and encompasses what I believe is more of the biblical data.

If my thesis is correct, it would completely undercut the preteristic interpretation and would provide a sufficient alternative that is consistent with the preteristic concerns regarding the immediate audience, but would also include the past and future generations that were intended to be in view and have been neglected by the preterist.

“Generation” – A General Overview

How are we to understand the term “this generation”. Scholars often disagree on its usage, however, there does seem to be a clear understanding of how Jesus intended us to understand the word.

The word “generation” means “origin, lineage, birth” as seen in Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament words. The Greek word “generation” (genea) is used most often in the New Testament in a qualitative (type), not quantitative (time) sense to describe a type of people. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon states that genea has at least four definitions (1. a begetting, birth, nativity: 2. passively, that which has been begotten, men of the same stock, a family; 3. the whole multitude of men living at the same time: 4. an age).⁹⁹ Thayer leverages the third definition (the whole multitude of men living at the same time) for Matthew 24:34, and states that it is **“used especially of the Jewish race living at one and the same period.”**¹⁰⁰ However, he doesn’t add Matthew 24:34 into the section of verses tied to Jewish race living at one and the same period. He adds the following verses into that section, but Matthew 24:34 isn’t one of them: Matthew 11:16; Matthew 12:39, 41f, 45; Matthew 16:4; Matthew 23:36; Mark 8:12, 38; Luke 11:29f, 32, 50; Luke 17:25; Acts 13:36; Hebrews 3:10.¹⁰¹ To me that is quite interesting! Why would it not be included in this section, or repeated? Perhaps because it was meant to function outside of the realm of a limited perspective of a singular Jewish race living at one and the same period. Thayer does group together 3 texts (Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 1:48) which leads me to believe they are joined together and have the same general meaning of a whole multitude of men living at the same time. If that is the case, the general understanding of *πᾶσαι αἱ γενεαῖ* must be speaking of the contemporaries of Jesus. So, whatever, position we take from here, there must be some relevance of “this generation” tied to the original audience that Jesus spoke to, a point I am sure my preterists friend would be happy to hear. However, it isn’t limited by time to only a singular quantitative generation (which is where I believe the preterist errs).

There are 37 mentions of “generation” in the New Testament and there appears to be three clear usages of the word:

(Generation – Successive Lineage) – 8 Total Usages

This refers to lineages that follow one after another. Here are some examples:

⁹⁹ Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, *γενεά*: <https://biblehub.com/greek/1074.htm>

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Matthew 1:17 LSB

Therefore all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen ***generations***; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen ***generations***; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ, fourteen ***generations***.

Acts 14:16 LSB

In the ***generations*** gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;

Ephesians 3:5 LSB

which in other ***generations*** was not made known to the sons of men, as it was now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit:

Colossians 1:26 LSB

that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and ***generations***, but has now been manifested to His saints,

(Generation – Restrictive Lineage) – 2 Total Usages

This refers to generations that are restricted to someone's lifetime. Here are some examples:

Acts 8:33 LSB

In humiliation His judgment was taken away; Who will recount His ***generation***? For His life is removed from the earth."

Acts 13:36 LSB

For David, after he had served the purpose of God in ***his own generation***, fell asleep and was laid among his fathers and saw corruption

(Generation – Pejorative) – 27 Total Usages

This refers to generations that have a negative qualifier associated to them. It functions as a qualitative statement about a type of people. In the biblical case it relates to the spiritual condition of the people. Here are some examples:

Matthew 11:16 LSB

"But to what shall I compare ***this generation***? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces, who call out to the other children.

Matthew 12:39-45 LSB

39 But He answered and said to them, "***An evil and adulterous generation*** eagerly seeks for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; 40 for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will stand up with ***this generation*** at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. 42 The Queen of the South will rise up with ***this generation*** at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. 43 "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with ***this evil generation***."

Matthew 17:17 LSB

And Jesus answered and said, “O you ***unbelieving and perverse generation***, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.”

Matthew 23:36 LSB

Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon ***this generation***.

Mark 8:12 LSB

And sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, “Why does ***this generation*** seek a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to ***this generation***.”

Luke 11:29-32, 50-51 LSB

Now as the crowds were increasing, He began to say, “***This generation is a wicked generation***; it seeks a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah. 30 For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to ***this generation***. 31 The Queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of ***this generation*** and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And behold, something greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with ***this generation*** and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And behold, something greater than Jonah is here. 50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against ***this generation***, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against ***this generation***.’

Luke 17:25 LSB

But first He must suffer many things and be ***rejected by this generation***.

Philippians 2:15 LSB

so that you will be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a ***crooked and perverse generation***, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

Having established some cases for the wording of this generation we can confidently exclude options 1-2 from being viable for Matthew 24:34, because the entire tone of the section is geared toward the culmination of the previous usage of genea throughout the gospels. Jesus must be continuing his condemnation from Matthew 23:36 forward into the Olivet Discourse. Jesus must be speaking of the same wicked and evil generation that He was prior.

Before moving backwards toward the Old Testament, we must consider a few important facts about how we interpret Jesus’ words:

- Jesus often uses and depends upon Mosaic language.
- Jesus often draws from Old Testament themes.
- Jesus often connects themes to people.

With a few of these considerations in mind, I want us to work through what I believe is the bridge into the Old Testament, and it comes just prior to the discourse, it also includes the terms (this generation).

The Missing Piece – Matthew 23:34-36

After exposing the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees there is a small section where I believe Jesus bridges the gap between the Old and New Testaments. This text will allow us to see that Jesus is drawing

out a theme from the Old Testament, specifically rooted from the beginning of the fall and applying it to His direct audience. The text is Matthew 23:34-36:

“Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will flog in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, 35 so that upon you will fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

In a text filled with important details we have one piece of information that stands out. In (vs.35), the second person plural “you” is used of the scribes and Pharisees as being the agents that murdered Abel down to Zechariah:

35 so that upon you will fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Take a step back for a moment. Is Jesus accusing the scribes and Pharisees of His day for the bloodshed of Abel down to Zechariah? How could it be possible that the guilt of righteous bloodshed on earth be accounted to this tiny group of religious leaders at the time of Jesus? How can Jesus (using the second person plural “you”) be saying that they murdered Zechariah? They weren’t even around to have committed these murders. How then could the guilt for these murders be tied to them? I believe the answer to these questions will become clearer as we proceed forward.

More important to this is why start all the way back at Abel? Why include Abel in this list? The religious zealots of Jesus’ day didn’t kill Abel, so why did Jesus mention Abel? There must be some reason to tie this group together (Abel → Zechariah). We know that there are themes that tie together Abel → Zechariah (they are righteous vs.35). Clearly, those that are killing (vs.34), crucifying (vs. 34), flogging (vs.34), persecuting (vs.34) are those that stand in opposition to those that are righteous. So, we have two groups here (righteous and unrighteous). The bloodshed of the righteous fall on the hands of the unrighteous. Well, we know that the sins of our fathers cannot fall on us, as per the Old Testament:

Deuteronomy 24:16 LSB

“Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; each shall be put to death for his own sin.

Ezekiel 18:19-20 LSB

“Yet you say, ‘Why should the son not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity?’ But the son has done justice and righteousness and has kept all My statutes and done them. He shall surely live. 20 The soul who sins will die. The son will not bear the iniquity of the father, nor will the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.

Unless we figure out what connection there is between those tied to Cain and those that are standing before Jesus, we will completely miss the point. Neil Nelson states:

“Matthew’s Jesus was speaking about evil, faithless contemporaries in his use of *hē genea haute* in 11:16; 12:39, 41, 45; 16:4; cf. 17:17. But the contemporaries of Christ did not murder Zechariah son of Berechiah (23:35-36), and thus “this generation” in 23:36 extends beyond Jesus’ contemporaries to include murderers

back to the time of Abel and forward to those who would kill and crucify and persecute disciples until Jesus returns (23:34-39)."¹⁰²

So, there must be some sort of connective element. The theme that I believe Jesus is drawing out for us the theme of good and evil (righteous and unrighteous) and this was a theme that was brought out in Genesis at the fall of man (Gen. 3). We must start there if we are to understand the relationship with the point Jesus is making here.

Genesis 3:15

In order to understand why Jesus starts with Abel, it is important for us to go back to Abel and Cain and where they originate from. Cain and Abel are offspring of Adam and Eve. The Lord said in Genesis 3:15 that there would 2 groups of enemies (the woman's offspring and the serpent's offspring). These 2 groups would battle each other and would be enemies.

Genesis 3:15 LSB

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.

Philip La Grange Du Toit correctly ties Genesis 3:15 to Matthew 23:35 when he states,

"Yet the accusation is also directed against the people listening to him personally, for they are of the same kind or of the same spiritual, evil generation of vipers as the fathers who killed the prophets. In addition, being the first enmity following the pronouncement of the enmity between the two 'seeds' in Genesis 3:15 (see Gn 4), the reference to the murder of Abel (Mt 23:35) specifically links the murderous behaviour of this generation of vipers that Jesus is addressing to the enmity between the two 'seeds' as portrayed by Genesis 3:15. Lastly, the content of the seven woes also points to the notion that it is not a physical or natural generation that Jesus has in mind, but a spiritual generation (Rieske 2008:212, 214, 217, 225) in that they are characterised by a certain conduct."¹⁰³

Abel must be tied to the woman (because he is the righteous offspring). We know that from the woman the Lord Jesus would come (the singular offspring and the corporate representative). Abel, as one that was righteous would fall under the woman's offspring. Cain on the other hand was clearly wicked and evil and was tied to the serpent. John confirms this in his epistle:

1 John 3:12 LSB

not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

John tells us that Cain was "of" [ἐκ] the "evil one" [πονηροῦ]. Thayer tells us that πονηροῦ is used to speak of the devil.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, we see the tie between Cain and the devil. It was Cain who was the unrighteous one, who had evil deeds. Cain is the offspring spoken of in Genesis 3:15 that would clash against the seed of the woman (Abel). Jesus, in pointing back to Cain has a clear point He is making. He wants his audience to know that He is tying them (scribes and Pharisees) back to Cain the first murderer

¹⁰² Neil D. Nelson, Jr. "This Generation" in Matt 24:34: A Literary Critical Perspective, JETS 38/3 (September 1996), 381, f.n. 37.

¹⁰³ Du Toit, P. La G., 2018, "This generation" in Matthew 24:34 as a timeless, spiritual generation akin to Genesis 3:15', Verbum et Ecclesia 39(1), a1850. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v39i1.185>, pg.5.

¹⁰⁴ Thayer, πονηροῦ, <https://biblehub.com/greek/4190.htm>

and those that come down the line of Cain as a wicked/evil people. This theme continues throughout the Old Testament.

Now, picture for a moment who Jesus is speaking to during his day. He is speaking to the religious leaders (who are wicked, unbelieving, and perverted). Jesus uses the same terminology as John does in his epistle of Cain in John 8:

John 8:44 LSB

You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Cain → Of the Devil (1 John 2:13)

Religious Leaders → Of the Devil (John 8:44)

Take a moment to swallow that one. Jesus is saying to the scribes and Pharisees, that they are directly tied to the evil and wicked generation, the seed of the serpent, the ones that are offspring of the devil himself. The devil is their father, a direct allusion to Genesis 3:15. Philip La Grange Du Toit is again correct in his conclusion when he states that,

“... ‘this generation’ in Matthew is neither time-bound, in that it would refer to Jesus’ contemporaries exclusively, nor is it connected to a certain ethnic group or race exclusively. Ultimately, ‘this generation’ points to the spiritual generation belonging to the devil (the serpent) and his kingdom, as opposed to the generation belonging to God and his kingdom. Such an opposition is especially based on the enmity portrayed by Genesis 3:15.”¹⁰⁵

Genesis 7:1

Moving from Genesis 3:15 to Genesis 7:1 we see the Septuagint speaking of another “generation”:

καὶ εἶπεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Νωε εἰσελθε σὺ καὶ πᾶς ὁ οἰκός σου εἰς τὴν κιβωτόν ὅτι σὲ εἶδον δίκαιον ἐναντίον μου ἐν τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ

The NIV picks up on this in its translation:

The Lord then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in **this generation**.

Neil D. Nelson, Jr. draws this out when he writes,

“Matthew seems to have deliberately juxtaposed the phrase “this generation” with his account of the days of Noah in 24:37-39 in order to echo the notorious generation of the flood (Gen 7:1 LXX). The flood generation is a type of “this generation” that sees the end signs, just as the flood itself typifies the judgment that will occur at the parousia. “This generation” in 24:34 represents a long line of unbelieving, unresponsive people from the time of Noah to the end of the age.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Du Toit, P. La G., 2018, “*This generation*” in Matthew 24:34 as a timeless, spiritual generation akin to Genesis, pg.7.

¹⁰⁶ Neil D. Nelson, Jr. “*This Generation*” in Matt 24:34: A Literary Critical Perspective, JETS 38/3 (September 1996), 383-384.

Nelson correctly sees the juxtaposition of the phrase “this generation” and the allusion (echo) of Noah’s generation of the flood. Note, that both in Noah’s day and in the day of Jesus, there are wicked and evil men that are being dealt with. Genesis 7 confirms for us that there is a generation during the days of Noah that represent another group tied to the seed of the serpent. There was another evil and wicked generation that was present during those days.

Now, if that weren’t enough, let’s look at another clear connection in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 32:5, 20

In the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, we see genea used to describe a type of people that existed during the days of Moses. Let’s look at genea from the LXX:

Deuteronomy 32:5 LXX

“ἡμάρτοσαν οὐκ αὐτῷ τέκνα μωμητά γενεὰ σκολιὰ καὶ διεστραμμένη”

Deuteronomy 32:5 LSB

They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children because of their defect; But are a *perverse and crooked generation*.

Deuteronomy 32:20 LXX

“καὶ εἶπεν ἀποστρέψω τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ἀπ’ αὐτῶν καὶ δείξω τί ἔσται αὐτοῖς ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων ὅτι γενεὰ ἔξεστραμμένη ἔστιν υἱοί οἵς οὐκ ἔστιν πίστις ἐν αὐτοῖς”

Deuteronomy 32:20 LSB:

Then He said, ‘I will hide My face from them; I will see what their end shall be; *For they are a perverse generation, Sons in whom is no faithfulness.*

Take a look at what we have in these two texts. Moses is condemning a generation that existed at his time and uses the same language that Jesus will start using in the gospels. Notice the terminology:

- They acted corruptly.
- They are not His children.
- They have a defect.
- They are a perverse and crooked generation.
- God will hide His face from them.
- They are a perverse generation.
- They are sons in whom there is no faithfulness.

Several scholars have tied these texts with Jesus’ usage of genea:

Colin Brown states,

“The Song of Moses in Deut. 32 (vv. 5 and 20) seems here to have had a certain influence on the wording.”¹⁰⁷

Brock Hollett notes,

¹⁰⁷ Colin Brown, “Genea” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2, 36.

"This is conclusive evidence that the phrase "this generation" conveys a technical meaning referring to the trans-historical offspring of wickedness, as it does in the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:5, 20)." ¹⁰⁸

Bob DeWaay also notes,

"Their unbelief when Jesus was present doing mighty deeds echoes the unbelief of those who were delivered from Egypt by God's mighty deeds and then grumbled in the wilderness. Moses wrote, "They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children, because of their defect; But are a perverse and crooked generation" (Deuteronomy 32:5 – "generation" is genea in the LXX). Since this was part of Moses' song it was not just for people then alive but future generations: "For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands" (Deuteronomy 31:9). The people in Jesus' day had the same characteristics as those in Moses' day and those carried on after Jesus' ascension just as they did after Moses' death." ¹⁰⁹

Neil D. Nelson states,

"His use of the phrase (hē genea haute) has deliberate connections to the two most notorious generations in the OT: the generation of the flood, and the generation of the wilderness wanderings. Adjectives like "evil," "perverse," "adulterous" and "faithless" (Matt 11:39,45; 16:4; 17:17) come from the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32; cf. especially w. 5, 20)." ¹¹⁰

Hebrews picks up on this language as well, describing this generation:

Hebrews 3:10 LSB

Therefore I was angry with **this generation**, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they did not know My ways';

Was the author of Hebrews speaking of the generation alive at the time of this writing? Or a generation that existed in the past, at the time of Moses? Hebrews 3:1-11 confirms that the Mosaic period is in view and that God was angry with (this generation) of Israelites. We are beginning to see a trend arising from the Old Testament.

Conclusion: Genesis 3:15 indicated that there were 2 groups (the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent) that would exist in constant friction with one another that we can clearly tie to Abel and Cain. This wicked generation existed during the days of the flood (as seen in Genesis 7) and appears again in Deuteronomy 32. I believe that this terminology indicates that we are looking at a trans-historical class of people that have existed from the very beginning and not a 40-year people limited to Jesus' time.

Moving to the Gospels

It is clear that in seeing how Moses is using "this generation" that he had a specific group in mind and was speaking to a specific audience (cf. Genesis 3:15, Genesis 7:1, Deuteronomy 32:5, 20). Now, the question that must be asked, is Jesus referring to a singular audience (restricted only to the 1st century) or were Moses and Jesus speaking of the same generation? My position is the latter. I believe that both

¹⁰⁸ Brock Hollett, *Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the Not Yet of Bible Prophecy*, Kindle, Location 1703.

¹⁰⁹ Bob DeWaay, "This Generation" and it's Preterist Exegetical Misuse.

https://cicministry.org/commentary/issue100b.htm#_edn4

¹¹⁰ Neil D. Nelson, Jr. "This Generation" in Matt 24:34: A Literary Critical Perspective, 373-374.

Moses and Jesus were speaking of a trans-historical (type/class) of people. Bringing together our findings from the Old Testament with Moses' writings and Jesus' writings we will see how Jesus is drawing from Moses very clearly. Let's again look at how Jesus is using *genea* in the Gospel of Matthew:

Matthew 11:16 LSB

“But to what shall I compare ***this generation***? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces, who call out to the other children.

Matthew 12:39-45 LSB

39 But He answered and said to them, “***An evil and adulterous generation*** eagerly seeks for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; 40 for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will stand up with ***this generation*** at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. 42 The Queen of the South will rise up with ***this generation*** at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. 43 “Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. 44 Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came’; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with ***this evil generation***.”

Matthew 17:17 LSB

And Jesus answered and said, “O you ***unbelieving and perverse generation***, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.”

Matthew 23:36 LSB

Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon ***this generation***.

Mark 8:12 LSB

And sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, “Why does ***this generation*** seek a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to ***this generation***.”

Luke 11:29-32, 50-51 LSB

Now as the crowds were increasing, He began to say, “***This generation is a wicked generation***; it seeks a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah. 30 For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to ***this generation***. 31 The Queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of ***this generation*** and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And behold, something greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with ***this generation*** and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And behold, something greater than Jonah is here. 50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against ***this generation***, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against ***this generation***.”

Luke 17:25 LSB

But first He must suffer many things and be ***rejected by this generation***.

Philippians 2:15 LSB

so that you will be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a ***crooked and perverse generation***, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

Just reading through these texts, one should see a clear parallel with Moses' usage. Let's put them side-by-side to compare:

Moses	Jesus	Combined Usages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They acted corruptly</i> • <i>They are not His children</i> • <i>They have a defect</i> • <i>They are a perverse and crooked generation</i> • <i>God will hide His face from them</i> • <i>They are a perverse generation</i> • <i>They are sons in whom there is no faithfulness</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They are an evil and adulterous generation</i> • <i>They crave for a sign</i> • <i>The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at judgment</i> • <i>They are an evil generation</i> • <i>They are an unbelieving and perverted generation</i> • <i>They would reject the Messiah</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They acted corruptly</i> • <i>They are not His children</i> • <i>They have a defect</i> • <i>They are a perverse and crooked generation</i> • <i>God will hide His face from them</i> • <i>They are sons in whom there is no faithfulness</i> • <i>They are an evil and adulterous generation</i> • <i>They crave for a sign</i> • <i>The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at judgment</i> • <i>They are an unbelieving and perverted generation</i> • <i>They would reject the Messiah</i>

There is no doubt in my mind that Jesus is leveraging Mosaic terminology and pointing us to the same group of people that have existed from the beginning. Matthew 23:34-36 is tying together a type/class of people that have existed from the very beginning and the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day fit within that class of people because they are of their father the devil. Let's summarize our findings:

This generation = Trans-historical, wicked, evil, unbelieving type/class of people, that are at enmity with the seed of the woman. They are responsible for the slaughter of the righteous and have blood on their hands since Abel. They are the serpent's offspring.

Further Proof – Matthew 25:31-33

If what I have brought together wasn't enough to compel you, let's look at another indicator at the end of the discourse.

Matthew 25:31-33 LSB

31 “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

Two groups are mentioned here:

- The Sheep
- The Goats

Sound at all familiar?

- The Sheep (The Seed of the Woman) – The Righteous
- The Goats (The Seed of the Serpent) – The Unrighteous

We are again drawn back to the clash between two groups and that is the group that Jesus has in mind in the Olivet Discourse and that is why the discourse finishes with the separation of the two groups. The two groups will be separated at last when Jesus comes back at the parousia, which Matthew 24:27-31 outlines, just prior to the statement in vs.34.

Concluding Observations

After dealing with these texts we can now return to Matthew 24:34 and understand it as Moses and Jesus intended.

Matthew 24:34 LSB

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

Jesus is saying that “this evil and wicked generation (i.e. the seed of the serpent) will NOT pass away, even though their house would be made desolate (Mt. 23:38-24:2) until all these things (tied to the Olivet Discourse) take place.” This generation makes up those tied to seed of the serpent from Abel down to Zechariah and those that were the contemporaries of Jesus and those down to the 2nd coming of Christ. *Genea* is not restricted to a singular generation. It isn’t a static term that means the generation only at the time of Christ. As we have seen it stems back further than the contemporaries, down the line to the contemporaries and will persist (not pass away) until the fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse. That is what the text is showing.

Let’s quickly recap as to avoid misunderstandings:

- The proper understanding of *genea* comes from the seed of the serpent in Genesis 3:15
- “This generation” is drawn from Mosaic language found in Genesis 7:1, Deut. 32:5,20 and reaches back to Cain (Mt. 23:34-36) to demonstrate that the generation in view is one that is trans-historical.
- “This generation” is in the pejorative and describes a type/class of people
- “This generation” includes those from Cain down to the 2nd coming of Christ
- “This generation” makes up the offspring of the devil, the seed of the serpent, the goats
- “This generation” will exist until the 2nd coming of Christ
- “This generation” is past, present, future (to the writings of the Scripture)
- “This generation” is not exclusive to the contemporaries of Jesus only, but includes them

I am convinced that my position best exemplifies the evidence and provides the only position whereas preteristic and futuristic concerns are accounted for and not ignored, it best fits with the data and explains the early usages which I believe can be overlooked by futurists and preterists.

Here is the trail from Genesis 3:15-Matthew 25:31:34. Clearly, we can see how the ‘seed’ travels from the beginning to the return of Christ, and that type/class of people will exist until alongside the ‘seed’ of the woman until the return of Christ.

Gn. 3:15 → Gn. 7:1 → Dt. 32:5,20 → Mt.12:39-45 → Mt. 17:17 → Mt. 23:34-36 → Mt. 24:34 → Mt. 25:31-34

35-41 – Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. [36] "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. [37] For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. [38] For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, [39] and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. [40] Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. [41] Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. (35. ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσεται, οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρέλθωσιν. 36. Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι τῶν οὐρανῶν οὐδὲ ὁ νιός, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατὴρ μόνος. 37. Ωσπερ γὰρ αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ Νῶε, οὕτως ἔσται ἡ παρουσία τοῦ νιοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. 38 ὡς γὰρ ἡσαν ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις [ἐκείναις] ταῖς πρὸ τοῦ κατακλυσμοῦ τρώγοντες καὶ πίνοντες, γαμοῦντες καὶ γαμίζοντες, ἔχρι ἡς ἡμέρας εἰσῆλθεν Νῶε εἰς τὴν κιβωτόν, 39. καὶ οὐκ ἔγνωσαν ὡς ἤλθεν ὁ κατακλυσμὸς καὶ ἦρεν ἄπαντας, οὕτως ἔσται ἡ παρουσία τοῦ νιοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. 40. τότε ἔσονται δύο ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ, εἰς παραλαμβάνεται καὶ εἰς ἀφίεται. 41. δύο ἀλήθουσαι ἐν τῷ μύλῳ, μία παραλαμβάνεται καὶ μία ἀφίεται)

After concluding that this evil and wicked generation would not pass away until all these things are fulfilled, make note that the Lord says that “heaven and earth WILL pass away” yet the words of the Lord will not pass away. The words of our Lord stand as true, we ought to trust them and know that all that he has said will come to pass in exactly the same way he has stated.

In vs.36 we have the transitional words (Περὶ δὲ), meaning that a new subject will be tackled here by Jesus while also retaining some aspects of the previous message. John Hart notes,

“When *peri de* stands at the very beginning of a sentence as it does here, it marks a new section of thought that reaches back to previous material, often to resume an unanswered or unspoken question.”¹¹¹

Alan Kurschner notes that *peri de* shifts the topic to that of “spiritual watchfulness” when he states,

“First, the natural flow of Jesus’ teaching contains two major sections. The first part, verses 4–35, is characterized by prophetic-narrative, a sequential outline for what is going to happen before his return. The second part, verses 36–44 (and through 25:46), is characterized by prophetic-exhortation, giving illustrations, parables, and other devices, warning to be spiritually watchful. Thus, after he concludes his teaching on eschatological events, he begins in verse 36 (“But as for” *peri de*) to shift to the topic of

¹¹¹ John Hart, *Jesus and the Rapture: Matthew 24 in Evidence for the Rapture: A Biblical Case for Pretribulationism*, (Moody Publishers, 2015), 54.

spiritual watchfulness. In short, Jesus teaches, “this is what is going to happen” (vv. 4–35) and “this is how you live in light of it” (vv. 36–44).”¹¹²

So, there is clearly a transition of thought here in vs.36, but how much of that thought is truly disconnected from the previous context. Hart sees it almost as completely disconnected, while Kurschner sees it as much more connected than Hart. I had at one time held to the chiasm that Hart refers to in vs.3 as the structure for Matthew 24¹¹³, but as Kurschner notes, this interpretation seems quite strained and doesn’t make the best sense structurally.¹¹⁴ If, vs.36 isn’t speaking of the rapture (contrary to Hart’s position), what is it in fact speaking of? We need to understand the words “But of **that day and hour** no one knows...” before moving forward. What day? What hour? Is this the rapture (imminency), is this the day of the Lord, or is this the second coming?

In my opinion, the strongest option is that Jesus is pointing *back to the second coming* in vss.30-31, as Kurschner and others have noted,

“The immediate and natural antecedent of “that” day and hour can only be the coming of Christ found in Matthew 24:30–31. Not only is it the closest antecedent of a coming, but up to this point it is the only coming of Christ mentioned. The climax of Matthew 24 is the coming of Christ in verses 30–31 where he sends his angels to gather his elect. Therefore it makes sense why Jesus does not have to identify “that” because it is obvious what coming he is referring to.”¹¹⁵

David L. Turner in agreement states,

“This section begins with an affirmation that the day of Jesus’s coming is unknowable (24:36).”¹¹⁶

H.L. Ellison states as well,

“The time of the coming is unknown, except to the Father, but there will be clear signs before it.”¹¹⁷

In terms of the Christology of the passage and how it is possible that Christ cannot know something despite being God, Merrill Unger comments,

“Jesus was speaking in the state of voluntary self-emptying (Phil. 2:7) as the incarnate Son, but He was given the revelation of these things after His glorification in resurrection and ascension (Rev 1:1). If the precise time of Christ’s advent was unknown, even to the angels and to the Son Himself in His self-emptyed, unglorified state, how much more will it be unknown precisely by humankind.”¹¹⁸

¹¹² Alan Kurschner, *Part 2 – Why the “Coming” in Matthew 24:36–44 Refers Back to Verses 30–31*, (Oct 9, 2012) <https://www.alankurschner.com/2012/10/09/part-2-why-the-coming-in-matthew-2436-44-refers-back-to-verses-30-31/>

¹¹³ See John Hart, *Jesus and the Rapture: Matthew 24 in Evidence for the Rapture: A Biblical Case for Pretribulationism*, (Moody Publishers, 2015).

¹¹⁴ See Alan Kurschner’s 6-part series addressing Hart: <https://www.alankurschner.com/2019/01/01/a-reply-to-john-f-hart-on-why-the-parousia-in-matt-2436-44-refers-back-to-the-parousia-in-matt-2430-31/>

¹¹⁵ Alan Kurschner, *Part 3 – Why the “Coming” in Matthew 24:36–44 Refers Back to Verses 30–31*, (Oct 10, 2012) <https://www.alankurschner.com/2012/10/10/part-3-why-the-coming-in-matthew-2436-44-refers-back-to-verses-30-31/>

¹¹⁶ David L. Turner, *Matthew in Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2008), 588.

¹¹⁷ H.L. Ellison, *Matthew in The International Bible Commentary* (Marshall Pickering, Zondervan, 1986), 1146. D.A. Carson also affirms this is the second coming when he says, “If the Son himself does know the time of his Parousia, we too should respect that ignorance and leave things in the Father’s hands.” D.A. Carson, *Matthew in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Abridged Version, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1994.), 112. William MacDonald agrees, “As to the exact day and hour of His second advent, “no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only” (v.36).” William MacDonald, *Matthew: Behold Your King*, (Walterick Publishers, Kansas City, Kansas, 1974), 275.

¹¹⁸ Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Gospels*, 170.

In vs.37 Matthew draws on the *παρουσία* (parousia) of the Son of man being compared to the days of Noah... well, why is this conclusion being drawn?

The point that Matthew and Luke are making is in reference to two things:

1) the worldly pursuits they sought after "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark"

Alfred Plummer states,

"The special point of the analogy is not that the generation that was swept away by the Flood was exceptionally wicked; none of the occupations mentioned are sinful; but that it was so absorbed in its worldly pursuits that it paid no attention to solemn warnings. Instead of saying: "It is certain to come; therefore we must make preparation and be always on the watch," they said: "No one knows when it will come; therefore there is no need to trouble oneself about it yet. Other matters are much more urgent."¹¹⁹

2) the unexpected nature of the crisis, or a lack of preparedness.

Daniel J. Harrington states,

"The point of the comparison between the days of Noah and the coming of the Son of Man is the unexpectedness of the crisis....So unexpected was the flood that people did not recognize it until it had already come upon them."¹²⁰

It is clear from the point that was just made by Jesus—in terms of the tribulation—that it should invoke fear, but all that the unbelievers will seek to do is press forward completely oblivious to what is going on around them, pursuing pleasure, ignoring the warnings and the signs of the Lord's coming. Arno Gaebelein says,

"Two classes were living in Noah's day. The one who were unbelieving and these were swept away by the divine judgment. The other class was Noah and his house, and he and his own were left and not destroyed by the judgment. It will be so again in the coming of the Son of Man. The unbelievers will be taken away in the day of judgment and wrath; the others will be left on the earth to receive and enjoy the blessings of the coming age and enter into the kingdom, which will then be established."¹²¹

As we can see. There was a lack of preparedness on the part of the non-believer. They were caught up in their worldly desires and didn't expect the judgment (flood)¹²². So, will be the coming of the Son of Man. It will surprise the unbeliever being taken away in judgment (the Day of the Lord), based upon their unpreparedness. Therefore, the time of Christ's parousia requires watchfulness.

In vs.40 we have the two people in a field, one of those will be taken and one will be left. The usage of *τότε* ("then") connects us back with the events that proceed the second coming of Christ. Contextually,

¹¹⁹ Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew*, 2nd. edition (Minneapolis: James Family, n.d.), 340.

¹²⁰ Daniel J. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 342. Merrill Unger in agreement states, "The flood was employed as an illustration of the peril of unwatchfulness." Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Gospels*, 170.

¹²¹ Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Gospel of Matthew: An Exposition* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, [1910] 1961), 515-516.

¹²² "Unwatchfulness (manifested unbelief) spelled the doom of that generation." Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Gospels*, 170.

we must understand that this is not the rapture of the church, but rather to those who “will be snatched away in judgment through physical death.”¹²³

Continuing the thought in vs.40 two women will be grinding grain at the mill, one will be taken, and one will be left. Unger again states clearly the purpose,

“Christ’s coming will be so sudden and discriminatory that the judgment attending it (cf. Rev. 19:11-21) will separate people working side by side. One man working alongside another in the field will be taken away by death; and one woman griding with a hand mill (NIV) alongside another woman will likewise be snatched away in the purging out of the wicked and the preservation of the righteous to enter the Messiah’s kingdom.”¹²⁴

This draws out the thought of Matthew 25 with the separation of the sheep and the goats.

Matthew 25:31-33 LSB

31 “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

42-44 – “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. [43] But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. [44] For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. (42. γρηγορεῖτε οὖν, ὅτι οὐκ οἶδατε ποίᾳ ἡμέρᾳ ὁ κύριος ὑμῶν ἔρχεται. 43. ἐκεῖνο δὲ γινώσκετε ὅτι εἰ ἦδει ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης ποίᾳ φυλακῇ ὁ κλέπτης ἔρχεται, ἐγρηγόρησεν ἀν καὶ οὐκ ἀν εἴασεν διορυχθῆναι τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ. 44. διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὑμεῖς γίνεσθε ἔτοιμοι, ὅτι ἡ οὐδοκεῖτε ὥρᾳ ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεται)

Moving into vs.42 Matthew uses, “οὖν” (therefore) to connect us back concluding what had come before. The conclusion is that we ought to be on alert (Γρηγορεῖτε) or keeping watch because we do not know the **day** (connected back to vs.36) which the Lord is coming.

In vs.43 another illustration is used, “If the head of the house had known at *what time* of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.” It is true that if one was aware of the time someone would break in, we most likely would remain prepared for that thief to protect our goods, in our home. The issue is that we really don’t know when a crafty thief might attempt to sneak in, so in that case how much more ought we to be alert?

In vs.44, based upon the previous verse, we then also must be ready (as believers) for the Son of Man is coming at an **hour** (connected back to vs.36), when we do not think he will come.

45-51 – “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? [46] Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. [47] Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. [48] But

¹²³ Ibid., 171.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ [49] and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; [50] the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, [51] and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (45. Τίς ἄρα ἔστιν ὁ πιστὸς δοῦλος καὶ φρόνιμος ὃν κατέστησεν ὁ κύριος ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκετείας αὐτοῦ τοῦ δοῦλοι αὐτοῖς τὴν τροφὴν ἐν καιρῷ; 46. μακάριος ὁ δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος ὃν ἔλθων ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ εὐρήσει οὗτος ποιοῦντα· 47. ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν αὐτοῦ καταστήσει αὐτόν. 48. ἐὰν δὲ εἴπῃ ὁ κακὸς δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ Χρονίζει μου ὁ κύριος, 49. καὶ ἄρξηται τύπτειν τοὺς συνδούλους αὐτοῦ, ἐσθίῃ δὲ καὶ πίνῃ μετὰ τῶν μεθυόντων, 50. ἥξει ὁ κύριος τοῦ δούλου ἐκείνου ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἡ̄ οὐ προσδοκᾷ καὶ ἐν ὥρᾳ ἡ̄ οὐ γινώσκει, 51. καὶ διχοτομήσει αὐτὸν καὶ τὸ μέρος αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν ὑποκριτῶν θήσει· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὁδόντων.)

We now come to the last section of Matthew 24. “Who then” (Τίς ἄρα) connects the previous section vs.32-44 regarding the previous parables (i.e., the fig tree and the watchful householder). Jesus says who then is the faithful servant who the master has put in charge of his household? This servant is contrasted against the “evil slave” (vs.48). The slave that is faithful against the wicked. Two classes will be found when the master comes back. Stanley Toussaint summarizes this section well when he states,

“The account of the two servants illustrates the two attitudes men will have in the end time with relationship to the King’s coming to the earth to judge and to reign. One will be characterized by faithfulness and wisdom and the other by wickedness. The sequence which is followed in each case is significant. In the first, faithfulness and wisdom issue in good works which in turn result in reward. This reward is blessing in the coming kingdom.... On the other hand, the evil character of a man brings forth sin which results in punishment. This punishment is described as “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Invariably throughout Matthew this phrase refers to the retribution of those who are judged before the millennial kingdom is established...”¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King. A Study of Matthew*, 282