

*Rethinking the Olivet Discourse, its Literary Structure, and Christ's
Explanation of the End-Times Events*

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November 12, 2006
Revised January 26, 2008

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Part I

Introduction:

Except for the book of Revelation, Jesus teaches more about the end-times events in Matthew 24-25—the Olivet Discourse—than in any other part of the New Testament. Christians from different theological perspectives use the Olivet Discourse to argue their respective positions on the end times, particularly their position on the Rapture of the Church. For example, some Christians contend that the Olivet Discourse teaches a post-tribulation Rapture. Other Christians suggest that the Discourse teaches a pre-tribulation Rapture. Still others contend that the Rapture isn't even pictured in the Olivet Discourse. It is the premise of this paper, however, that Christians from all theological views may have overlooked one of the nuances of the Discourse's literary structure. Specifically, most Christians assume that Christ's teaching in the Olivet Discourse is *entirely chronological* in nature. This writer suggests that it is not.

This paper will attempt to make clear the literary structure of the Olivet Discourse; will suggest an appropriate outline for the Discourse, given its unique literary structure; and will analyze each section of the Discourse. In this analysis the writer will assert (1) that Jesus indeed teaches the disciples about the Rapture of the Church in the Olivet Discourse, (2) that Jesus teaches that the Rapture of the Church will be unexpected, unannounced, and at any-moment—the pre-tribulation Rapture position, (3) that the doctrine of Imminency is taught by Jesus Himself not just by Paul, and (4) that Matthew 24:29-31 describes the bodily return of Christ to the earth, not the Rapture.

In addition, the paper will show that although Jesus refers the disciples to Daniel 9:24-27—and its seminal prophecy on the prophetic program for Israel—He focuses His teaching in the Olivet on events which take place *before* He establishes His Millennial Kingdom—events which include the Church Age, the Rapture, the Tribulation period, His bodily return to the earth, and His judgment of the earth's remaining inhabitants. In the writer's view the major theme of Matthew's gospel is "The Revelation of God's Inter-Advent Kingdom" [see Appendices A & B]. The Jewish audience to which Matthew writes wants to have one basic question answered: "If Jesus Christ is Israel's Messiah, then why isn't He reigning from Jerusalem this very moment?" Matthew answers this question by unveiling in the second half of his gospel the unforeseen *Inter-Advent* Kingdom of Messiah, which is designed to take root in the hearts of Jews and Gentiles who put their faith in Jesus Christ as their savior from sin. Jesus (in Matthew's gospel) discloses a number of the principal characteristics of this inter-advent kingdom through the use of twelve parables—similes which begin with the words "the kingdom of heaven is like" or "the kingdom of heaven is comparable to." These twelve parables are found in chapters 13, 18, 20, 22, and 25 of Matthew's gospel—the final two being portrayed in the Olivet Discourse [see Appendix C]. To be sure, Jesus upholds this inter-advent context when, on the morning of His crucifixion, He tells Pontius Pilate: "*My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then*

My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm” (John 18:36).¹

The Literary Structure of the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 – 25):

The writer contends that Christ presents four clearly defined *chronological* vignettes in the Discourse and seven clearly defined *parenthetical* vignettes. Accordingly, the Olivet Discourse is a mixture of (1) the future sequence of human events and (2) parenthetical exhortations, descriptions, promises, and warnings which relate in some way to this future sequence of events—*but which do not advance the sequence of events*. This “chronological vs. parenthetical” pattern in the Olivet Discourse is similar to that found in the book of Revelation. Both C.I. Scofield² and John Walvoord³ recognized a chronological-parenthetical pattern in the book of Revelation and used it as the basis of their Revelation outlines and commentaries. Likewise, J. Dwight Pentecost acknowledges that certain parts of the Olivet are parenthetical.⁴

Appendix F contains the writer’s analysis of which sections of the Discourse, in his view, are chronological and which sections are parenthetical

The Writer's Outline of the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 – 25):

- I. CHRIST'S PROPHECY ABOUT THE JERUSALEM TEMPLE
(24:1-2)
- II. THE DISCIPLES' QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS PROPHECY
(24:3)
- III. CHRIST'S ANSWERS TO THE DISCIPLES' QUESTIONS AND
CHRIST'S EXPLANATION OF THE END-TIMES EVENTS
(24:4 - 25:46)

A. THE CHURCH AGE (24:4-8)

B. THE TRIBULATION PERIOD (24:9-14)

Paraphrased: Christ's Exhortation to Flee the Abomination of Desolation and His Pronouncement of the Severity of the 2nd Half of the Tribulation (24:15-22)

Paraphrased: Christ's Exhortation to Avoid False Christs While He is Away (24:23-28)

C. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST TO THE EARTH (24:29-31)

Paraphrased: The Parable of the Fig Tree—and the Sign of the End of the Age (24:32-35)

Paraphrased: Christ's First Teaching on the Rapture and His Exhortation to Be Alert for It at All Times (24:36-44)

Paraphrased: Christ's Promise of Blessing and Reward for Faithful, Sensible Servanthood While He is Away (24:45-51)

Paraphrased: The Parable of the Ten Virgins—the Picture of Christ's Coming for His Own at the Rapture (25:1-13)

Paraphrased: The Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)

D. THE JUDGMENT OF THE REMAINING NATIONS BY CHRIST (25:31-46)

Part II

A Section-by-Section Analysis of the Olivet Discourse:

Having reviewed the literary structure of the Olivet Discourse and having outlined the Discourse in light of its chronological vs. parenthetical structure, let us now analyze what (in the writer's view) Jesus teaches about the Church Age, the Rapture, the Tribulation period, His bodily return to the earth, and His judgment of the earth's remaining inhabitants. [Note: The writer has used an upright font style for the text of the chronological passages in the Olivet Discourse and an *italic* font style for the text of the parenthetical passages to help the reader distinguish between the two.]

I. Christ's Prophecy About the Jerusalem Temple (24:1-2)

^{24:1} And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. ²And He answered and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another which will not be torn down."

Commenting to Jesus on the majesty of the temple buildings, the disciples still seem to believe (as they had a few days earlier—Luke 19:11) that Jesus is going to set up His prophesied kingdom on earth in the immediate future. Jesus, however, stuns the disciples by stating that the temple will be destroyed at some point in the future—destroyed to such a degree in fact that "*not one stone here shall be left upon another.*"

II. The Disciples' Questions About this Prophecy (24:3)

³And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?"

Sometime later, after mulling over what He has told them about the temple, the disciples come to Jesus in private and ask Him three questions: (1) when will the temple be destroyed, (2) what will be the sign of your coming, and (3) what will be the sign of the end of the age.

III. Christ's Answers to the Disciples' Questions and Christ's Explanation of the End-Times Events (24:4 – 25:46)

Jesus, in the Olivet Discourse, answers all three of these questions. Furthermore, because He knows from the disciples' questions that they expect Him to come back in the near future at a single moment in time, Jesus gives them a *two-part* answer to question #2 ("what will be the sign of your coming?"). Jesus develops this two-part answer in three of the eleven major sections of the Discourse.

In terms of their historical and still future chronology, the disciples' questions (and Christ's answers) will unfold as follows:

1. **When will the temple be destroyed?** Answer: the temple will be destroyed during the Church Age.
2. **What will be the sign of the end of the age?** Answer: when the "leaves" of world events begin to burst forth in such a way that the end-times events can be fulfilled in a literal fashion exactly as conveyed in Scripture, then you will know that My return is near.
3. **What will be the sign of your coming (part 1)?** Answer: I will come *for* my own (the Church) unexpectedly and unannounced "like a thief in the night." Therefore, there will be *no* sign preceding My coming for My own; instead, you must be alert at all times for this any-moment return.
4. **What will be the sign of your coming (part 2)?** Answer: When you see *the* sign of the Son of Man in the sky, then I will come *with* my own to judge those who remain on the earth and to set up my earthly kingdom.

In addition to giving specific answers to the disciples three questions, Christ also shows the disciples the broad outline of future events—and He peppers His explanation of the future with several powerful exhortations, parables, and pronouncements.

Let us now examine what Christ teaches about the end times in the Olivet Discourse.

A. The Church Age (24:4-8)

⁴And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. ⁵For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. ⁶And 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. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. ⁸But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

At the beginning of the Discourse, Jesus describes what will happen on earth during the Church Age (Matt. 24:5-8)—the period of time between the day of Pentecost

and a pre-tribulation Rapture. Specifically, people will claim to be the Christ and, in doing so, will mislead many. The Church Age will be filled with wars and rumors of wars. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdoms will rise against kingdoms. As well, the Church Age will see famines and earthquakes. [Note: one instance of a “kingdom rising against another kingdom” occurred in the first century when General Titus of the Roman Empire led his armies into Israel in 70 A.D. Among other things, Titus utterly destroyed the Jerusalem Temple, thus providing the answer to the disciples’ question: “when will the temple be destroyed?” The Apostle John was still alive when the temple was destroyed.]

Nevertheless, such occurrences are “*not yet the end*” but are merely “*the beginning of the birth pangs*”—either a reference to “false labor” or the more modest pain of early contractions rather than the more severe pain (of birthing labor) yet to come during the Tribulation itself. All of these events have been taking place during the past 1,900 years and are still taking place today. For example, Hindu and Eastern mystics routinely claim to be the Christ. Cult leaders in the West often claim to be Christ. World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War scourged the earth during the most recent century. Famine has ravaged many parts of the world. Earthquakes have occurred all over the globe for centuries.

Furthermore, while many Christians see Matthew 24:5-8 as describing the first half of the Tribulation rather than the Church Age, such an interpretation should be questioned for the following reasons:

1. If Matthew 24:5-8 represents the first half of the Tribulation, then Jesus never answered the disciples’ first question: “when will the temple be destroyed?” (Matt. 24:3). It is unfathomable that Jesus would not answer this crucial question, and indeed He did answer it. Today, with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight we know that the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D.—during the Church Age. The Apostle John would have either seen the destruction first hand or would have known of it through eyewitness reports—thus witnessing a vivid example of a “kingdom (the Roman Empire) rising against a kingdom (Israel)” and receiving confirmation in his heart that Jesus had answered the temple question. As a result, we can reliably conclude that Matthew 24:4-8 represents the Church Age.
2. “Wars and rumors of wars” have occurred frequently and profusely over the past 1900 years. For centuries wars have occurred throughout the earth—in Europe, in Africa, in the Middle East, in Asia, and so on. During the 20th century alone, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Falklands, the Iran-Iraq War, the Persian Gulf War, the Bosnian conflict, plus countless tribal wars in Africa and elsewhere marred the century. The Tribulation period, however, will last just *seven* years, not centuries. Indeed, Scripture records just *four* conflicts (albeit catastrophic) during the Tribulation period: the Antichrist-middle eastern nation confrontation (Dan.11:36-45; Joel 2:1-8; Rev. 12:13-16; Rev. 6:3-8); the Antichrist-“kings of the east” conflagration (Rev. 9:13-19);

the descent of Gog and his hordes into Israel (Ezek. 38 - 39); and the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16; 19:11-21). Thus, Christ's statements in Matthew 24:6-7 that "you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars" and "nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" best fit a Church Age context, not a first half of the Tribulation context.

3. The phrase "but all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs" in Matthew 24:8 applies to the Church Age not the Tribulation period. The "birth pangs" expression could mean one of two things. First, any obstetrician will attest to the fact that a pregnant woman will begin to have "false labor" during the sixth or seventh month of her pregnancy. This false labor might take the form of a sharp pain lasting but a minute or two, not to return again for several days or even weeks. This false labor is contrasted with the actual birthing labor which takes the form of sharp pain for two to three minutes followed by a respite of ten minutes, and then sharp pain once again for two to three minutes followed by another respite of nine to ten minutes. As the delivery grows nearer after an hour or two, the time between the contractions (the respite) grows less and less—until the delivery occurs. Thus, World War I would represent an example of "false labor." Though twenty million persons lost their lives in Europe, such a number is a minor loss compared to the Tribulation pain of losing more than a billion persons during the Seal judgments. Similarly, World War II would represent another example of "false labor"—or the "beginning" of birth pangs but not the continuous birth pangs themselves. Though sixty million persons lost their lives throughout the world during WW II, such a number again is a small loss compared to the more than two billion persons who will lose their lives during the Seal and Trumpet judgments. Alternatively, the "beginning of birth pangs" could represent the more modest pain of the early and less frequent contractions twelve to fifteen hours before the actual delivery compared to the more intense and more frequent contractions of the final hour of labor. Whichever explanation is being referenced, it is clear that Christ is telling us today that the wars, famines, and earthquakes which have taken place so far (during the Church Age) are only modestly difficult ("*the beginning of birth pangs*") compared to what lies ahead in the Tribulation period ("*then they will deliver you to tribulation*"). In short, the "beginning of birth pangs" best fits the Church Age.
4. The natural flow of the text at the beginning of Matthew 24:9—"Then they will deliver you to tribulation"—readily points to a chronological transition from the Church Age into the Tribulation period. Once again, Matthew 24:4-8 best represents the Church Age.
5. The statement later in the Discourse that "My master is not coming for a *long time*" readily pictures the Church Age (Matt. 24:48). Likewise,

the statement in Matthew 25:19 that “after a *long time* the master of those slaves came and settle accounts with them” assuredly pictures the Church Age. The statement in Matthew 25:5, “Now while the bridegroom was *delaying*,” also pictures the Church Age. Consequently, with three clear allusions to the Church Age in parenthetical sections of the Discourse, it seems logical that Christ would include the Church Age in His Olivet Discourse chronology.

The writer would thus assert that Jesus describes the Church Age in Matthew 24:5-8, not the first half of the Tribulation.

B. The Tribulation Period (24:9-14)

⁹“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. ¹⁰And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. ¹²And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.

Jesus now transitions the disciples from an overview of the Church Age to an overview of the Tribulation period: “*Then they will deliver you to tribulation.*” In this chronological section (Matt. 24:9-14), Jesus describes some of the difficulties that take place during the seven-year Tribulation period: post-Rapture *Christians* (“*on account of My name*”) will have to deal with extreme hardship and will be hated by all nations. Many in post-Rapture Christendom will fall away from their nominal faith and will deliver up true post-Rapture Christians to be killed. False prophets (including *the False Prophet*) will arise during the Tribulation and will mislead many. Lawlessness will increase, and most people's love will grow cold. Nevertheless, despite the horrors of the Tribulation, the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and of Christ's impending Millennial Kingdom will be preached to all nations throughout the world during this period—principally, it seems, by the 144,000 post-Rapture Jewish believers of Revelation 7:1-8 and 14:1-5, who are the first ones saved after the Rapture (“*as first fruits* to God and to the Lamb”) and who are saved *before* the Tribulation begins (“do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bondservants of our God on their foreheads”). Once the Gospel is preached in the whole world [during the Tribulation] for a witness to all nations, “*then the end shall come*”—i.e., the next chronological event taught by Jesus in the Discourse: His bodily return to the earth to establish His 1000-year Kingdom of righteousness over the entire earth. [Note: although some Christians believe that the Rapture cannot occur until the “gospel of the kingdom is preached in the whole world for a witness to all nations,” this interpretation is incorrect: The pronouncement in Matthew 24:14 is not a Church Age pronounce-

ment but a Tribulation Period pronouncement. Jesus teaches that the gospel will be preached to all nations during the *Tribulation period*. In short, *nothing* precludes the Rapture from happening at any moment.]

Parenthetical: Christ's Exhortation to Flee the Abomination of Desolation and His Pronouncement of The Severity of the 2nd Half of the Tribulation (24:15-22)

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),¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; ¹⁷let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; ¹⁸and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak.

¹⁹"But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! ²⁰But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; ²¹for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. ²²And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.

In His first parenthetical teaching during the Discourse, Jesus now points the disciples (and the reader or hearer of the Olivet Discourse) to Daniel 9:24-27 ("*when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place [let the reader understand]*"). Daniel 9:24-27 teaches the following key information about Israel, Messiah, the Antichrist, and the Tribulation period—information which Christ wants the disciples (and us) to learn:

- Seventy years times seven, or 490 years, have been decreed for the Israelites (and for Jerusalem) to finish their transgression and to bring in everlasting righteousness.
- Messiah will be presented to Israel exactly 483 years (or 69 "weeks") after the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. [Jesus had just fulfilled this prophecy a day or two earlier when He was presented to Israel on the "Palm Sunday" triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:35-40). Seven years (or one "week") yet remain to finish the transgression and to bring in everlasting righteousness.]
- Messiah will be presented to Israel—and subsequently killed ("cut off")—before Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed
- An invading people, from whom will come the 70th week Antichrist, will destroy Jerusalem and the temple
- A time gap of an unspecified length of time will occur between the 69th and 70th weeks during which time Messiah will be killed and the temple will be destroyed

- The Antichrist will be a descendent of the people who destroy the temple
- The Antichrist will sign a seven-year peace treaty with Israel at some point in the future
- Jerusalem will have a rebuilt temple during the time when the seven-year treaty is operative
- The Antichrist will both desecrate the temple and break the peace treaty at the mid-point of the treaty
- Upon breaking the peace treaty, the Antichrist will put an end to Israel's reinstated Levitical worship system
- The Antichrist will make Israel and Jerusalem desolate after the mid-point of the Tribulation
- The Antichrist will eventually be destroyed

Christ also knows that the reader of Daniel can go to Daniel 12 for additional information about end-times events—particularly Daniel 12:11-12 where he/she will discover that Messiah will return bodily to the earth exactly 1,290 days after the Antichrist's desecration of the temple: *“And from the time of the regular sacrifice is abolished, there will be 1,290 days. How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!”* Thus, thirty days after the end of the tribulation, Jesus Christ will return bodily to the earth with His elect (I Thess. 3:13) and His holy angels (II Thess. 1:7). The reader can be sure that this Daniel 12 quotation refers to the bodily return of Christ because it correlates perfectly with the Lord's teaching in Matthew 24:29: *“immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened . . . and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky . . . and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with great power and great glory.”* Forty-five days after Christ's bodily return to earth (or exactly 1,335 days after the Antichrist's desecration of the temple), Christ will begin His Millennial reign over the earth, thus fulfilling Dan. 9:24: *“to bring in everlasting righteousness.”* [Note: though there is some debate whether the Lord's bodily return occurs 1,290 days or 1,335 days after the desecration of the temple, it is clear that either timeframe fits the Lord's declaration in Matthew 24:29: *immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened . . . and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky . . . and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with great power and great glory.”* It is this writer's view that the “1,335 day” reference—“how *blessed* is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days”—points to the blessing of a post-Rapture believer surviving the Tribulation period and then being able to enter the Millennial Kingdom. Thus, in the writer's view the Lord will return to the earth 1,290 days after the desecration, will slay all those who have gathered against Jerusalem (Rev. 19:11-21), and will gather to Jerusalem and judge all the earth's remaining inhabitants (Matt. 25:31-46) before the 1,335th day arrives.]

After pointing his hearer to Daniel 9 and its picture of the Antichrist desecrating the Jerusalem temple, Jesus exhorts those living in Jerusalem and Judea during this time to flee to the mountains when they see the Antichrist standing in the temple. Furthermore, by faith, they are to flee *immediately* and are to leave everything behind because of the urgency of the situation.

Jesus also describes the *severity* of what will take place on earth during the second half of the Tribulation (Matt. 24:19-22). He states in these verses that "*at this time there will be great tribulation—such has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be again. And except those days be cut short, no life would be saved.*" Clearly, the Great Tribulation will be a time of unparalleled horror on earth, and Christ's pronouncement here in the Olivet Discourse readily corresponds with the horrors and the death toll depicted in the book of Revelation.

Parenthetical: Christ's Exhortation to Avoid False Christs While He is Away (24:23-28)

²³"Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. ²⁴For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵Behold, I have told you in advance. ²⁶If, therefore, they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go forth, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. ²⁷For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

Jesus continues His break from the end-times chronology by exhorting the disciples and all Church Age Christians to avoid false Christs and false prophets while He is away. The exhortation can likewise be applied to post-Rapture Christians; they too are exhorted to avoid false Christs and false prophets during the Tribulation period. Accordingly, Church Age believers ("*the elect*") and post-Rapture believers ("*the elect*") are to ignore any pronouncement that Christ has already returned and is located in the wilderness or some remote building. The reason: Christ's bodily return will come from the sky and will be "announced" by signs in the sky ("*for just as lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be*"). Because these signs (to be described in the Olivet's next section) have not yet occurred, the reader of the Discourse can know with certainty that Jesus is not "in the wilderness" or "in the inner rooms" as some might claim Him to be.

C. The Second Coming of Christ to the Earth (24:29-31)

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, ³⁰and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and 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. ³¹And 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.

Jesus now resumes His unveiling of the end-times chronology and describes the four signs in the sky which will "announce" His bodily return to the earth: the sun will be darkened; the moon will not give off its light; the stars will move out of their customary positions in the sky; and the celestial laws which govern the solar systems and galaxies will be altered (v.29). Jesus then tells the disciples that after these four signs *the sign of His return will appear in the sky* (v.30). Thus, Christ, in Matthew 24:29-30, answers the disciples' second question from Matthew 24:3: "what will be the sign of your coming?"

After describing the signs which immediately precede His return to the earth, Jesus then tells the disciples that He will send forth His angels to gather His elect "*from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.*" Notice that Jesus does not say in Matthew 24:31 that He will send forth His angels to gather His elect from the *earth*, or from *under the earth*, or from *under the seas*. In contrast, Christ tells John in the Revelation that, at the Second Resurrection (after the Millennial Kingdom and in conjunction with the Great White Throne Judgment), "the *sea* gave up the dead which were in it . . . ; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds" (Rev. 20:13). If Matthew 24:31 represents the Rapture of the Church, the assertion of post-tribulationists, then why isn't the same type of language present? To be sure, Matthew 24:29-31 offers no hint of a translation of believers *from the earth* up into the sky. Nowhere in v. 31 are the Greek words for "earth" or "sea."

What, then, is Jesus teaching in v.31? First, the Greek word for "sky" in v.31 is the same word for "sky" in v.29 ("*and the stars will fall from the sky*"). This suggests that the gathering of the elect in v.31 will take place somewhere in the far reaches of the universe—where the stars reside and where the abode of the Trinity exists—not from the earth itself (as would be the case if this were the Rapture of the Church). In John 14:1-2 Jesus teaches the disciples (and us) that He will prepare a *heavenly* abode ("in My Father's house") for each believer: "*Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.*" Second, Christ uses the expression "from the four winds," rather than saying, for example, "from the North wind." By using the "four winds" expression, Christ is teaching (1) that His angels will gather the elect from *all* directions above rather than from one direction—indeed "*from one end of the sky to the other*"—and (2) that, just as we don't know from where the wind comes (John 3:8), we won't know from where in the heavens the elect will be gathered. But from John 14:1-2 we do know that they will be gathered from "many dwelling places"—in fact, most likely from a *myriad* of dwelling places in heaven, indeed "from one end of the sky to the other." To be sure, the Apostle Paul makes it clear in I Thess. 4:16-17 that, at the Rapture, Christ (1) will descend from heaven, (2) will raise the dead in Christ first (from the earth), (3) will translate the living in Christ next (from the earth), and (4) will meet both groups—His resurrected saints and His translated saints—in the air. Paul also makes it clear that Christ will raise His dead

saints and translate His living saints from the earth to a *particular location* in the air—specifically, where Christ Himself is located. Paul does *not* teach that, at the Rapture, dead and living saints will be resurrected/translated into a *multitude* of locations—“from one end of the sky to another”—only to then be collected by Christ’s angels from these locations to be joined with Christ, an interpretation the post-tribulation rapture position would be forced to suggest

In short, when Christ’s angel’s gather His elect “*from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other,*” His angels will gather together the *entirety* of the elect—specifically, all resurrected Old Testament saints, all resurrected Church Age saints, and all resurrected Tribulation saints (i.e., those post-Rapture believers who either died or were martyred during the Tribulation period)—*from their dwelling places in heaven* for their *bodily return to the earth* with Christ (I Thess. 3:13) and with His holy angels (II Thess. 1:7). All who remain on earth thirty days after the end of the Tribulation period will witness Christ’s bodily return to the earth with His saints and holy angels (Rev. 1:7). What will be the response of remaining mankind? “*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*” (v.30).

[Note: Post-tribulationists contend that the Church will have to go through the entire Tribulation period, though being preserved through it.⁵ So the question must be asked: Are Christians divinely sheltered from the wrath of God during the Tribulation period? What do the Scriptures teach? In the writer’s view, the Scriptures teach just the opposite. Far from being divinely protected during the Tribulation period, millions and millions of Christians, according to Revelation 7:9-15, either die in the judgments themselves or are martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ: “*After these things I looked; and, behold, I saw a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and tribe and people and tongue, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. . . ."* And one of the elders answered, saying to me, “*These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where have they come?*” And I said to him, “*My lord, you know.*” And he said to me, “*These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*” If a “great multitude” of believers “which no one could count” has been martyred or killed during the Great Tribulation, then how has God sheltered them from wrath? It seems to this writer that the Law of Non-Contradiction would rule out any such interpretation.]

Parenthetical: The Parable of the Fig Tree—and the Sign of the End of the Age (24:32-35)

³²“*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*even 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. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away.

In the Parable of the Fig Tree, Jesus tells the Christian how to discern when the “season” of His return is near: Just as a person knows that summer is near when the leaves begin to burst forth in the spring, so too a person can know that Christ's return is near when the “leaves” of world events begin to burst forth in ways which could allow for a literal fulfillment of the End-Times prophecies, including the death tolls portrayed in the book of Revelation (death tolls to which Christ clearly alludes when He states in Matthew 24:22a: “*and unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved*”). Thus, Christ, in Matthew 24:32-35 (a parenthetical passage), answers the disciples’ third question from 24:3: “what will be the sign of the end of the age?” Answer: When the “leaves” begin to burst forth. In 1948, Israel once again became a nation. In the 1950’s and 1960’s, the nightmare of potential nuclear holocaust—and a potential *literal* fulfillment of the death tolls depicted in the Revelation—became a reality with the collective warhead and I.C.B.M capability of the United States and the Soviet Union. In 1967, Israel once again gained possession of Jerusalem. The 1970’s saw the beginning of legalized abortion (Isa. 5:20), the casting off of sexual restraint, and the stark reality of the West’s dependence upon Middle East Oil. The 1980’s saw an explosion of pornography, the increasing acceptance of homosexuality and lesbianism as an “alternative lifestyle,” global communications capabilities, and the emergence of the AIDS epidemic. The 1990’s saw the maturation of global satellite TV (Rev. 13:8), the “safe sex” campaign, the threat of Islamic nuclear proliferation, microchip technology implanted into animals, and the global Internet. The current decade has already seen the attempted cloning of humans (Gen. 11:6), the drive in the West to legalize same-sex marriage (Lev. 18:23), the revelation that China has eleven nuclear-tipped I.C.B.M.’s aimed at major U.S. cities, the sobering reality of Radical Islam (and its call for the elimination of Israel and the Western world), the efforts of Iran to develop nuclear weapons, and the much publicized efforts of North Korea to test and perfect I.C.B.M.’s which could reach the west coast of the United States. Dozens of other “leaves” could also be listed.

With the benefit of 20/20 hindsight it is reasonable to suggest that Jesus has in mind with this Fig Tree Parable a “summer-fall-winter-spring” picture of the *entirety* of Church history. Indeed, any broad overview of Church history from today’s twenty-first century perspective tends to support this premise. In the writer’s view, the Day of Pentecost—when Peter and the “120” are filled with the Holy Spirit and the “3000” are “on fire” for Christ—represents the first hour of “summer” in Christ’s parable. Next, given that we are now nearly 2000 years into Church history and that the destruction of the Jerusalem temple took place forty years after Pentecost (or one fiftieth into a 2000-year Church history), Titus’s destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. thus takes place at the end of the first week of “summer” in this parable. During the next 240 years of Church history a significant portion of the Church is still largely “on fire” for Christ—hot, if you will, and alive in the Holy Spirit—though the “on fire” part of the Church begins to decrease in number and fervor as “summer” ends. By 500 A.D., after Constantine’s “Christianization” of the Roman Empire and the subsequent institutionalization of the Church, the Church enters into the cooler weather of “fall”—a lukewarm period, if you will, and a period of an increasingly quenched Holy Spirit. The

reality and efficacy of the “priesthood of all believers” diminishes dramatically. By the time 1000 A.D. arrives, the Church has entered into the long nights and frigid cold of “winter”—and a time of near lifelessness in the Church. Five hundred years later, however, during the Reformation, the Church moves into early “springtime,” and new life is breathed into the Church. An on-fire remnant of true believers once again begins to infiltrate the Church both in number and fervor. Over these past five hundred years a significant portion of the Church has grown ever warmer as “summer” approaches. During this timeframe, the Gospel has penetrated into the Western Hemisphere, Africa, Asia, and recently into the Middle East. The “mustard seed” in the Parable of the Mustard Seed has now become the full grown plant prophesied by Jesus nearly 2000 years ago. To be sure, today’s underground church in China is radically on fire for Christ and is probably the most vivid portrait of the early church seen by Christendom since the first century. During the past sixty years a significant number of evangelical churches in America have seen the number of on-fire believers increase in both number and fervor. In certain parts of Christendom the reality of the priesthood of all believers once again has emerged, as millions of born-again Christians today use their spiritual gifts in the Body of Christ. To sum up, this easily recognizable “summer-fall-winter-spring” pattern to Church history also points us to the conclusion that the springtime “leaves” of world events indeed now seem to be bursting forth in anticipation to Christ’s coming at the end of “spring” or the beginning of “summer.”

Jesus concludes His answer on the “season” of His coming by explaining to the disciples (and us) that the generation which sees the “leaves bursting forth” will not pass from the scene before His return. Perhaps after the long delay pictured in Matthew 24:48 and 25:5, the Lord’s coming indeed is at hand.

[Note: Jesus at this point in the Discourse has now answered all three of the disciples’ questions—and has answered them in the order they were asked: (1) “When will the temple be destroyed?” (Chronological section 1: During the Church Age); (2) “What will be the sign of your return?” (Chronological section 3: Immediately after the Tribulation period—Daniel’s 70th Week—when *the* sign of the Son of Man appears in the sky); and (3) “What will be the sign of the end of the age?” (Parenthetical section 3: When the “leaves” of world events begin to burst forth in such a way that the end-times prophecies can be fulfilled literally). In the remainder of the Discourse, Jesus goes *beyond* these three questions to give the disciples additional information about the end times—including answers, if you will, to questions they didn’t ask. Jesus obviously knows the gaps in the disciples’ understanding of what the future holds, and He wants to help them see the entire end-times panorama with complete clarity—including the previously undisclosed Rapture of the Church, the long delay before His return, and His judgment of the earth’s remaining nations after His bodily return.]

[Additional note: Up until this point the disciples have probably been thinking to themselves: “What have we gotten ourselves into? Jesus is telling us that there’s going to be a seven-year period of judgment on the earth before His bodily return and that the second half of this period is going to be utterly horrific. Are we going to have to go through all of this?” Knowing what is in their hearts (including their fear), Jesus in the next section begins to comfort the troubled hearts of His disciples. He does so by

introducing them to the doctrine of a pre-tribulation Rapture—an unannounced, any-moment coming for His own children before the seven-year judgment takes place.]

Paranetical: Christ's First Teaching on the Rapture and His Exhortation to be Alert for It at All Times (24:36-44)

³⁶"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. ³⁷For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

⁴⁰"Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴²Therefore, 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. ⁴⁴For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

In His introduction of the Rapture to the disciples, Jesus makes it clear that, even though a later ("springtime") generation of Christians will be able to discern the "season" or nearness of His coming (at the Rapture), no Christian—indeed *no one* at all—can know the *day* or the *hour* (v.36) of this previously undisclosed coming—a coming which He describes in vv.40-42. Only the Father in heaven knows the day and the hour (v.36) of this particular coming.

Jesus then points out that most persons on earth at any time between His first advent and the coming described in vv.40-42 will be wholly preoccupied with their day-to-day lives and will pay no attention to God's pronouncement of impending judgment (despite the fact that it is taught in many parts of Scripture)—just as man was wholly preoccupied with day-to-day activities and paid no attention to God's pronouncement of impending judgment in Noah's day: "*For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in the days of Noah which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark; and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away. So too shall the coming of the Son of Man be*" (vv.37-39). Notice that Jesus twice uses the phrase "the coming of the Son of Man." So the first question that needs to be asked is this: *which coming* is He talking about? The coming *for* His own (which He will shortly substantiate in Matt. 25:1-13), or the coming *with* His own (the "elect" of Matt. 24:31), which He has just described for the disciples (in

Matt. 24:29-31)? The answer is the former: Jesus begins to teach the disciples about the Rapture—His coming for certain people *before* the Tribulation judgments begin. (The “who” He comes for and “who” He leaves behind will be explained by Christ in Matt. 25:1-13.) [Note: Christ’s teaching in vv.36-44 is *parenthetical* in nature. Thus, even though this teaching occurs after Christ’s description of His bodily return to the earth in vv.29-31, the placement or position of this teaching in the Discourse has nothing to do with where the event being described fits into the end-times chronology. Where it fits chronologically must be determined by the meaning of the passage itself.]

After He presents the “days of Noah” comparison, Jesus then describes the *nature* of this future unannounced and unexpected coming of the Son of Man—a coming for which the disciples (and Christians today) are always to be alert (v.42). Specifically, Jesus teaches the disciples that this collection will involve the taking of some and the leaving behind of others: “*Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.*” Though Jesus does not yet reveal who will be taken and who will be left (He will shortly do that in the Parable of the Ten Virgins), the implication at this point—given the context of His “days of Noah” comparison—is that believers will be taken from the earth at this coming (by the Rapture) and that unbelievers will be left behind (to face the Tribulation judgments).

Christ then goes on to solidify His teaching about the unannounced and unexpected nature of this particular coming by comparing it to the unannounced, unexpected nature of a thief entering a home at night: “*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. For this reason you be ready too, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will*” (vv. 43-44). Once again Jesus exhorts Christians to be alert for this coming because no one except God the Father knows the exact time of this event. This exhortation to be alert at all times for Christ’s unexpected coming for His own stands in sharp contrast to Christ’s coming *with* His own thirty days after the end of the Tribulation, a timeframe *explicitly stated in Scripture* and which Christ (in Matthew 24:15) implores every Christian to learn. Thus, because the timeframe of His bodily return to the earth is *known* (i.e., thirty days after the end of the Tribulation), Christ’s statement in v.42—“for you do not know which day your Lord is coming”—cannot possibly be referring to His bodily return to the earth. Instead, His statement refers to an unannounced, unexpected coming for His own.

Many Christians nevertheless assign a Second Coming to the earth context and a “prophetic plan of Israel”/Millennial Kingdom interpretation to Matthew 24:36-44. These Christians would interpret the passage as follows: “But when He comes, ‘two men will be in the field; one will be taken [away into judgment] and the other left [to go into the millennial kingdom]. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken [away into judgment] and the other will be left [to go into the kingdom].’ ” Thus, some will be allowed to enter the Millennial Kingdom; others will be taken away into judgment.⁶ It seems to this writer, however, that such a position has not scrutinized the context of the Lord’s “days of Noah” simile carefully enough. In the vernacular of our day the condition

on earth at the time of the coming described in vv.36-44—and the interpretive key to the passage—is “business as usual.” It is “business as usual” in Noah’s day—people are eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage—until Noah enters the ark and the flood comes to judge those not in the ark. Similarly, it will be “business as usual” on the earth just prior to the coming described by Jesus in these verses. People will be eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage, until a coming of the Lord in which “some will be taken and some will be left.”

On the other hand (and in sharp contrast to this “business as usual” scenario), it will *not* be “business as usual” on earth during the second half of the Tribulation period, the timeframe which immediately precedes the Lord’s bodily return to the earth. For example, during the fifth Trumpet Judgment, those who have not turned to Christ will face five months of excruciating torture—like that of the sting of a scorpion (Rev. 9:1-6). It is hard to imagine any non-believer “marrying or giving in marriage” during this timeframe. Furthermore, few believers will be “marrying and giving in marriage” during this timeframe because all of them will be in hiding. [Note: By the time the first Bowl judgment takes place toward the end of the Tribulation, one-half of the earth’s post-Rapture population will no longer be “eating and drinking” or “marrying and giving in marriage” because they will be *dead*—having been killed during the Seal and Trumpet judgments (Rev. 6:7,9; Rev. 9:18).] It will hardly be “business as usual” when the first Bowl judgment takes place and malignant sores break out on all persons who have the mark of the beast on their right hand or forehead (Rev. 16:2) (and when the world’s medical facilities find themselves overwhelmed with frantic people). It will hardly be “business as usual” when the second Bowl judgment takes place and the earth’s oceans turn to blood and all marine life dies (Rev. 16:3) (and when millions of dead carcasses cover the earth’s coastlines, and trillions of dead sea creatures cover the surface of the earth’s oceans). It will hardly be “business as usual” when the third Bowl judgment takes place and the earth’s entire fresh water supply turns to blood (Rev. 16:4-6) (and when people throughout the earth will have to strain the blood out of their drinking water). It will hardly be “business as usual” when the fourth Bowl judgment takes place and men are “scorched with fierce heat” (Rev. 16:8-9) (and when no one will be able to find relief). It will hardly be “business as usual” when fifth Bowl judgment takes place and unbelievers in the Antichrist’s empire suffer excruciating pain (Rev. 16:10): “*and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.*” And, finally, ***no one*** on earth will be marrying or giving in marriage after the cataclysmic destruction of the seventh Bowl judgment thirty days before the Lord’s bodily return [see Appendix D]. Hence, because it fails to recognize the business-as-usual human condition which exists immediately prior to the coming described by Jesus in vv.36-44—erroneously applying instead a *not* business-as-usual context to this “one will be taken, one will be left” passage—the “prophetic plan of Israel”/Millennial Kingdom interpretation of Matthew 24:36-44, in this writer’s view, is contextually impossible and must be ruled out as a plausible interpretation of the passage.

To reiterate, Jesus teaches in Matthew 24:36-44 that it will be “business as usual” on the earth before He comes *unexpectedly* (“*be on the alert for you do not know which day your Lord is coming*”) for certain people at the Rapture. Jesus teaches in

Matthew 24:9-22 and in the Revelation, however, that it will *not* be business as usual before His bodily return to the earth.

[Note: the post-tribulation rapture position also fails to distinguish between the business-as-usual human condition described by Christ in vv. 36-44 and the not business-as-usual human condition before His bodily return to the earth. Because of the entirely different human conditions which immediately precede these events, the two comings of the Son of Man portrayed in the Olivet (1) are mutually exclusive, (2) cannot occur simultaneously, and (3) must be separated by a reasonable amount of time (e.g., the fifth Trumpet judgment itself lasts five months) while the human condition erodes from “eating and drinking and marrying” into torture, panic, and fright (“*and unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved*”). Thus, the contention of post-tribulationists that the Rapture of the Church occurs at the end of the Tribulation (after the horrors of the Bowl judgments) only to be followed immediately by the Second Coming of Christ with the resurrected Church is Scripturally untenable—and must be ruled out.]

Parenthetical: Christ’s Promise of Blessing and Reward for Faithful, Sensible Servanthood While He is Away (24:45-51)

⁴⁵*“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 if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’⁴⁹ and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; ⁵⁰the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, ⁵¹and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth.*

In still another parenthetical pause from the chronology of events, Jesus challenges each born-again Christian to set his heart on doing the Lord's work and to be a faithful, sensible servant while He is away (vv.45-47). Jesus teaches that such a Christian is blessed—and will be rewarded for his faithfulness during the Millennial Kingdom (“when He comes”): “*Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions*” (v.47). In Matthew 19:28-30 Christ promises the twelve apostles that they will rule over and judge the twelve tribes of Israel during the “regeneration”—the Millennial Kingdom. [Note: We can be certain that this promise is a Millennial Kingdom promise because sin will not exist in the Eternal Kingdom; hence, there will be no need to have “judges.”] Conversely, Jesus states that the person who rejects His salvation offer (the “evil slave”) will be punished in a horrible place of torment where there will be “*weeping and gnashing of teeth.*”

Notice, too, that Jesus for the first time teaches His disciples that His coming will not take place for a long time (alluding to what we now know to be the lengthy Church Age): “*My master is not coming for a long time*” (v.48). As well, Jesus (in v. 50) reiterates the *unexpected* nature of this particular coming (as He had previously taught in Matthew 24:42-44): “*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.*”

Parenthetical: The Parable of the Ten Virgins—the Picture of Christ’s Coming for His Own at the Rapture (25:1-13)

^{25:1}“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. ³For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.

⁵“Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. ⁶But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But the prudent answered, saying, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ ¹⁰And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.

¹¹And later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ ¹²But he answered and said, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³Be on the alert, then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

Christ now provides, in the Parable of the Ten Virgins, additional information about the Rapture. Previously, in Matthew 24:40-42, Christ has given the disciples a description of *what happens* at the Rapture: some will be taken and some will be left behind. Here Christ explains *who* will be taken at the Rapture and *who* will be left behind. [Note: the context of the Ten Virgins parable is the (now long) Church Age: “*now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep*” (v. 5).]

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins Christ uses the metaphor of a typical Jewish betrothal, marriage, and marriage supper to augment His earlier teaching on the Rapture. The first century Jewish betrothal was unlike the typical Gentile engagement of today. In the Jewish betrothal, the bridegroom, after proposing to his loved one, would “go away” to his “father’s house” to “make a place” for them to live on the father’s land. Often he would be away for a year while he completed their home. Then, when the home was ready and all the arrangements had been made for the wedding feast, the

bridegroom, in a touch of Jewish romance, would come for his bride *unexpectedly*, usually in the middle of the night. The bride, of course, was to be alert and ready for his return, eager to have their marriage consummated. To be fully prepared (after all, her groom might come for her in the middle of the night), she would have to have her lamp trimmed with oil so that she would have sufficient light to go out to greet him.⁷ [Note: Because Christ knows that He will not return for many centuries when He presents this parable—and because He knows that the vast majority of His Bride (the true Church of born-again believers) will have died before He returns—He apparently chooses here to describe the *living* members of the true Church when He comes at the Rapture as five “prudent” virgins. The prudent virgins have the “oil”—a picture of the indwelling Holy Spirit—and are that part of living Christendom which will be translated into heaven at the Rapture. In contrast, Jesus describes that part of living Christendom which will be left behind on earth at the Rapture as five “foolish” virgins. The foolish virgins have no “oil”—no indwelling Holy Spirit—because they have not come to Christ on the basis of faith in His finished work (but instead have come to Christ on their own terms, typically by sacraments, good works, church membership, or universalism).]

And so it is to be today with the *living* Church, the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-32; Rev. 19:7). All persons indwelt with the Holy Spirit (the “oil”) are to be alert and ready for an *any-moment* coming of the Bridegroom (Christ) to take them to the Father’s home for the consummation of their wedding (the completion and perfection of their salvation) and for the subsequent wedding feast prepared for them by the Father. Those having the “oil” (the indwelling Holy Spirit)—the “wheat” of Matthew 13:36-39, or born-again Christians—are taken by the Groom (Christ) to the wedding feast in heaven (Rev. 19:7-9). Those not having the “oil”—the “tares,” or counterfeit “Christians” of Matthew 13:36-39—are left behind on the earth. It is too late for the tares (counterfeit Christians): the door to the “ark” (heaven in this case) has been closed, even though some of them will perhaps finally embrace salvation by grace through faith and will want to be with the Lord: “*And later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' But he answered and said, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you'*” (vv. 11-12). It is also now too late for all other unbelievers on earth; all of them will have to face the Tribulation judgments, just as all unbelievers in Noah’s day had to face the Flood after the door to the ark was closed. In addition, for a fourth time in the Olivet Discourse Christ exhorts the listener to be ready for this any-moment coming for His own: “*Be on the alert, then, for you do not know the day or the hour*” (v. 13).

In short, Jesus once again teaches the disciples about an unexpected, any-moment Rapture in this parable. Moreover, Christ teaches the “who” of this any-moment coming: He will come *for His own* at the Rapture. In contrast, Christ teaches that those who are not His own—“Christians” who are not born again and all other non-believers (as taught by Christ previously in the “days of Noah” simile)—will be left behind on earth to face the Tribulation judgments.

[Note: so far Jesus (1) has taught the disciples about the *human condition* prior to the Rapture—people will be eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage

(“business as usual”); (2) has taught the disciples *what happens* at the Rapture—some will be taken and some will be left behind; (3) has taught the disciples *who* will be taken into heaven at the Rapture—born again believers in Jesus Christ (the “wheat”)—and *who* will be left behind—counterfeit Christians (the “tares”) and all other unbelievers; and (4) has taught the disciples that the Rapture will occur *before* the Tribulation judgments. It is Paul who later adds that the Rapture will be instantaneous (“in the twinkling of an eye”); that the dead in Christ will be raised first and the living in Christ will then be translated; that the raptured will meet Christ in the air; that the raptured will be given eternal, imperishable bodies; and so on. To be sure, however, it is Christ who first introduces the Rapture, not Paul.]

Paranetical: The Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)

¹⁴“For it [the kingdom of heaven] is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. ¹⁷In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸But he who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master's money.

¹⁹“Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents.' ²¹His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.' ²²The one also who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents.' ²³His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

²⁴And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. ²⁵And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours.' ²⁶But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no seed. ²⁷Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. ²⁸Therefore, take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' ²⁹For to everyone who has shall more be given,

and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. ³⁰*And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Jesus once again instructs the disciples that He will be gone for a long time before He returns: “*Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.*” Jesus then goes on to teach the disciples that *faithfulness* with however much or little the Lord gifts each believer is all that He asks of His children—and that equal faithfulness will be rewarded equally (vv.14-23). Christ also makes it clear, however, that all counterfeit Christians—the “tares” of Matthew 13:24-30, 36-40 and the “wicked, lazy, worthless slaves” depicted here—will be cast out “*into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (vv. 24-30). In no uncertain terms, Jesus teaches that Hell will be a place of utter separation from God (and from God's people) and will be a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

D. The Judgment of the Remaining Nations by Christ (25:31-46)

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. ³²And 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; ³³and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

³⁴“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? ³⁸And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’

⁴¹“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ ⁴⁴Then they themselves also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a

stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?'
⁴⁵Then He will answer them, saying, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Jesus, after several parenthetical parables and exhortations in which He explains to the disciples (among other things) His unannounced, unexpected, any-moment return for His own, now transitions the disciples back to His final major chronological teaching on the end times: His judgment of the remaining nations after His bodily return to the earth (*"when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all His angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne"*).

Jesus tells the disciples that upon His return He will judge all persons who survive the horrors of the Tribulation: *"and all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another as a shepherd the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on the right and the goats on the left"* (vv. 32-33). Christ then teaches that all remaining persons on earth who have put their faith in Him will be allowed to enter the Millennial Kingdom (*"inherit the kingdom prepared for you"*). Those who have not put their faith in Him will be slain (*"depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels"*) (vv. 34-46).

Summary of Christ's Olivet Discourse teaching:

- Christ presents a four-fold chronology of future events in the Olivet:
 - (1) the Church Age (24:4-8)
 - (2) the Tribulation period (24:9-14)
 - (3) the Second Coming of Christ to the earth (24:29-31)
 - (4) the Judgment of the earth's remaining nations by Christ before He begins His Millennial reign over the earth (25:31-46)
- Christ teaches that the Church Age will be characterized by the following phenomena (Matt. 24:4-8):
 - (1) many will come in Christ's name, claiming to be Christ
 - (2) many will be misled by these claims
 - (3) there will be wars and rumors of wars
 - (4) nation will rise against nation, and kingdom will rise against kingdom
 - (5) there will be earthquakes in various places
 - (6) there will be famines in various places
- Christ teaches that the Church Age will last for long time and that His return will not take place for a long time (Matt. 24:48; 25:5; 25:19)
- Christ confirms, by referring the disciples to Daniel 9:24-27, that the Tribulation period will last for seven years

- Christ teaches that the seven-year Tribulation period will be characterized by the following phenomena (Matt. 24:9-14):
 - (1) Many Tribulation Christians (i.e., post-Rapture Christians) will be killed
 - (2) Tribulation Christians will be hated by all nations because of Christ
 - (3) many so-called “Christians” will fall away, will hate Tribulation Christians, and will deliver up Tribulation Christians to be killed
 - (4) false prophets will arise—and will mislead many
 - (5) lawlessness will increase
 - (6) most people’s love will grow cold
 - (7) those Tribulation Christians who endure to the end will be saved
 - (8) the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world for a witness to all nations
- Christ teaches that the second half of the Tribulation will be a time of unimaginable horror on earth—and that “unless those days be cut short no life would survive” (Matt. 24:19-22)
- Christ teaches that His bodily return to the earth will be “announced” by four signs in the sky—the sun will be darkened; the moon will not give off its light; the stars will move out of their customary positions in the sky; and the celestial laws which govern the solar systems and galaxies will be altered—and then by *the* sign of His return (Matt. 24:29-30)
- Christ introduces the disciples to the doctrine of the pre-tribulation Rapture of the Church in two parenthetical passages: Matthew 24:36-44 and 25:1-11. Unlike the Second Coming of Christ to the earth, which will be announced by signs in the sky, the Rapture will be *unannounced* and will occur *unexpectedly*
- Christ teaches, in four separate verses, that the born-again Christian is to be ever-expectant and always ready for this any-moment Rapture (Matt. 24:42; 24:43-44; 24:50; 25:13)
- Christ teaches that those within Christendom who are born-again believers will be taken from the earth at the time of the Rapture—and that the Rapture will occur *before* the Tribulation judgments (Matt. 24:36-44; 25:1-11)
- Christ teaches that those within Christendom who are not born-again believers will be left behind on earth at the time of the Rapture—and will not be able to escape the Tribulation judgments even if some of them want to turn to Christ after the Rapture (Matt. 24:36-44; 25:1-11)
- Christ teaches that the born-again Christian, even though he/she cannot know the day or the hour of the Rapture, can nevertheless discern when the Lord’s return is near: Just as a person knows that summer is near when the leaves begin to burst forth in the spring, so too a person can know that Christ’s return is near when the “leaves” of world events begin to burst forth in ways which could allow for a literal fulfillment of the end-times prophecies (Matt. 24:32-35)

- Christ teaches that all persons who survive the horrors of the Tribulation will be judged by Jesus Himself after His return. Those who have put their faith in Him will be allowed to enter the Millennial Kingdom. Those who have not put their faith in Him will be slain (Matt. 25:31-46)
- Christ points out that most persons during the Church Age—including persons today—will pay no attention to God's pronouncement of impending judgment, just as humans paid no attention to God's pronouncement of impending judgment in Noah's day (Matt. 24:36-39)
- Christ teaches that virtually all of Christendom—including His own children (those indwelt with the Holy Spirit)—will be drowsy and asleep (i.e., not alert) when He comes unexpectedly at the Rapture (Matt. 25:1-11)
- Christ exhorts today's believer to set his heart on doing the Lord's work and to be a faithful, sensible servant of the Lord while He is away (Matt. 24:45-51)
- Christ teaches that all who name the name of Christ (i.e., both the “wheat” and the “tares”) will one day give an accounting of their lives to Christ. Those who are born again will enter into the joy of their Master; those who are not born again will be cast into Hell (Matt. 25:14-30)
- Christ teaches that faithfulness with however much or little the Lord gifts each born-again believer is all that Christ asks of His children and that equal faithfulness will be rewarded equally (Matt. 25:14-29)
- Christ teaches that Hell will be a place of utter separation from God (and from God's people) and will be a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:30)

[Conclusion on next page]

Conclusion

Jesus describes *two* very different comings of the Son of Man in the Olivet Discourse. These comings not only are two separate events, but they are *mutually exclusive* events (i.e., an event cannot be both unannounced and announced at the same time; an event cannot simultaneously be unexpected and expected). In addition, these two events are separated in time, thus allowing the human condition to disintegrate from the one described in Matthew 24:37-38 to the one described in Matthew 24:15-22. Appendix E shows the contrasts and the mutual exclusivity of these two comings of the Son of Man.

One coming is *unannounced* (like a thief in the night), unexpected, and occurs when the human condition is one of “eating, drinking, and marrying.” Scoffers in fact will ask during this timeframe: “*Where is the sign of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation*” (II Pet. 3:4). This previously undisclosed coming of the Son of Man (introduced and explained parenthetically in Matthew 24:36-44 and Matthew 25:1-13) is the **pre-tribulation Rapture of the Church**—Christ’s sudden, unannounced, unexpected, instantaneous coming in the air *for* His own. To be sure, Jesus provides significant information about the Rapture in the Olivet Discourse. First, He describes the *human condition* prior to the Rapture—people will be eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage. It will be “business as usual” on earth at the time of this unexpected coming. Second, He describes *what happens* at the Rapture—some will be taken and others will be left behind. Third, He teaches *who* will be taken into heaven at the Rapture—born again believers in Jesus Christ (those having indwelling Holy Spirit)—and *who* will be left behind on earth to face judgment—counterfeit Christians (those not having the indwelling Holy Spirit) and all other unbelievers. And, fourth, He explains that the Rapture will occur *before* the Tribulation judgments.

The other coming is *announced* (by signs in the sky), expected (thirty days after the end of the Tribulation period), and takes place immediately after the final three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation period—a period filled with death, horror, terror, panic, and fright. It will *not* be “business as usual” on earth prior to the Lord’s bodily return. This particular coming of the Son of Man (presented chronologically in Matthew 24:29-31) is the **Second Coming of Jesus Christ**—the bodily return of Christ to the earth *with* His own (including resurrected Old Testament saints, resurrected Church Age saints, and resurrected Tribulation saints), in order to save Israel from annihilation, to judge the earth’s remaining nations, and to set up His long-awaited Millennial Kingdom.

Finally, Christ’s revelation of two very different and mutually-exclusive comings of the Son of Man—separated in time by two entirely different human conditions—renders the post-tribulation Rapture position Biblically impossible.

Footnotes

1. Some Christians believe that Matthew's "Kingdom of Heaven" parables teach "new truths concerning the Millennial Kingdom" rather than the unveiling of Messiah's "Inter-Advent" Kingdom. ["Matthew 13: The Church or the Kingdom?" Couch, Mal. general editor. *Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2000. pp. 210-220.] But how accurate is this contention? Do the "kingdom of heaven" parables of Matthew 13 reveal new truths about the Millennial Kingdom?

First, let us look at Matthew's Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matt. 13:23-30, 36-43). Jesus teaches that in the "kingdom of heaven" He (the Son of Man) is the one who sows the "wheat" (the good seed, the sons of the kingdom) in the world. But He also teaches that the enemy, the *devil*, sows the "tares" (the counterfeit seed, the sons of the evil one) in the world. Furthermore, Jesus teaches that *both* types of seed will be allowed to grow together until the harvest (v.30). Jesus also gives us the timeframe of the harvest and the judgment of the evil ones: the end of the age (vv.39-40). So the question must be asked: Does this parable have the *Millennial Kingdom* in view? All Christians holding to consistent literalism would agree that Satan is *bound* during the Millennial Kingdom. Thus, it would be impossible for Satan to sow counterfeit seed during the Millennial Kingdom—in turn making any "Messianic Kingdom" interpretation of this parable difficult, if not impossible. As distasteful as this conclusion is to those who hold to the "new truths concerning the Millennial Kingdom" view, it seems clear that the plain normal interpretation of the Wheat and Tares parable precludes the Millennial Kingdom view.

Let us now look at Matthew's Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23). Jesus teaches that the "word of the kingdom," when preached to unbelievers, will find a wide spectrum of response among those who hear the message—from outright rejection, to shallow profession, to carnal reception, to whole-hearted reception. Once again, however, persons holding to the Millennial Kingdom view of this parable finds themselves in a difficult dilemma: *Satan* (v.19) is seen as the one who, in the case of the unreceptive hearer (v.20), "comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart." Because Satan is bound during the Millennial Kingdom, it is difficult to see how Christ's Parable of the Sower can have a Millennial context. What interpretation is left? Most assuredly, in this writer's view, the Parable of the Sower is dealing with the inter-advent sowing of the Gospel of Christ—the good news that Christ died for the sinner and rose again on the third day.

Let us also look at Matthew's Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matt. 13:31-32). Jesus teaches that the "kingdom of heaven" is like a tiny mustard seed which a man sows in a field. Jesus then makes it clear in the parable that there is a *growth process* involved. And though this "kingdom of heaven" starts out as something utterly insignificant, it will grow to become the largest of kingdoms. Because of the presence of this growth dynamic in the Mustard Seed parable, the writer sees still another dilemma, if not impossibility, for the Millennial Kingdom view. At the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom, Christ will reign over a *large* kingdom: His Kingdom, in fact, will be vast: "And He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Zech. 9:10). It will include surviving Jewish tribulation believers and resurrected

Jewish believers from all prior Ages, living in the land promised the Patriarchs. It will include surviving gentile tribulation believers and resurrected gentile believers from all prior Ages, living in the surrounding nations. There will be nothing small or insignificant about the Messianic Kingdom, even at its beginning.

In the writer's view, at least nine of Matthew's twelve "kingdom of heaven" parables have significant difficulties or contradictions when one attempts a Millennial Kingdom interpretation—thus suggesting, to this writer at least, that an inter-advent understanding of the twelve parables is the best position.

2. Scofield, C.I. editor. *The New Scofield Reference Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967. p. 1351.
3. Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1966. pp. 169, 187, and others.
4. Pentecost, J. Dwight. *Thy Kingdom Come*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1995. p. 255.
5. Ladd, George Eldon. *The Blessed Hope*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956; reprinted November, 1992. pp. 85-86, 163.
6. Pentecost. *Thy Kingdom Come*. p. 240.
7. Levitt, Zola. *In My Father's House*. Self-published, Zola Levitt, 1981. pp.1-18.

Appendix A

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW: *THE REVELATION OF GOD'S INTER-ADVENT KINGDOM OF HEAVEN*

- I. CHRIST'S GENEALOGY [1:1-17]
- II. CHRIST'S BIRTH AND GROWTH [1:18 – 2:23]
- III. CHRIST'S BAPTISM AND TEMPTATIONS [3:1 – 4:11]
 - *THE ANNOUNCEMENT (BY JOHN THE BAPTIST) OF THE IMPENDING KINGDOM OF HEAVEN*
[3:1-12]
- IV. CHRIST'S MINISTRY TO THE MULTITUDES [4:12 – 16:12]
 - *THE OFFER OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN TO ISRAEL (BY JESUS CHRIST)*
[4:17 – 11:30]
 - *THE REJECTION OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BY ISRAEL'S RELIGIOUS LEADERS*
[12:1 – 12:50]
 - *THE UNVEILING OF GOD'S INTER-ADVENT KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (THE "MYSTERY" KINGDOM) IN CHRIST'S FIRST SEVEN K.O.H. PARABLES*
[13:1-50]
- V. CHRIST'S FOCUS ON THE TWELVE [16:13 – 20:34]
 - *THE EXPLANATION OF HOW A PERSON ENTERS GOD'S INTER-ADVENT KINGDOM OF HEAVEN*
[18:1-3]
 - *THE CONTINUED UNVEILING OF GOD'S INTER-ADVENT KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN CHRIST'S EIGHTH K.O.H. PARABLE*
[18:23-35]
 - *THE PROMISE OF REWARD IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM FOR THOSE WHO FOLLOW CHRIST FAITHFULLY IN THE INTER-ADVENT KINGDOM*
[19:27-29]
 - *THE CONTINUED UNVEILING OF GOD'S INTER-ADVENT KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN CHRIST'S NINTH K.O.H. PARABLE*
[20:1-16]
- VI. CHRIST'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY [21:1-17]
- VII. CHRIST'S FINAL CONFRONTATIONS WITH THE PHARISEES [21:18 – 23:39]
 - *THE CONTINUED UNVEILING OF GOD'S INTER-ADVENT KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN CHRIST'S TENTH K.O.H. PARABLE* [22:2-14]

- VIII. CHRIST'S FINAL MINISTRY TO THE TWELVE [24:1 – 26:19]
- *THE FINAL UNVEILING OF GOD'S INTER-ADVENT KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN CHRIST'S ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH K.O.H. PARABLES*
[25:1-30]
- IX. CHRIST'S ARREST AND CRUCIFIXION [26:30 – 27:66]
- X. CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND APPEARANCES [28:1-20]
- *THE EXHORTATION TO TAKE THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST—THE CORE MESSAGE OF GOD'S INTER-ADVENT KINGDOM—TO ALL NATIONS*
[28:19-20]

Appendix B

MATTHEW'S INTERADVENT "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN" PARABLES

(in approximate chronological order, though the first eight mostly overlap)

- **THE SOWER** [throughout the Church Age]
(Matt. 13:3-9,18-23; Mark 4:3-8,14-20; Luke 8:5-8)
- **THE MUSTARD SEED** [throughout the Church Age]
(Matt. 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)
- **THE WHEAT & THE TARES** [throughout the Church Age]
(Matt. 13:24-30,36-43)
- **THE LEAVEN** [throughout the Church Age]
(Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20-21)
- **THE HIDDEN TREASURE** [throughout the Church Age]
(Matt. 13:44)
- **THE PEARL OF GREAT VALUE** [throughout the Church Age]
(Matt. 13:45-46)
- **THE KING WHO SETTLES ACCOUNTS** [thr. the Church Age]
(Matt. 18:23-35)
- **THE LANDOWNER WHO OFFERS WORK** [thr. the Church Age]
(Matt. 20:1-16)
- **THE TEN VIRGINS** [The Rapture]
(Matt. 25:1-13)
- **THE TALENTS** [The Judgment Seat of Christ, 25:19-23]
(Matt. 25:14-30) [*The Great White Throne Judgment, 25:24-30*]
- **THE WEDDING FEAST** [Revelation 19:7-9]
(Matt. 22:2-14)
[Christ's bodily return to the earth]
- **THE FISHING NET** [Christ's post-return judgment of the nations]
(Matt. 13:47-50)

[The Beginning of Christ's 1,000-Year Reign over the Earth]

Appendix C

MATTHEW'S INTERADVENT "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN" PARABLES

(in order of presentation)

- **THE SOWER**
(Matt. 13:3-9,18-23; Mark 4:3-8,14-20; Luke 8:5-8)
- **THE WHEAT & THE TARES**
(Matt. 13:24-30,36-43)
- **THE MUSTARD SEED**
(Matt. 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)
- **THE LEAVEN**
(Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20-21)
- **THE HIDDEN TREASURE**
(Matt. 13:44)
- **THE PEARL OF GREAT VALUE**
(Matt. 13:45-46)
- **THE FISHING NET**
(Matt. 13:47-50)
- **THE KING WHO SETTLES ACCOUNTS**
(Matt. 18:23-35)
- **THE LANDOWNER WHO OFFERS WORK**
(Matt. 20:1-16)
- **THE WEDDING FEAST**
(Matt. 22:2-14)
- **THE TEN VIRGINS**
(Matt. 25:1-13)
- **THE TALENTS**
(Matt. 25:14-30)

Appendix D

THE SEVENTH BOWL JUDGMENT—AND ITS AFTERMATH

On the final day of the Tribulation period God concludes His wrath against the nations by subjecting the entire world to the greatest earthquake in human history—and by radically changing the whole topography of the earth:

*And the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air; and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.” And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a **great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.** And the great city [Babylon the Great, the Antichrist's Empire] was split into three parts, and **the cities of the nations fell.** And Babylon the Great [the Antichrist's Empire] was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And **every island fled away, and the mountains were not found** (Rev. 16:17-20).*

Listen to the magnitude and finality of this judgment: The *entire* earth (“*and the cities of the nations fell*”) is rocked by this *greatest* earthquake in human history (“*such as there has not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty*”); the Antichrist's Empire is thrown down with violence (by way of this greatest earthquake in human history); and the Antichrist's Empire is split into three parts.

Furthermore, God completes His full retribution against the Antichrist's Empire by destroying it *utterly and forever* (described parenthetically in Revelation 18):

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons, and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality. . . . Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.”

*And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and **will not be found any longer**” (Rev. 18:1-3, 20; 18:21).*

Not only does God split the Antichrist's Empire into three parts (Rev. 16:19), but He causes it to fall into the earth's oceans, never to be found again (Rev. 18:21).

Hear, too, the prophet Isaiah's description of the final day of the Tribulation: “*Behold, the Lord lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface, and scatters its inhabitants. The earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled, for the Lord has spoken this word. . . . **The earth is broken asunder, the earth is split through, the earth is shaken violently. The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard, and it totters like a shack, for its transgression is heavy upon it, and it will fall, never to rise again**” (Isa. 24:1-2, 19-20). The earth is*

“completely laid waste” and is “shaken violently;” the earth “reels to and fro like a drunkard.” Anyone who has seen the television footage of the 1964 Alaskan earthquake (8.5 on the Richter scale) has a vivid mental picture of the earth’s crust reeling “to and fro like a drunkard.” Unfortunately for post-Rapture mankind, this worldwide—and most violent of earthquakes in human history—will be far more powerful on the Richter scale than the Alaskan quake. Listen also to Revelation 16:20, Psalms 46:2, and Psalms 97:5: “*And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found*” (Rev. 16:20); “. . . though the earth should change, and *though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea*” (Ps. 46:2); and “*the mountains will melt like wax at the presence of the Lord*” (Ps. 97:5). The material trappings which the nations worshipped will be laid waste in minutes.

The prophet Ezekial also pictures the scope of this seventh Bowl judgment: “*And the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, and all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence; the mountains also will be thrown down; and every wall will fall to the ground*” (Ezek. 38:20). Notice that every living creature, including all men on the face of the earth, will shake in sheer terror as the judgment takes place. Notice that the mountains will be thrown down and that every wall will collapse. No high-rise in the world will remain standing. No building—no matter how great or strong—will survive. All buildings will fall.

[Note: Given the symmetry of the Seal and Trumpet death tolls—one fourth of mankind for the Seal judgments and another one third of remaining mankind for the Trumpet judgments (and therefore one fourth of the earth’s initial post-Rapture population for the Seals and another one fourth of the earth’s initial post-Rapture population for the Trumpets)—it is reasonable to postulate that one half of the earth’s remaining population (or another one fourth of the earth’s initial post-Rapture population) will be killed during the Bowl judgments, principally on this final day of the Tribulation. Thus, it can be suggested that, by the end of the seventh Bowl, *three fourths* of the earth’s post-Rapture population will have been killed during the seven-year Tribulation period—and that *three fourths of the earth’s post-Rapture population will no longer be “marrying or giving in marriage” or “eating and drinking” immediately before the Lord’s bodily return to the earth.*]

Clearly the seventh Bowl judgment brings forth a massive upheaval and re-arrangement of the earth’s crust. First, every island on earth will “flee away”—will sink back into the oceans. The Hawaiian Islands, New Guinea, the Solomon’s, the Fiji’s, the Philippines, Malaysia, Borneo, the West Indies, and hundreds more—indeed every island on earth—will disappear (Rev. 16:20). Second, all of the earth’s mountains will likewise disappear (“*and the mountains were not found*”—Rev. 16:20). They will simply melt like wax (Ps. 97:5). As some of the mountains of the world heat up and melt, their melting mass will spread over the surrounding terrain—and will wipe out and cover whole villages, towns, and cities. Still other mountains will melt and run off into the seas (Ps. 46:2). Thus, on the final day of the Tribulation period, every mountain and all the great mountain ranges (including the Andes, the Rockies, the Appalachians, the Pyrenees, the Himalayas, and the Urals) will be leveled.

[Note: it is likely that topography of Israel—though touched somewhat by the seventh Bowl judgment—will be spared from the most severe manifestations of this judgment, if for no other reason than to protect the Israelites who, by faith, fled into their Israel-Jordan mountain hideouts at the mid-point of the Tribulation. Nevertheless, the topography of Israel

will be radically changed during the end times according to Zechariah 14:10—perhaps between the time of Christ’s bodily return to the earth and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. We can deduce—from Zech 14:10, Rev. 20:9, and from the disappearance of the earth’s islands and mountains—that Jerusalem will be the highest point on earth once the transformation of the earth’s topography is complete.]

Hear again what happens on this final day of the Great Tribulation. First, God moves all of the earth’s fault lines simultaneously and brings forth the greatest earthquake in human history. So massive is this earthquake that every wall on earth falls to the ground (Ezek. 38:20). Second, God heats up the earth’s islands and mountains—and then causes *every* island to sink back into the oceans (Rev. 16:20) and *every* mountain to fall—to simply melt like wax (Ps. 97:5). Perhaps a half a billion people will be killed during the worldwide earthquake and the removal of the earth’s islands and mountains. Third, God causes the Antichrist’s Empire (the Western world) to break into three parts (Rev. 16:19)—and then to sink to bottom of the ocean, never to be found again (Rev. 18:1-3, 20; 18:21). It is likely that at least another half a billion people will be killed (drowned) as the Antichrist’s Empire disappears beneath the sea. Indeed, when Jesus Christ sets up His Millennial reign over the earth seventy-five days after this final Bowl judgment (Dan. 12:11-12), no vestige of the Antichrist’s Empire will remain on earth (Rev. 18:21).

In conclusion, it can safely be argued, given Scripture’s various descriptions of the final day of the Tribulation, that ***no one*** will be marrying and giving in marriage during the thirty days between the seventh Bowl and the Lord’s bodily return to the earth. Virtually every remaining person on earth will live in sheer survival mode, clinging to life in utter desperation. In addition, ***most*** of these people, because of the destruction of the seventh Bowl’s staggeringly-powerful worldwide earthquake—with every remaining village, town, and city lying in rubble—will no longer routinely be “eating and drinking” (the word-picture given by Christ of the human condition before the *unannounced* and *unexpected* coming of the Son of Man portrayed parenthetically in Matthew 24:36-44) but instead will have difficulty even *finding* food to eat. Because of the shortage of food—and the disease quickly being spread by decomposing bodies and ripped-open sewer lines—it is easy to see how Jesus tells His disciples that “unless these days had been cut short, no life would survive.” Thirty days after the seventh Bowl judgment, these days *will* be cut short when Jesus Christ returns bodily to the earth.

Let every Christian understand that *this* is the human condition which exists on earth immediately prior to Christ’s bodily return. The writer would therefore suggest that the widely-held “prophetic plan for Israel”/Millennial Kingdom interpretation of Matthew 24:36-44 is contextually impossible—and must be ruled out if we are to handle this passage of God’s Word accurately.

[Note: though the cities of the earth lie in utter rubble upon Christ’s return, it can be postulated that Jesus Christ—the one who spoke the universe, including the earth, into existence (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26)—will simply speak a word and the rubble will disappear, thus making the earth once again inhabitable for those humans who enter the Millennial Kingdom. It can also be postulated that Christ will speak a word and some type of shelter (housing) will come forth on the earth. It can be postulated that Christ will simply say the word and all those entering the Millennial Kingdom will be clothed with fresh covering.

Furthermore, it is easy to see how Christ would simply say, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, and fruit trees after their kind; and it was so” (Gen. 1:11) in order to provide food at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.]

Appendix E

THE TWO COMINGS OF THE SON OF MAN IN THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

THE RAPTURE:

BEFORE THE TRIBULATION

“just like the days of Noah . . .”

RETURNS FOR HIS SAINTS

UNANNOUNCED (LIKE THIEF . . .)

UNEXPECTED

UNKNOWN DAY OR HOUR

CONDITION ON EARTH PRIOR:

“business as usual”

eating & drinking

marrying & giving in marriage

*INVISIBLE RETURN*²

*A CATCHING UP*³

UP INTO HEAVEN

FOR DELIVERANCE

THE SECOND COMING:

AFTER THE TRIBULATION

“immediately after the tribulation . . .”

RETURNS WITH HIS SAINTS

ANNOUNCED (BY SIGNS IN THE SKY)

EXPECTED

*KNOWN DAY*¹

CONDITION ON EARTH PRIOR:

not “business as usual”

woe to those with child . . .

unless those days be cut short . . .

VISIBLE RETURN (THEY WILL SEE . . .)

A COMING DOWN

DOWN TO THE EARTH

FOR JUDGMENT

¹ Dan. 12:11-12

² I Cor. 15:50-52; I Thess. 4:15-18

³ I Thess. 4:15-18; I Cor. 15:50-52

Appendix E-a

THE TWO COMINGS OF THE SON OF MAN IN THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

THE RAPTURE:

BEFORE THE TRIBULATION

“just like the days of Noah . . .”
(Matt. 24:37-39)

RETURNS FOR HIS SAINTS

(Matt. 24:36-41; 25:1-10)

UNANNOUNCED (LIKE THIEF . .)

(Matt. 24:43-44)

UNEXPECTED

(Matt. 24:43-44; 24:50; 25:5-6)

UNKNOWN DAY OR HOUR

(Matt. 24:36; 24:42; 24:50; 25:13)

CONDITION ON EARTH PRIOR:

“business as usual”
eating & drinking
marrying & giving in marriage
(Matt. 24:37-39)

INVISIBLE RETURN²

A CATCHING UP³

UP INTO HEAVEN

(Matt. 25:6-12)

FOR DELIVERANCE

(Matt. 24:37-42)

THE SECOND COMING:

AFTER THE TRIBULATION

“immediately after the tribulation . . .”
(Matt. 24:29-30)

RETURNS WITH HIS SAINTS

(Matt. 24:31)

ANNOUNCED (BY SIGNS IN THE SKY)

(Matt. 24:29-30)

EXPECTED

(Matt. 24:29-30)

KNOWN DAY¹

CONDITION ON EARTH PRIOR:

not “business as usual”
woe to those with child . .
unless those days be cut short . .
(Matt. 24:19-22)

VISIBLE RETURN (THEY WILL SEE . .)

(Matt. 24:30)

A COMING DOWN

(Matt. 24:29-30)

DOWN TO THE EARTH

(Matt. 25:31-32a)

FOR JUDGMENT

(Matt. 25:14-19,24-30; 25:31-46)

¹ Dan. 12:11-12 ² I Cor. 15:50-52; I Thess. 4:15-18 ³ I Thess. 4:15-18; I Cor. 15:50-52

Appendix F

The Text of the Olivet Discourse—and an Analysis of Which Sections of the Discourse are Chronological and Which Sections are Parenthetical:

^{24:4}And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. ⁵For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. ⁶And 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. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. ⁸But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

*[Chronological vs. parenthetical analysis: Jesus begins His explanation of the future in vv.4-8. Most evangelical commentators hold this section to be chronological in nature; the only debate is whether it represents the Church Age or the first half of the Tribulation period. This writer holds to the former view (and will present five reasons why he favors the former view). The final sentence of this section (v.8) is a "sending" transition to the next chronological section: "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs." Matthew 24:4-8 is **Chronological Section 1**]*

⁹"Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. ¹⁰And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. ¹²And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.

[Chronological vs. parenthetical analysis: Jesus now mentions the word "tribulation." Most evangelical commentators hold this section to be chronological in nature. Many of these commentators contend that Jesus describes the second half of the Tribulation period in this section; other commentators, however, suggest that it represents the entire Tribulation period. This writer holds to the latter view. The first sentence of this section (v.9) is a "receiving" transition from the previous chronological section: "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, . . ." The final sentence of this

section is a sending transition to the next chronological section: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world . . . and then the end shall come.”
Matthew 24:9-14 is Chronological Section 2]

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),¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; ¹⁷let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; ¹⁸and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak.

¹⁹“But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! ²⁰But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; ²¹for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. ²²And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.

*[Chronological vs. parenthetical analysis: It is here, in verses 15-22, that Jesus (in the writer’s view) presents His first parenthetical vignette in the Discourse. Notice that verses 15-17 do not advance the chronology of events but instead present an exhortation. Jesus refers the reader to Daniel 9:24-27 and then exhorts those who see the temple being desecrated by the end-times Antichrist to flee to the mountains. In verses 21-22, Jesus describes the severity of the second half of the Tribulation period—so severe in fact that no life would survive unless God intervenes to put an end to the tribulation. Thus, when one carefully analyzes the substance of Christ’s teaching in verses 15-22, it is clear that Jesus is not advancing the chronology of events in these verses; instead, He is (1) giving a parenthetical exhortation and (2) describing the severity of the second half of a period of time He has already unveiled to the disciples in verses 9-14. Matthew 24:15-22 is **Parenthetical Section 1]***

²³“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe him. ²⁴For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵Behold, I have told you in advance. ²⁶If, therefore, they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go forth, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe them. ²⁷For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the

coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

*[Chronological vs. parenthetical analysis: Jesus introduces, parenthetically, another future and end-times concern—the emergence of false Christs and false prophets—and simultaneously exhorts the disciples to be alert for them during the two periods of time He has just described in 24:4-8 and 24:9-15. Once again it is clear that Jesus is not advancing the chronology of events in these verses. Matthew 24:23-28 is **Parenthetical Section 2**]*

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, ³⁰and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and 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. ³¹And 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.

*[Chronological vs. parenthetical analysis: Verse 29 is a receiving transition from the previous chronological section—"but immediately after the tribulation of those days"—and tells the reader that the Lord's unveiling of the chronology of events has once again begun. Most evangelical commentators regard this section of the Discourse to be chronological in nature. Matthew 24:29-31 is **Chronological Section 3**]*

³²"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; ³³even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. ³⁴Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away.

*[Chronological vs. parenthetical analysis: Jesus presents a parable and exhorts the disciples to learn from its parallel logic. He is not advancing the chronology of events but instead is teaching the disciples (and us) to know how to discern the "season" of His return. Matthew 24:32-35 is **Parenthetical Section 3**]*

³⁶"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. ³⁷For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

⁴⁰"Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴²Therefore, 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. ⁴⁴For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

[Chronological vs. parenthetical analysis: In verse 36 Jesus teaches that no man can know the day or the hour of an unexpected coming of the Son of Man (which He describes in vv.40-42). He then sets up a simile which describes the human condition on earth before this unexpected coming—the day and hour of which no man can know. He also describes what happens at this coming and twice exhorts the disciples (and us) to be alert for it. Nevertheless, though the section describes an event which takes place somewhere in the end-times chronology, and though Jesus exhorts all Christians to be alert for it, careful analysis of the passage (including the fact that it contains no sending or receiving transitional phrases) shows that the section itself is parenthetical in nature. Furthermore, any assessment of where this event fits into the end-times chronology must be determined by an analysis of the text itself and not by its placement or position in the Discourse. Matthew 24:36-44 is **Parenthetical Section 4**]

⁴⁵"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?

⁴⁶Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

⁴⁷Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

⁴⁸"But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' ⁴⁹and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; ⁵⁰the 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 shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth.

[Chronological vs. parenthetical analysis: In this section Jesus promises that those who have been faithful and sensible slaves during His absence will be rewarded—and that those who have been indifferent slaves (and in fact counterfeit slaves) will be punished in a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. The passage does not advance the chronology of events and is parenthetical in nature. Matthew 24:45-51 is **Par-enthetical Section 5**]

^{25:1}"Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. ³For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.

⁵"Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. ⁶But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ⁷Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹But the prudent answered, saying, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' ¹⁰ And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.

¹¹And later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' ¹²But he answered and said, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³Be on the alert, then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

[Chronological vs. parenthetical analysis: Jesus again sets up a simile to describe an event which will take place somewhere in the end-times chronology. During this event, some are prepared to leave with Christ and do in fact join Him at a wedding feast; others are not prepared, are left behind, and are excluded from the wedding feast. Jesus then exhorts the disciples, in language identical with the exhortation language of Parenthetical Section 4, to be alert for this coming—the day and hour of which no man knows. Even though this section describes an event which takes place somewhere in the end-times chronology, and even though Jesus exhorts all Christians to be alert for it, careful analysis (including the fact that the passage contains no sending or

receiving transitional phrases) shows that the section itself is parenthetical in nature. Furthermore, any assessment of where this event fits into the end-times chronology must be determined by an analysis of the text itself and not by its placement or position in the Discourse. *Matthew 24:36-44 is Parenthetical Section 6]*

¹⁴"For it [the kingdom of heaven] is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. ¹⁷In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸But he who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master's money.

¹⁹"Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents.' ²¹His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.' ²²The one also who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents.' ²³His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

²⁴And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. ²⁵And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours.' ²⁶But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no seed. ²⁷Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. ²⁸Therefore, take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' ²⁹For to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. ³⁰And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[Chronological vs. parenthetical analysis: Jesus uses a simile to teach the disciples about the doctrine of reward for

*those who have been faithful servants of the master and lack of reward for those who have been counterfeit servants. The latter will be punished in a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. The passage does not advance the chronology of events and is parenthetical in nature. Matthew 24:45-51 is **Parenthetical Section7]***

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. ³²And 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; ³³and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

³⁴“Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' ³⁷Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? ³⁸And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

⁴¹“Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' ⁴⁴Then they themselves also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' ⁴⁵Then He will answer them, saying, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

[Chronological vs. parenthetical analysis: Verse 31 is a receiving transition (“but when the Son of Man comes in His glory”)—and refers the reader back to Matt. 24:30 (in Chronological Section 3): “and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.” This receiving transition in Matt. 25:31 then sets up the rest of

*this fourth and final chronological section in the Discourse (“then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him”). Matthew 25:31-46 is **Chronological Section 4**]*