

## Mapping the Second Half of the Olivet Discourse<sup>1</sup>

Matt 24:32-25:46

Robert Dean, Jr. ThM, MA, DMin

For any student of eschatology or dispensationalism, a study of the Olivet Discourse is foundational.<sup>2</sup> However, a quick perusal of those holding to a futurist, dispensational, pre-tribulational theology will discover an array of contradictory interpretive options. The freshman or sophomore interpreter may easily become confused. Walvoord notes:

It would seem at first glance that illustration and application would not present too many problems of interpretation, and yet in this passage, rather strangely, commentators who are quite similar in their points of view in prophecy, have differed considerably in their exposition of this last portion of Matthew 24. Some special problems of interpretation must be taken into consideration in the study of this chapter.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to sort out the options and provide a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of each view as critiqued by others from within the dispensational, futurist community. The goal is to provide a tool to enable both novice and seasoned student to think through the hermeneutical, exegetical, and theological issues.

I am personally grateful for the ministry of each of the men whose positions are evaluated in this paper for their contributions to my understanding of Scripture, eschatology, and dispensationalism in numerous areas. Some were professors, others mentors, and still others long time colleagues and friends. Each of us through our developing years and teaching ministries have favorite scholars to whom we look for insight and direction, often relying heavily on them because we have found them to be faithful and true to the Scripture. Most often we find these men to be in close agreement. But in the study of the Olivet Discourse we find that many of our “lifeline” colleagues, who normally agree, hold to disparate and irreconcilable positions. Therefore, we must thoroughly investigate each option and compare and contrast their views. In some cases, our favorites may have failed us. Chafer’s statements echoes my own feelings:

At great hesitation, I rise up in opposition to interpretations of men that I’ve known and loved all my life. The great A.C. Gabelein was my very dear bosom friend. I spent many, many hours with him in fellowship and prayer. And so with dear Dr. Ironside also. But both of these men have taught all through their ministry that this is the midnight cry of the church.

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<sup>1</sup> Future updates and revisions of this paper will be located at: [http://www.deanbibleministries.org/file-downloads/download-file?path=Resources%252FPre-Trib%2BRapture%2BConferences%252F2017%252FMapping\\_2nd\\_Half\\_of\\_OD.pdf](http://www.deanbibleministries.org/file-downloads/download-file?path=Resources%252FPre-Trib%2BRapture%2BConferences%252F2017%252FMapping_2nd_Half_of_OD.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Ice, “The Olivet Discourse,” in Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, gen. eds., *The End Times Controversy: The Second Coming under Attack* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2003), 151.

<sup>3</sup> John F. Walvoord, [“Christ’s Olivet Discourse on the Time of the End.”](#) *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129 (1972): 20.

We all believe that God has only one intended meaning in the Scripture. Among any group of hermeneutical options hopefully one is correct, but the others then must be wrong. Perhaps in some cases all have missed the target, in others we have perhaps hit the paper, but missed the bull's-eye. Our goal should be to seek the option that is most consistent with the argument of the book, the external and internal connections of the passage, and the lexical and syntactic data. In some cases, we must choose the option with the fewest difficulties that best explains all of the data. From this, the interpretation should become obvious. In many cases, the theological conclusions developed in the disparate views may not be in themselves wrong, but we must determine if those conclusions express the meaning of our Lord in this discourse. It is our hope that this paper will provide light to move us to a closer unity in the understanding of the passage.

The presuppositions of this paper are first, a consistent, futurist, dispensational, pre-millennial, pre-tribulationism.<sup>4</sup> Post-tribulationist, preterist, or historicist views will not be examined. Second, God's plan for mankind since the call of Abraham includes one plan for Israel and Old Testament saints and a distinct plan for the Church Age and Church Age believers. Third, that Matthew is a Jewish focused gospel, with a Jewish background Christian audience, answering specifically Jewish background questions. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to describe the offer of the promised and prophesied Messianic Kingdom to Israel and then when that was rejected, to explain the impact of its postponement and the circumstances surrounding the return of the King to establish His kingdom in the future. The Olivet Discourse is our Lord's message which then explains the impact of that rejection on God's plan for Israel in the future.

In categorizing the futurist dispensational views of Matt 24:31-25:46 we see two broad views: those who believe the Rapture of the Church is introduced in Matt 24:36, and second, those who believe the entire context relates only to events surrounding the Second Coming of Christ.

Among those who hold to the *Rapture view*, there are two broad positions on the three subsequent parables. First, those who hold that the judgments described in the subsequent parables describe the judgment of Church Age believers at the Bema seat. Second, those who see the judgments coming at the end of the Tribulation. Among those who hold the second view, that of judgments at the Second Coming, there are three views: first, they refer to judgments of all who survive the Tribulation, second, they describe judgments for individual surviving Gentiles, and third, they describe judgments for individual surviving Jews.

The approach of the paper is to first examine the hermeneutical framework. In this section both far and near contextual issues will be examined. The strengths and weakness of each view will be evaluated. The next section will examine two structural issues raised by the different views. The third section will then summarize specific exegetical issues in the Matt 24:36-42 section. Though a myriad of details are discussed in the literature, it is believed that those analyzed here are foundational to each position. Finally, the fourth section will look at how the previous two views (Rapture or No Rapture) impact the interpretation of the three subsequent parables.

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<sup>4</sup> "Consistent futurists view the Tribulation, Second Coming, and millennium as entirely future events for national Israel." Ron J. Bigalke Jr., 2003. "[The Olivet Discourse: A Resolution of Time.](#)" *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* Volume 9, no. 1 (2003): 106. Consistent pretribulationism understands "one taken, one left" and "the fig tree" to refer to events pertaining to the second coming, not the Rapture of the Church.

### The Hermeneutical Differences

Two broad hermeneutical positions have developed concerning the passage in question. Within each of these positions are several secondary views. The first view is that beginning with the shift to Noah (Matt 24:36ff) the focus shifts from the return of Jesus to establish His kingdom on the earth to the pre-tribulational rapture of the church. The second view is that the entire context continues to describe what will take place at the Second Advent.

In the interpretation of any passage of Scripture, context reigns supreme. We are reminded that “A text apart from its context is a pretext.”<sup>5</sup> As such, each passage has both a far and a near context. The far context examines the argument of the book, the central theme and focus of the book, and how this is reflected in each section, subsection, and paragraph of the book. In the broadest sense, the context of the gospels, then the New Testament, then the entire Bible are included. The near context examines the surrounding paragraphs and incidents. In the futurist hermeneutic of the second half of the Olivet Discourse, two strong distinctions become apparent. One view consistently takes great pains to discuss the far context, while the other (to the knowledge of this writer) does not. Second, within the near context, there are strong distinctions in how each interprets the significance of the disciples’ questions in Matt 14:4.

#### The Far Context: The Argument of Matthew

##### *The ‘Rapture’ view*

The *Rapture view*’s discussion of the far context of Matthew is conspicuous by its absence. There is no discussion of the relation of this passage to Matthew’s argument: the nature of the kingdom, the presentation of the kingdom, the rejection of the kingdom, the framework for understanding the kingdom parables, the distinctions between Israel and the Church, and the role of the kingdom on the interpretation of Matthew 24—25 are not mentioned in relation to the interpretation of the Olivet Discourse.

##### *The ‘No Rapture’ view*

Advocates of the *No Rapture view* emphasize the argument and context of the gospel of Matthew.

The key to understanding the Olivet Discourse is to interpret it consistently, noting the context and the Jewish understanding of the phrase *the end of the age*. Importing the church into *this distinctly Jewish discourse confuses the interpretation*.<sup>6</sup> [emphasis added]

At least seven different aspects of the far context are mentioned.

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<sup>5</sup> Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua, The Life of Messiah From a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, Vol 3, (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 1917), 363.

<sup>6</sup> Bigalke 105.

1. The Jewish nature of Matthew. Part of Matthew's purpose is to explain that Jesus did not bring in the prophesied kingdom of God at His first coming because Israel's rejection and the apostate wickedness of the religious leaders will bring divine judgment on the religious system and postpone the kingdom.<sup>7</sup>

The issue, however, is, What is Jesus talking about? Or more specifically, About whom is Jesus teaching? And the answer to this question found in the context of the passage is believing Israel.<sup>8</sup>

2. The centrality of context. We must understand that above all, determination of meaning in words or syntax is determined by context.

"The context does not merely help us understand meaning—it virtually makes meaning"<sup>9</sup>

Thus, words must derive their meaning from context, the far context and then the near context. Thus words and phrases might be used differently by one author than another.<sup>10</sup> Much of the debate over the interpretation of this section focuses on words. It will be important to evaluate the roll context plays in the word studies.

3. The Jewish and Kingdom emphases in each of the five discourses in Matthew

The five discourses all teach something about Israel and the Messianic kingdom in some way, not to the Church. The first discourse is Matthew 5-7, the Discourse on Kingdom Righteousness. Jesus explains the kind of righteousness one generation of Israel will need for the kingdom to come. The second discourse is Matthew 10, the Discourse on Kingdom Missions. Here Jesus explains the missionary enterprise to Israel when the kingdom is at hand. The third discourse is Matthew 13, the Discourse on Kingdom Postponement. Jesus explains that the kingdom will be postponed and reveals new truths about the characteristics of the age leading up to the kingdom's establishment. He does not teach that the kingdom of the heavens has a mystery form. The meaning of the kingdom of the heavens continues to have the same meaning as it did before Matthew 13, that is, the covenanted, prophesied Messianic Kingdom envisioned and hoped for by all the prophets. New truths are being revealed about that kingdom. Therefore, none of the parables in Matthew 13 reveal the Church. The Church will not be revealed until Matt 16:18. The fourth discourse is Matthew 18, the Discourse on Kingdom Greatness. Here Jesus explains how a believer during the postponement can be great in the kingdom to come. The fifth discourse is Matthew 24-25, the Discourse on Kingdom Coming. In this

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Ice, "An Interpretation of Matthew 24—25" Part 1, *Pre-Trib Perspectives*, Vol 7, No 1, March, 2002, 6-7

<sup>8</sup> Larry D. Pettegrew, "Interpretive Flaws in the Olivet Discourse," *Master's Seminary Journal* 13, no. 2 (2002): 179. Cf. *Understanding the Olivet Discourse: A Futurist Interpretation of Matthew 24-25*, Middletown, RI: Stone Tower Press, 2021

<sup>9</sup> Moises Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 139.

<sup>10</sup> A classic example of this is that Paul's phrase, "in Christ," refers to positional truth for every believer, but Christ's "in Me," and John's "in Him" describe relational fellowship in Johannine literature. Robert Dean, Jr, "Abiding in Christ" *Chafer Theological Journal*, Vol 7.1, 39.

discourse Jesus explains the events that will immediately precede the kingdom's arrival in history. It is important to note that none of these discourses is about the Church, but they are all about the kingdom. This fits within Matthew's argument that Jesus is the King, but his kingdom did not come because that generation of Israel failed to recognize Him as their King, and as such the kingdom has been postponed until a later time when one generation of Israel will repent. The discourse in Matt 24-25 then, describes the conditions in the world that will bring Israel to repentance.<sup>11</sup>

4. The lack of knowledge about either the Rapture or the future Church. The *No Rapture view* questions how Jesus would suddenly began talking about the Rapture apart from any foundation. First, there is no foundation for either the doctrine of the Church or the Rapture. Some may question this because Matthew is the only gospel that uses the word, *ekkleōsia* (Matt 16:18; 18:17). But, does our Lord really provide any teaching or content to that word.

In the first (Matt 16:18), our Lord makes the simple statement that, "I will build My church." With no other information, the disciples most likely understood him to say, "I will build My assembly." Matt 18:17 is a verse that would most likely be understood to refer to the assembly or synagogue, "tell it to the church" could just as easily be understood as, "go tell it to the assembly." In neither case is any content communicated about a future entity distinct from Israel. That new, previously unrevealed information does not begin to be revealed with significant information until 2 days after the Olivet Discourse (John 13-16).

Thus the introduction of the Rapture of Church Age believers and subsequent introduction of parables related to the Judgment Seat of Christ has no contextual foundation.

5. The Gospels describe Jesus' teaching to the disciples about His mission to Israel. The teaching about Israel emphasizes the Second Coming (with the exception of John 13-17 which addresses the new reality to come after the crucifixion), but the epistles emphasize the Rapture which is a doctrine about the Church.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it is logically consistent with the context and progress of revelation that key passages (Matthew 24:37-44, Mark 13:32-37, and Luke 17:26-37) describe the Second Coming rather than the Rapture. It seems more contextually satisfactory to understand Jesus answer Jewish focused concerns here, and then two nights later (John 14-16), teach about things related to the new Church, rather than mixing them all up with clear indications of such.

6. The 'no rapture' view holds that in Matthew 24-25 Jesus is addressing the future for Israel and the Church and Church Age teaching is not present.

The Olivet Discourse does not refer to the church age, so it does not discuss the timing of the rapture.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Jeremy Thomas, "Are Any Signs of His Coming in the Church Age?" Unpublished paper (Irving, TX: Pre-Trib Conference, 2017), 3-4.

<sup>12</sup> Bigalke, 110.

<sup>13</sup> Bigalke, 107.

Let us note concerning this great eschatological discourse that Jesus was here revealing the prophetic program for Jerusalem, the nation Israel, and the people of Israel. He made no reference to the church or the prophetic program for the church. Jesus did not speak here of events that will precede the consummation of the program for the church at the Rapture (John 14:1-4; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-17). Rather, He dealt with the future Tribulation, or seven-year period that will complete the prophetic program for Israel as revealed in Daniel 9:27. Because of its Jewish context this portion of Scripture must be interpreted with reference to Israel and not the church.<sup>14</sup>

The Olivet Discourse gives an outline of the future of Israel—a people at the center of much of biblical eschatology<sup>15</sup>... [the disciples ask] Him three questions about the future of Israel.<sup>16</sup>

7. One other argument for the Jewish nature of the discourse is that Matthew 24 follows a Jewish narrative style in that first general overview is made, followed by a drill down into specific issues. Examples of this are found in Gen 1:1-2:3 covering the first seven days of creation followed by the more specific focus in Gen 2:4-26 on the sixth day and the creation of mankind.

### *Evaluation*

The consideration of the argument of Matthew is possibly the greatest weakness for the *Rapture view* and the greatest strength of the *No Rapture view*. This weakness impacts their word studies as well as some syntactical interpretation. All *Rapture view advocates* need to explain the relation of the Olivet Discourse to the overall context of Matthew. Those that do mention the argument of the book, need to show how their understanding of the far context affects their interpretation in the second half of Matthew 24. This means they must demonstrate that Jesus brings the Church into the discussion when there is no foundation or justification in either the near or far context to do so and why he does so. Relating the introduction of the Church and Church Age doctrine to Matthew's argument and context is the central hermeneutical problem, for as we shall see, all subsequent exegetical decisions are shaped by the presupposition of the context. Exegetical decisions related to structure and lexicography might support either view, but what will shape those decisions on word meaning and syntax is an understanding of context. Failure to address these contextual issues on the part of those advocating a Rapture is a fatal flaw in their arguments and in some cases it might call into question their consistent understanding of Ryrie's *sine qua non* for dispensationalism, especially the distinction between Israel and the Church. Chafer's observation is noteworthy:

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<sup>14</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, n.d., Mt 24:1–3. Others who deny any reference to the Church can be found in the appendix at the end of this paper.

<sup>15</sup> Larry D. Pettigrew, "Interpretive Flaws in the Olivet Discourse," *Master's Seminary Journal* 13, no. 2 (2002): 173–174.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

I heard a man give an address on the second coming of Christ: he was talking about the Church and the Rapture—a man who lives in this city—and he just gathered up all these passages as arguments for the Church to be watching. Now let's settle it and have it definitely settled: we've not a thing here addressed to a Christian—not one thing addressed to a Christian. It's all to Israel.

We've missed very much indeed when we go through the gospel of Matthew if we do not discover what is true about the Kingdom and what is true about Israel in relation to the Kingdom. Matthew is not life truth for the Christian at all; it's not addressed to the Christian. And whenever it's appropriated that way it's just full of confusion and contradiction.<sup>17</sup>

### The Near Context: What Are the Disciples Asking?

#### *Rapture View*

The basic argument involves two points. First, that the disciples are asking only two questions. Second, that the first question is about when all of the events of the Tribulation (Daniel's Seventieth Week, the Day of the Lord) will take place. According to some Rapture advocates, their understanding of the first question is a *sine qua non*, for their position.

If we do not understand the “when” concerning which our Lord speaks, we will not see the rapture in Matthew 24.<sup>18</sup>

How many questions do the disciples ask?

1. One of the most often discussed issues is how many questions are asked by the disciples? This is important in this discussion because some of those who hold to the Rapture position emphasize this in order to establish a certain structure to the chapter which is integral to their argument.
2. Some advocates of the *Rapture view* argue dogmatically for two questions.<sup>19</sup> However, others who take a *Rapture view* recognize three distinct questions.<sup>20</sup> Does a vast disagreement among those who take a *Rapture view* warn that perhaps this may not be a strong argument?

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<sup>17</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, online lectures on the Olivet Discourse. Lecture 2; <http://www.dts.edu/media/play/olivet-discourse-part-one/?audio=true>

<sup>18</sup> Spradley, Wes, “Jesus is a Pre-Tribber,” Unpublished paper presented to the Grace Evangelical Society, Fort Worth, Jan 2017, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Spradley, I., John F. Hart, “Should Pretribulationists Reconsider the Rapture in Matthew 24:36–44?,” Part 1 of 3, *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 20, no. 39 (2007): 50; Zane Hodges, *The Atonement*, Corinth, TX, 2014, 72. However, the NR position has advocates who also hold to two questions, instead of three. Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King, A Study of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Kregel, 1980), 268. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Work of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1981), 397-398. Dr P does not specifically enumerate the questions, but punctuates them as two. Renald Showers, *The Sign of His Coming: Understanding the Olivet Discourse*, 12. It will

Basically, *two questions* are asked: 1) when will “these things” take place? and 2) “what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”<sup>21</sup> [emphasis added]

There they asked Him *two questions* that could only be answered by a prophet (v 3).<sup>22</sup> [emphasis added]

On three questions:

Matthew worded the three questions this way: *Tell us, when shall these things be? And what <shall be> the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?* (Mt. 24:3b)... In an attempt to systematize the questions, we can note the following:

Question 1: What is the sign of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple?

Question 2: What is the sign of your coming, or what is the sign that the second coming is about to occur?

Question 3: What is the sign of the end of the age? The Jews spoke of two ages: this age, meaning the present age, and the age to come, which is the messianic age. So, what is the sign that this age is about to end and the age to come, the messianic kingdom, is about to be established?<sup>23</sup>

3. Some who argue on the basis of two questions, use that conclusion as the foundation for their argument. In addition, these writers interpret the *meaning* of the first question to be about *when* the Tribulation takes place. For this group, a major presupposition of their argument is the view that the “day of the Lord” in 1 Thess 5 is synonymous with the Tribulation, and the Rapture is what begins the day of the Lord. If this identification is correct, they then argue, the the timing of the Rapture and Day of the Lord are both imminent, a view called the double imminence view. This view is advocated by Dr. Robert L. Thomas. This matrix of theological conclusions is then imported to Matt 24 to interpret what they believe to be the answer to their understanding of the first question. Note how their interpretation of the first question impacts their argument for the presence of the Rapture in Matt 24.<sup>24</sup>

But the point of the *when* question [the first question] is not to ask when does the tribulation end, but when does the tribulation begin. The disciples did not ask when will *this thing* be (singular) but when will *these things* be (plural). And our Lord’s answer to

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be noted later that the two positions differ remarkably on how they understand the first question. Others hold to two questions as well who do not hold to a chiastic structure.

<sup>20</sup> Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Life of Messiah*, Vol 3 (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 1917), 327-328

<sup>21</sup> John F. Hart, Part 1 of 3; 50.

<sup>22</sup> Hodges, 73.

<sup>23</sup> Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Life of Messiah, Vol 3*, n.d.

<sup>24</sup> Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 2:281



the disciples' *when* question is not about when He will appear in the clouds at the end of the tribulation. Rather, our Lord's answer to the *when* question concerns when will all these things (that is, all the events of the tribulation) happen.<sup>25</sup>

4. One Rapture advocate makes a detailed case for the Rapture in Matt 24:36-42 based strongly on there being two questions. His view argues that there are only *two* questions being asked and that the answers form a chiasm. The second question is answered first, and the first question is then answered second. Both questions are answered *in* Matthew, according to this view (Hodges), contrary to other Rapture advocates which do not believe the first question is answered by Matthew at all. According to Hodges' view, Matthew does not talk about the AD 70 destruction of the Temple, as Luke does, but he does answer the first question. This is seen in the chiasm which he organizes in this manner:

A<sup>1</sup> Question: "When will these things happen?" (v 3a)

B<sup>1</sup> Question: "What will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" (v 3b)

B<sup>2</sup> Answer: "What will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" (vv 4–35)

A<sup>2</sup> Answer: "When will these things happen?" (vv 36–44)<sup>26</sup>

In Hodges' interpretation, the first question, is rephrased as referring to the timing of the Lord's return.

In contrast to his view, others who advocate a Rapture in the Olivet Discourse, but see three questions instead of two, do not base their argument on either the number of questions or on an identification of the beginning of the Day of the Lord with the Rapture. These agree with the *No Rapture view* in both their understanding of the meaning of the first question, and in their understanding that the first question is answered by Luke.

It should also be noted that Yeshua did not answer the questions in the order in which they were asked. He answered the third question first, the first question second, and the second question last. Furthermore, not all three Gospel writers recorded all of His answers to all three of the questions. Mark and Matthew both ignored Yeshua's answer to the first question, while Luke chose to record it.<sup>27</sup>

This understanding of the disciples' questions enables the advocates of the Rapture position to argue that verse 36 shifts the focus of the discourse from the Second Coming to the Pre-Trib Rapture.

*The No Rapture view*

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<sup>25</sup> Spradley, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Hart, Part 1 of 3, 53–54. Hodges does not mention a chiasm, but his approach is basically the same, arguing for the first question being answered beginning in verse 36, "Jesus does not get to the first question until the discourse reaches Matt 24:36", Hodges, 74.

<sup>27</sup> Fruchtenbaum, 3.28.

1. Debate also takes place among those who advocate a *No Rapture view* about the number of questions asked by the disciples. However, how many questions are being asked does not impact the question of the Rapture so this issue is not a factor in their argument.<sup>28</sup>
2. In the *No Rapture view*, the first question, (which is answered second) is understood to be a question about when the Temple will be destroyed. Walvoord, as just one example, argues for this position, as does Pentecost, paraphrasing the question, “When will this happen” as “When will Jerusalem be destroyed?”<sup>29</sup>

Matthew 24:3 records the threefold question: (1) “When shall these things be?” referring to the prediction of the destruction of the temple; (2) “What shall be the sign of thy coming?”; (3) “What shall be the sign of the end of the age?”<sup>30</sup>

3. Dr. Toussaint provides a more detailed answer, but in complete agreement with Dr. Pentecost.<sup>31</sup> A summary of his argument follows:
  - a. A better approach is to link all three questions.
  - b. The thinking of the disciples had already connected Jesus’ statements to Zech 14 and a sequence of events laid out there: the destruction of Jerusalem, the glorious presence of the Messiah to deliver His people, and third, the establishment of His kingdom. “In other words, they believed the destruction of Jerusalem was closely associated with the coming of Christ and the end of the age.”<sup>32</sup>
  - c. A central feature of his argument is his discussion on the meaning of *parousia* in Matt 24:3.

Toussaint lays out three meanings:<sup>33</sup>

- 1) the common definition refers to the coming of a king or dignitary to some locality; or the “arrival as the first stage in presence.”
- 2) Another “neglected” meaning refers to a ritual or cultic sense in which a deity makes his presence felt in some way (BDAG).

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<sup>28</sup> Those who do not hold to a Pre-Trib Rapture and believe three questions are addressed include: John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 182; Randall Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1999), 280; Glasscock, *Matthew*, 461, 463; W. K. Price, *Jesus’ Prophetic Sermon: The Olivet Key to Israel, the Church, and the Nations* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 280.

<sup>29</sup> Pentecost, 398.

<sup>30</sup> John F. Walvoord, [“Christ’s Olivet Discourse on the Time of the End: Prophecies Fulfilled in the Present Age.”](#) *Bibliotheca Sacra* 128 (1971): 206–207.

<sup>31</sup> Stanley D. Toussaint, “Are the Church and the Rapture in Matt 24?” *When the Trumpet Sounds* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995), 241.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

In both of these first two nuances, this emphasizes the “presence” of the Lord with the implication of his staying.

3) In the intertestamental period, “*parousia* also was used in a religious sense, where it referred to the coming and aid of the Lord and also to the appearance of the Messiah.” Citing evidence from NIDNTT and Josephus, *Antiquities* (18:284). He concludes, “this religious sense may be in view in Matthew.

4) Next, Toussaint observes that, although *parousia* is used 24x in the New Testament, it is only used four times in the Gospels and *all four of those uses are in Matthew 24* (vv. 3, 27, 37, 39). (his emphasis).

He concludes,

“This means that the first time the term is used in the NT it probably included a Jewish religious sense of the appearance of the Messiah to deliver.”

“If this is so, it gives the whole discourse in Matthew 24 an especially Jewish slant. In a word, the questions of the disciples are completely Jewish and have nothing to do with the church! The disciples did not grasp the significance of the church at this point; they only gradually began to understand how God was building His church, as the book of Acts attests. The questions of the disciples are not only related to Israel, they form the basis for the entire discourse.”<sup>34</sup>

### *Evaluation*

1. The form of the *Rapture view* argument based on the chiasm appears at first blush to have merit. However, in the structure of the argument, representatives have paraphrased the first question in such a way that it fits their thesis, but does not reflect the near context of the events which give rise to the question.
2. The *No Rapture view* again appears contextually stronger. It recognizes the context which shows no foundation for introducing the Church. The question asked has nothing to do with the beginning of the Tribulation or the Day of the Lord, but the end of that period, the Second Coming. This view emphasizes that the *when* question is related to when the Temple will be destroyed, not when will the Day of the Lord begin.
3. The argument set forth by Toussaint and Pentecost provide evidence from both a far and near context that restricts the entire discourse to a focus on God’s plan for Israel. Thus showing that there is no foundation for the introducing either the Church or the Rapture, which is a Church Age related doctrine.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 242.

4. Nothing comparable to the Toussaint and Pentecost line of reasoning or answer to this line of reasoning exists within the literature of the *Rapture view* proponents.

5. Another point that should be addressed is the use of the plural in the disciples' question: "When will these things be?" In the immediate context our Lord has announced that 1) their "house [Temple] is left to you desolate. The word *eremos*, can mean abandoned or deserted. 2) that they would not see Him again until they say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Matt 23:39), and 3) that "not one stone shall be left here upon another," (Matt 24:2). The plural of "these things" refers to these three things which Jesus says will happen. Specifically, when will these things happen to the Temple and the people call upon you. These "things" all occur at the conclusion of Daniel's seventieth week. It seems forced to claim that they refer to the beginning of that seven year period, as one writer puts it, "the disciples were asking Jesus how they could know when these end-of-the-age events begin, i.e., when the day of the Lord begins"<sup>35</sup> which in his view is at the Rapture.

### *Conclusion*

After evaluating the treatment of both far and near contexts, it is evident that those who argue for a *Rapture view* need to work on relating their interpretation to both the far and near context. While some may recognize the Jewish nature of Matthew and agree with those contextual clues, they have not related their specific exegetical conclusions to those arguments. And for those who suggest a revision of the first question, perhaps a bit more attention to context is also in order.

The importance of context will play an enormous role in lexical and syntactical decisions. For it is context more than anything that determines meaning.

It is true that sound interpretation must begin with the grammatical sense of the text, and this does indeed hold first place in the rules for interpretation, nevertheless it is possible to trot all day in a grammatical half-bushel and fail to get the great sweep of the meaning of the broad context. Hence there are other rules, presented in a later section, which safeguard against an overemphasis of grammatical considerations.<sup>36</sup>

### **Structural Differences**

One interpretive move related to the structure of the passage distinguishes the *Rapture view* from the *No Rapture view*. This view stresses the significance of the transitional nature of *peri de* at the beginning of verse 36 which is claimed to be the "the solution to this dilemma."<sup>37</sup> Other than

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<sup>35</sup> John F. Hart, "[Should Pretribulationists Reconsider the Rapture in Matthew 24:36–44? Part 2 of 3,](#)" *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society Volume 21* 21, no. 40 (2008): 46.

<sup>36</sup> Rollin Thomas Chafer, "[A Syllabus of Studies in Hermeneutics,](#)" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 93 (1936): 202.

<sup>37</sup> John Hart, Part 3 of 3; *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society Volume 21*, no. 41 (2008): 43.

the Rapture advocates, this writer found very few exegetes who discuss, much less, emphasize the *peri de* construction. Under this section we will also see another structural indicator in this section which demonstrates a shift which is consistent with a *No Rapture view*.

### ***The significance of peri de for the structure of the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:36)***

Matt. 24:36 “But [*peri de*] of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

#### *The Rapture view*

Those who hold to a *Rapture view* put a lot of emphasis on the use of the Greek transitional phrase at the beginning of 24:36, which is usually translated “but of that day” (NKJV, NASB), “but concerning that day...” (ESV), “but as for that day...” (NET).

The argument is summarized.

1. The use of *peri de* at the beginning of a sentence, introduces a new subject, thus our Lord is shifting now from discussing the Second Coming to a different event, the [Pre-Trib] Rapture of the Church.<sup>38</sup>
2. Documentation for this usage is cited from I Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12; I Thess. 4:9; 5:1;<sup>39</sup>
3. Argues that the analogy with 1 Corinthians shows a shift of subject here.<sup>40</sup>

#### *The No Rapture view*

Few on the No Rapture side seem to address this issue at all. Either they ignore it, which does not fit the stature of so many scholars, or they do not consider it exegetically significant.<sup>41</sup> That it is not discussed in almost all of the major commentaries consulted in the paper suggests that the latter is the case.

### **Evaluation**

1. The need here is to demonstrate from the same author’s writing (Matthew) the use of *peri de* as a change in subject.
2. A second need is for clarification of terms. One writer presents a confusing and ambiguous definition and explanation, even as he attempts a detailed analysis. He then

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<sup>38</sup> Hart cites the preterist R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, NICNT, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 936-37, to support his view.

<sup>39</sup> Hart, *Evidence for the Rapture* (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 68; Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Life of Messiah, Vol 3*, 2017, .

<sup>40</sup> Hart, *Ibid*.

<sup>41</sup> One notable exception is Craig Blaising, *Three Views on the Rapture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 48. However, Blaising does not see this as a shift to the Rapture.

cites another writer who uses different and conflicting terminology. One problem here is standardizing the way *peri de* is described. He states his explanation of the meaning:

Verse 36 is introduced by *peri de*. This Greek phrase is widely recognized as beginning a shift in *subject or perspective*<sup>42</sup> [emphasis added]

It would have been helpful for him to define what is meant by the terms “subject” and “perspective.” Are these used synonymously or antithetically? From his following discussion, it would seem that he means a shift from one topic to another, in this case a shift from answering the first question to answering the second (see below for questions about his understanding of the first question). However, when that writer summarized his view at the beginning of his third part of the series, he defined it a slight shift in perspective.<sup>43</sup>

That *peri de* is used in Pauline writings to indicate a change in subject is clearly affirmed by almost all commentators, including those who do not see a Rapture in Matt 24. Regarding Paul’s use of *peri de* in 1 Thess 5:1, Ryrie states:

Pretribulationists point out that the contrast between the subjects of the two chapters is sharpened by the fact that Paul did not simply use a *de* to begin 5:1 but a phrase, *peri de*. This is very significant, because elsewhere in his writings Paul uses *peri de* to denote a new and contrasting subject. Notice 1 Corinthians 7:1; 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; 16:12; and 1 Thessalonians 4:9 and 5:1.<sup>44</sup>

Note that Ryrie cites the same scripture for support that the Rapture advocates cite to prove this same usage in Matt 24:36.

On the other hand, *peri de*, is also used to indicate a shift in perspective within the same topic. This is why Hart’s use of the phrase “shift in subject or perspective” is ambiguous. To his credit, he dropped that explanation in the most recent version of his paper.<sup>45</sup>

3. An illustration may help. It is now about three weeks before Christmas. Many will be planning their Christmas menu. As a serious devotee of desserts, I believe we should always begin with the end in mind, so we will begin with the recipe for chocolate cake. I begin by listing all of the ingredients and their amounts, 2 cups of flour, 2 cups of sugar, ¾ cup unsweetened cocoa powder, etc. Following the list of ingredients, I want to continue writing about the subject of the recipe for the chocolate cake, but I want to focus

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<sup>42</sup> John F. Hart, [“Should Pretribulationists Reconsider the Rapture in Matthew 24:36–44? Part 2 of 3,”](#) *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* Volume 21 21, no. 40 (2008): 46.

<sup>43</sup> Such a shift in meanings for the same term is classified as the logical fallacy of equivocation: “shifting from one meaning of a word to another within an argument.” Hart, Part 3 of 3, 43. Definition taken from the glossary in Jason Lisle, *Discerning Truth* (Green Forest, AK: Master Books, 2010), 133.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, [What You Should Know about the Rapture](#), *Current Christian Issues* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1981), 104.

<sup>45</sup> Hart, *Evidence for the Rapture*, 54-55.

attention on one aspect of that ingredient list, the kind of cocoa powder that should be used. At this point, if writing in Greek I would say, *peri de*, “now concerning the chocolate.” *Peri de* is used to draw attention to something specific within the same subject of the recipe. I have not changed subject, but have changed perspective to narrow our focus to one aspect of the list of ingredients. When I finish with the recipe for the dessert, I then return to a different subject, the main course. I could also indicate this shift by using *peri de*. But this time I am changing to a completely different subject.

4. Advocates of the Rapture position, argue that Matthew uses *peri de*, in the same way Paul does. Evidence for this should be evaluated. Perhaps Matthew is using *peri de* only to emphasize some aspect of the same subject, the Second Coming of Christ, in the following verses.

5. Richard Mayhue observes that *peri de* is used 18 times in the New Testament, and “in all but four cases an obvious change in time or topic is implied (see Matt 22:31; 24:36; Mark 12:26; 13:32).<sup>46</sup> Though he includes Matt 24:36 as one of these that is not an obvious change in time or topic, we believe he has misidentified two other uses in Matthew.

6. There are four uses of *peri de* in Matthew. It is noteworthy that none of the *Rapture view* advocates cite or refer to the other three Matthaen uses to support their interpretation of *peri de* in Matt 24:36. This is a glaring omission.

7. The three other uses of *peri de* in Matthew are:

**Matt. 20:6 And about (*Peri de*) the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, “Why have you been standing here idle all day?”**

**Matt. 22:31 But concerning (*Peri de*) the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying,**

**Matt. 27:46 And about (*Peri de*) the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”**

The first two examples are from the mouth of Jesus as is Matt 24:36. It is apparent, that his use of *peri de*, is not the same as Paul’s.

a. Matt 20:6 is in the context of kingdom of heaven parable of the day laborers (Matt 20:1-16). As the story progresses we learn of a landowner who hires laborers early in the morning, at the third hour, again at the sixth hour, and the ninth hour. When he hires the final group at the eleventh hour, the statement is made, “And about (*peri de*) the eleventh hour.” *Peri de* stands at the beginning of

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<sup>46</sup> Richard L. Mayhue, “Why A Pretribulational Rapture?” [\*Master’s Seminary Journal\*](#) 13, no. 2 (2002): 251.

the sentence. It does not appear this is a change of topic, that is, a shift to a new subject. But is a continuation of the *same* process of mentioning the time of hiring, but now the readers attention is drawn to something specific about this group hired at the end of the day, because it is they who will become the focal point of the parable.

b. Matt 22:31 is in the context of the Sadducees confronting our Lord with the bogus case of the woman widowed seven times and remarrying 6 brothers (Matt 22:23-32). They attempt to trap Jesus by asking whose husband she will be in the resurrection. Jesus began to answer them in vs 29 and then in vs 30 introduces a statement about the resurrection, “for in the resurrection they neither...” Matt 22:31 begins with *peri de* but the topic (subject) remains the same, the resurrection. *Peri de* is used to draw attention to something specific within the same subject.

c. Matt 27:46 also begins with *peri de*. In the previous context Matthew has described the events leading up to the crucifixion, and the crucifixion itself. In Matt 27:45 there is a change, now he begins to talk about what happened chronologically, “now from the sixth hour (*apo de*) not *peri de*, which one might expect in a change of topic. The next verse continues the chronology of v. 45, “And about” (*peri de*) the ninth hour.” It is difficult to see how this is a change of topic, when it continues with a chronological framework introduced in the previous verse. Instead, it is better to understand this as the same subject, but the use of *peri de* focuses our attention on something specific, this saying of Christ.

d. Hart’s documentation of his claims for *peri de* is from R. T. France, *Commentary on Matthew*. Neither Hart’s nor France’s assertions about *peri de* stand up to close examination.<sup>47</sup>

7. The application of the meaning of a word or phrase from one author and genre to another author and genre without documenting the meaning from within the writing of phrases context appears to fit Barr’s category of illegitimate totality transfer.

The error that arises, when the ‘meaning’ of a word (understood as the total series of relations in which it is used in the literature) is read into a particular case as its sense and implication there, may be called ‘illegitimate totality transfer’.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusion

Though the argument from *peri de* at first glance appears substantive, closer examination reveals some fundamental flaws in both the logic, and the evidence. Arguments that *peri de*, indicates a shift in topic in Matthew are less than convincing.

<sup>47</sup> An important study would be to see how Matthew uses simply *de* to indicate a change of subject as he does in Matt 26:59 and 69.

<sup>48</sup> James Barr, [\*The Semantics of Biblical Language\*](#) (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1983), 218.



### ***The function of the fig tree parable. (Matt 24:32-35)***

Matt 24:1-31 describes the events leading up to the Second Coming of Christ to the earth. Matt 12:31 concludes with the King sending forth His angels to “gather the elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other.” This is followed by the parable of the fig tree. What is the purpose of the parable of the fig tree?

The two views differ on the role of the fig tree parable. The *Rapture view* sees it as a conclusion to the first part of the discourse. Some advocates of the *No Rapture view* understand it as transitional, moving from the chronology of the events leading up to the sign of His coming, then shifting to lessons that should be applied in terms of watching and being prepared. This sets up the difference. For the *Rapture view*, the topic will change from the Second Coming to the Rapture, and for the *No Rapture view*, the Jews of that generation who witness these signs, are exhorted to watch and be prepared because the Second Coming entails judgment.

#### *Rapture view*

1. The fig tree parable, (Matt 24:32-35) is the conclusion to the first part of the Olivet Discourse and is designed to show that when the disciples see the “sign,” i.e., the tree’s budding in the spring, that Jesus’ coming is near.<sup>49</sup> This is directly dependent on their view that *peri de* in Matt 24:36 is what changes the subject to the Rapture, as discussed previously.

We have already considered some of the markers that indicate that the fig tree passage is the conclusion to our Lord’s answer to the *what* question.<sup>50</sup>

2. In support of his argument Hart cites progressive dispensationalist, David Turner. However, Turner clearly identifies the “date of his coming,” i.e., “the glorious coming of Jesus, already mentioned repeatedly,” i.e., the Second Coming, not the Rapture, as unknowable.<sup>51</sup>

#### *No Rapture view*

In the *No Rapture view* there is little said about the structure, except in a few commentaries. However, of those that do, several of them divide the discourse at Matthew 24:32, and have titles for the following section, such as: “Seven Illustrations of His Coming 24:32-25:30”;<sup>52</sup> “Parenthetical Exhortations, *Matt 24:32-51*,”<sup>53</sup> “The responsibilities of the disciples, 24:32-

<sup>49</sup> Hart cites progressive dispensationalist David Turner, in support of this view. John F. Hart, [“Should Pretribulationists Reconsider the Rapture in Matthew 24:36–44? Part 2 of 3,”](#) *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* Volume 21 21, no. 40 (2008): 46.

<sup>50</sup> Spradley, 3.

<sup>51</sup> David Turner, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2008), 570. Hart has a pattern of citing evidence in support of his position from writers who do not support his Rapture view. For example, he also uses Robert Thomas, “Immanence in the New Testament” to support his view that the “day and hour” in Matt 24:36 is a reference to the Day of the Lord.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas O. Figart, *The King of the Kingdom of Heaven* (Duluth: Grace Gospel Press, 2016), 464.

<sup>53</sup> Pentecost, *WWJC*, 405.

25:30;”<sup>54</sup> “The Confirmation By Parables (24:32-51),”<sup>55</sup> and “The Parabolic Admonition, 24:32-30.”<sup>56</sup>

1. Since the arguments for *peri de* seem insufficient, several authors see a more consistent structure beginning in Matt 24:32.
2. Pentecost sees Matt 24:32-51 to be a series of certain parenthetical exhortations concerning watchfulness and preparedness.<sup>57</sup>

For Pentecost the “these things”

In the context “these things” refers to the signs of verses 4-28. Those who will see the signs will know that He, the Messiah, or it, Messiah's judgment, is at the door. Since these signs will all occur in the seven years of Daniel's seventieth week, the generation that sees the beginning of these signs will “not pass away until all these things have happened” (Matt. 24:34), for they all will fall within a brief span of time. These will not be signs given to a generation preceding the Rapture. Instead, these signs will be given to a generation that cannot begin until after the church has been translated. To remove any doubt as to the certainty of these events, Christ said, “My words will never pass away” (v. 35). God’s predetermined program to pour out judgment before believers experience the blessings of the millennial age must come to pass.<sup>58</sup>

3. This view focuses on two structural changes:

The shift to the use of parables and illustrations in 24:32-25: the parable of the fig tree, the illustration from Noah,<sup>59</sup> the brief parable or illustration of the homeowner (Matt 24:43), the parable of the wise servant (Matt 24:45-51), the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1-13), the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30), and the final episode of the coming of the Son of Man in His glory.

The use of the command to “learn from the fig tree” indicates a transition from chronology to application of what should be learned from the previous section of the discourse.

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<sup>54</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 24:31. Mark Bailey et al., *Nelson's New Testament Survey: Discover the Background, Theology and Meaning of Every Book in the New Testament* (Nashville: Word, 1999), 51. Showers, *The Sign of His Coming*, 111ff.

<sup>55</sup> Louis Barbeiri, *BKC*, 2:78

<sup>56</sup> Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King, A Study of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1980), 458.

<sup>57</sup> Pentecost, 405.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Barbieri's outline suggests that he views the Noah comparison as an illustration of the fig tree parable. (Louis A Barbieri, Jr. “Matthew.” In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985) 2:78.

### *Evaluation*

1. Since arguments in favor of *peri de* indicating a shift in subject matter are not convincing, the Rapture advocates are left without a foundation for their view and must shore up their contextual analysis to find a basis for a subject shift away from the Second Coming at the end of Daniel's seventieth week.
2. Dividing the chapter at vs 32 instead of v 36 has much stronger support from the context. The previous section from 24:4-31 provides a chronology leading up to the coming of Christ at the Second Advent. But from 24:32 the content changes to parables and illustrations. The parable of the fig tree focuses attention on watching, which is the theme of the following illustrations and parables.
3. An important word in vs 3-31 is *tote*, used nine times to advance the chronology. This word is almost absent from the rest of the discourse, except to indicate time transitions within the parabolic narratives. Perhaps the use of *tote* at the beginning of Matt 25:1 is why Pentecost understood that parable to resume the chronology. If so, the weakness of his organization is the similarity between Matt 24:32 and Matt 25:13 which ties the paragraphs together in one unit.

### *Conclusion*

The fig tree parable teaches that the person alive at the time should be watching, "when you see all these things" (Matt 24:33). The purpose for the comparison with Noah is stated in Matt 24:42, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming." The short illustration in v. 43 focuses us on the homeowner who "would have watched." The good servant is watching for his master so he is prepared for his coming (Matt 24:46). The lesson of the parable of the ten virgins is to "watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming," and the parable of the talents focuses on one who was not watching and not prepared for the "coming" of the master.

It is structurally vital to see the echo in Matt 25:13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." of Matt 24:42; "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming." This intentionally connects the illustration of Noah with all that follows through the end of at least the parable of the ten virgins. Thus showing that however, these verses are intended (Rapture or Second Coming), they must all be taken together.

## **Specific Issues in Matt 24:36-42**

### *The Purpose of the Noahic illustration*

#### *The Rapture position*

1. The Rapture position interprets the point of comparison as a normal lifestyle. This argument emphasizes that everything is going on in life as normal, which would not be the case if the "earth dwellers" have already gone through the seal and trumpet judgments and are now

almost through the final series of bowl judgments near the end of the judgments of Daniel's seventieth week.

the rapture will occur when conditions on earth are normal and people are *eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage* (Mt. 24:38).<sup>60</sup>

2. Evidence for this is based on the use of the word "know." Their argument suggests the antediluvian civilization was in *total ignorance* about the coming flood and judgment.

3. Evidence is further provided by the response of the kings of the earth, and the wealthy and leaders of the world including every slave and freeman's response to sixth seal judgment:

**Rev. 6:15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,**

**Rev. 6:16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"**

4. The argument is that because they are totally ignorant, they are taken by surprise.

5. Argument based on the change of verbs for "took them all away" (*airo*) (24:39) changes to "will be taken" (*paralambano*) in Matt 24:40, 41). In this view, this verb change shows that those taken, are not taken in judgment, but taken in the Rapture, and those not taken or left are abandoned to go through the Tribulation.

6. In some forms of this argument, the introduction of the Church at this point by talking about the Rapture, sets the stage for the subsequent parables and interpreting them as related to the judgments for Church Age believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

#### *The No Rapture View*

1. The *No Rapture view* sees the point of comparison as being prepared or watchful.

It's customary with many teachers today to draw on this to try to prove that the days of Christ are the evil days like the days of Noah, but there's nothing here that's said to be evil. The citing of the days of Noah is merely to show that they were taken unawares. They were not prepared and that's the whole appeal here: "Watch; don't be unprepared."<sup>61</sup>

Before resuming the chronology of prophetic events (Matt. 25:1), the Lord paused to give certain parenthetical exhortations concerning watchfulness and preparedness (24:32-51).<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Fruchtenbaum, 3:366.

<sup>61</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, online lectures on the Olivet Discourse. <http://www.dts.edu/media/play/olivet-discourse-part-one/?audio=true>

<sup>62</sup> Pentecost, 405.

2. The lack of knowledge is not that they were not aware or given information, but indicates a willful ignorance, “suppressing the truth in unrighteousness.” (Rom 1:18).
3. Evidence from 2 Peter 2:5 indicates that Noah was a preacher of righteousness and for 120 years proclaimed the gospel and warned of the coming cataclysm. As the people watched the ark’s construction and later the gathering of the animals, evidence of Noah’s message was provided, but the truth of his claims were rejected. Thus they did not watch, and were not prepared (ready [*hetoimos*]) by trusting in Noah’s gospel. They were taken by surprise, like the homeowner who did not know what hour the thief would come (Matt 24:43)
4. The two terms for coming [*parousia* and *erchomai*] are used synonymously and thus to be consistent within the discourse must refer to the Second Coming not the Rapture.
5. The analogy to Noah indicates that those taken are taken in judgment and those left behind are those who survive to go into the Messianic kingdom.
6. This will be connected to their interpretation of the subsequent parables which will focus on the judgments of those who survive the Tribulation.

### Evaluation

1. In reading the *Rapture* view arguments, from what was read, little seems to be said to argue contextually that the point of comparison is normality. This conclusion is assumed and asserted, rather than demonstrated, as if the meaning of the illustration analogy is self-evident. In contrast, the *No Rapture view* argues contextually that the point of comparison is based on the commands to watch and being ready. First, the fig tree parable enjoins the reader to learn and to watch for all of these signs to take place. This will let them know that the Second Coming is near.
2. Second, the concluding admonition is to “watch, therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.” This is then followed by a brief illustration related to the thief, but the point is given in Matt 24:44, “therefore you also be ready.”

Conclusion: The weakness of the Rapture position is that they do not provide a contextual or biblical basis for the explanation of the Noahic comparison, they assume it. The strength of the *No Rapture view* is that they argue contextually for its meaning. For the *Rapture view* to be affirmed, a strong, contextual rationale for their interpretation of the illustration is badly needed.

3. The *Rapture view* goes on to interpret the word “know” to mean that those who are later taken in the flood, have no information about the coming of the flood or the personal consequences of the flood. On this basis they argue that must refer to the generation of unbelievers at the time of the Rapture, because they have no knowledge or information about the Rapture and are taken by complete surprise. In contrast, Rev 6:12-17 indicates those going through the seal judgments understand its source.

The weakness of this view is that Scripture states that Noah did communicate about the coming cataclysm. He was preacher of righteousness. However, that generation rejected

his explanation. In the same way, the earth dwellers in the Tribulation will have some knowledge of what is going on, but will reject it and oppose God.

4. The analogy to Noah indicates that those taken are taken in judgment and those left behind are those who survive to go into the Tribulation.

That being taken away in judgment is the probably interpretation of Matthew 24:40,41 is seen by a comparison with the context found in verses 37-39. It was the godless, outside the safety of the ark, that were taken away with the flood into death and judgment.<sup>63</sup>

5. The word studies done on the shift between *airo*, *paralambano*, and *aphiemi* must be evaluated closely. Words have a range of meaning, some more than others. Often fallacies inadvertently slip in due to insufficient data, or reading the text in light of contextual assumptions. Most *Rapture view* advocates agree with *No Rapture view* that *airo* in 24:39 refers to those taken away in judgment, but the shift in from *airo* to *paralambano* in vs 40, 41, in the *Rapture view*, indicates that a difference is emphasized, those taken in these verses are taken in the Rapture, and those left are abandoned on the earth for judgment. The arguments for that view must be carefully analyzed.

A. This argument is based on their assumption that *peri de*, has established a transition of subject to the Rapture [see previous discussion].<sup>64</sup> In light of earlier comments, the lack of evidence for of *peri de* indicating a change of subject here must be revised, otherwise their foundation is seriously weakened.

B. *Paralambano* means “to take away” in judgment or in the Rapture. The assumption of this view is that “... *paralambanō* carries the meaning, “to take to or with [oneself].” The claim that this is always one of accompaniment, usually in a positive sense, i.e., for close fellowship<sup>65</sup> must be reevaluated.

1. One expression of this argument is heavily depended on work by Michael H. Burer.<sup>66</sup> Some significant questions should be raised about that analysis.

- a. The NET note reads as follows:

**\*sn** There is debate among commentators and scholars over the phrase *one will be taken and one left* about whether one is taken for judgment or for salvation. If the imagery of Noah and Lot is

<sup>63</sup> Gerald B. Stanton, *Kept From the Hour* (Miami Springs, FL: Shoettle Publishing, 1991), 63.

<sup>64</sup> Hart, Part 3 of 3, 44.

<sup>65</sup> Hart, Part 3 of 3, 45.

<sup>66</sup> Burer, a member of the DTS New Testament faculty worked for many years as an editor and assistant project director for the NET Bible. He published an extended defense of the NET notes on Matt 24:40-41 on the bible.org website. <https://bible.org/article/matthew-2440-41-net-bible-notes-taken-salvation-or-judgment>. Michael H. Burer, “Matthew 24:40-41 in the NET Bible Notes: Taken for Salvation or Judgment?” [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org). Hart leans heavily on his analysis, to the degree that Burer’s errors significantly weaken Hart’s argument.

followed, the ones taken are the saved. Those left behind are judged. The imagery pictures the separation of the righteous and the judged (i.e., condemned) at the return of the Son of Man, and nothing more.<sup>67</sup>

Later he states:

The imagery itself lends the most credence to the interpretation that those taken away are taken for salvation. In the original narrative about Noah, God was gracious to save Noah from judgment by taking him off the earth and placing him in the ark. He was “taken away” from the place where God’s judgment was poured out to a place of safety in the ark. Thus the reference to Noah lends more credence to the interpretation that those taken are taken for salvation.<sup>68</sup>

1. According to Burer’s understanding those taken (*airo vs 39*) are the saved (Noah, Lot). But a careful reading of the text in Matt 24:39 indicates that those taken away are those “who did not know” and are taken when the flood came, not those in the Ark. Such an egregious exegetical error and misrepresentation of the text should give us pause in accepting any other conclusions.

2. Burer admits the first glance reading in the English seems to imply a judgment nuance to *paralambano*, and even though he explains that away, he still admits that the context involves judgment. His analysis of *paralambano*, is important. He states that of Matthew’ sixteen uses of the term, seven are neutral, and *only one has a negative context*. [emphasis added] This interpretation is challenged:

In contrast to Burer, the claim from the No Rapture advocates is that, “Contextually, *airō* and *paralambanō* are equivalent within the Olivet Discourse.”<sup>69</sup>

3. Burer needs to be fact-checked on his data. Of his seven neutral uses, he concedes only one as negative, Matt 27:27 where

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<sup>67</sup> This differs slightly from a note in an earlier version of the NET which is as follows: “sn There is debate among commentators and scholars over the phrase *one will be taken and one left* about whether one is taken for judgment or for salvation. If the imagery is patterned after the rescue of Noah from the flood, as some suggest, the ones taken are the saved (as Noah was) and those left behind are judged. The imagery, however, is not directly tied to the identification of the two groups. Its primary purpose in context is to picture the sudden, surprising separation of the righteous and the judged (i.e., condemned) at the return of the Son of Man.”

<sup>68</sup> Burer, op cit.

<sup>69</sup> Bigalke, 129.

Jesus is *taken by* the soldiers into the Praetorium. However, it could be argued that the devil *taking* Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple or to a high mountain, (Matt 4:5, 8) is neither positive nor in safety, but is primarily negative.

4. Outside of Matthew, other examples exist of *paralambano*, used with negative circumstances (John 19:16).

b. Conclusion

Words usually have ranges of nuance, some words have a broader range than others. Context determines meaning, not the lexica. In the case of *paralambano*, the claim is made that this must indicate a positive sense and that this is the predominate meaning. It has been shown that the evidence used for this conclusion is less than solid.

When a word can take one of two contrasting nuances, then context plays a much larger role. To strengthen their argument the Rapture position needs to relate this meaning to the context, both near and far. Further, to substantiate their meaning, it would be beneficial to recognize that the shift from *airo* to *paralambano* does not provide the evidence desired. Based on the evidence, the claims of the *No Rapture view* seem stronger based on immediate, near, and far context. Other evidence must be considered.

C. *Aphiemi*: “Left Behind” or “Abandoned”

*Rapture View*

1. One form of the Rapture view posits that *aphiemi* is best understood to mean, “abandoned.”<sup>70</sup> This is within the range of lexical possibilities.

2. The argument then posits that Jesus would not abandon his sheep. The question is then asked, “If these uses can be allowed to set the pattern, *aphiēmi* could hardly be used of what the Father or the Son do with believers at the final return of Christ to the earth.”<sup>71</sup> It should be determined if these cited uses should be allowed to set the pattern.

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<sup>70</sup> In fact *aphiēmi* (“to leave,” vv 40, 41) takes on the meaning of “abandon” in its recurrent use with personal objects in Matthew (Matt 4:11, 22; 8:15; 13:36; 19:29; 22:22, 25; 26:56, etc.). Hart, [“Should Pretribulationists Reconsider” Part 3 of 3.](#) 46. Hart cites John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 994; and W. D Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*. Vol. 3. International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 383, as corroborating commentaries.

<sup>71</sup> Hart, Part 3 of 3, 46.



3. The argument emphasizes Jesus uses *aphiemi* that in John 14:18 to indicate what He would *not do to the disciples*.

N.B. The inferences in both 2 and 3 are predicated on the assumption that *aphiemi* should undoubtedly be translated abandoned in the context.

### *The No Rapture view*

Those who advocate a *No Rapture view* usually do not specifically address this word. They adopt BDAG's third meaning "to move away, with the implication of causing a separation, *leave, depart from*."<sup>72</sup>

### *Evaluation*

1. Burer is again referenced for support. He claims the main meaning is "abandon" or "forsake" and cites Matt 4:20, 22; 8:22; 19:27, 29; 23:23, 38; 26:56; and 27:50 as evidence.
2. The meaning of the verb "abandon" in the COED has three meanings, only the first two apply here: **1** give up (an action or practice) completely; **2** desert or leave permanently.<sup>73</sup>

Based on this meaning of the English, it seems inappropriate for many of the uses designated as such by Burer. The disciples did not permanently leave their nets, their boat, or their father. By John 21 they are back there again, and numerous other times in the gospel accounts. It does not appear that "abandon" which carries with it harsh, negative nuances is an appropriate translation.

3. BDAG lists these other meanings for *aphiemi*: 1. To dismiss, or release someone or something from a place or one's presence, this can mean *to let go, send away, give up, emit, divorce*; 2. To release from legal or moral obligation or consequence, *cancel, remit, pardon, forgive*, this can involve forgiveness of sin, cancelling or forgiving a debt; 3. A more general meaning of simply moving away which implies causing a separation, *to leave, depart from*. Under this category BDAG cites only Matt 26:56 as an example for *abandon*. In a figurative sense, *abandon* is also suggested for Rev 2:4. 4. To have something remain in a place, *leave standing or lying*, i.e., *to be left* or *remain* Matt 24:2 referring to the stones; 5. *To leave it to someone to do something to let them or allow or permit them to do something*.

<sup>72</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 156.

<sup>73</sup> Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., [\*Concise Oxford English Dictionary\*](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

4. It should also be noted that in many cases where there is a judicial or judgment context, the word group has the nuance of “forgive” which means to exempt from guilt, or punishment.<sup>74</sup> This latter idea embodies the realm of meaning of forgiveness or exemption from punishment which easily fits the context for the *No Rapture view*. In that view, those who are taken are taken to judgment, but those “left” are not abandoned, but exempted from judgment and punishment, they are the forgiven ones because they trusted in the gospel of the kingdom during the Tribulation, and are therefore, under the third meaning, separated from those taken in judgment, and as forgiven ones are left to enter into the kingdom.
5. Citations from Nolland and Davies simply reassert the nuance for *aphiemi*, without truly demonstrating it from either near or far context.
6. Evidence for translating *aphiemi* appears to be cherry picking the data. The most that can be said for translating it as “abandon” is that it is one of numerous possibilities. However, the selection of those possibilities must be argued for and not simply asserted by repeating arguments from other authorities.

### *Conclusion*

While it might appear from *prima facie* evidence that the Rapture view has a substantial argument, it is only because of surface similarities to the Rapture related to the statement “no one knows the day or the hour.” However, in light of usage, these words clearly have a range of meaning which does not necessarily support one view or the other. Words gain their meaning from context and usage. Since the context so clearly excludes the Church, and no evidence is provided for introducing the church, the conclusions must default to the *No Rapture view*.

In closing we should remember Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer’s comments:

And so in connection with the glorious appearing of Christ, those that are taken are taken in judgment and those that are left are left for the kingdom blessing. But it does not mean that this is the Church or the Rapture at all; be careful about such foolish mistakes as that.<sup>75</sup>

*No one knows the day and hour*

### Summary Intro

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<sup>74</sup> H. Vorländer, “[Forgiveness](#),” ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 698.

<sup>75</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, online lectures on the Olivet Discourse. Lecture 2. <http://www.dts.edu/media/play/olivet-discourse-part-one/?audio=true>

As noted by many, it appears that this term would be more consistent with an imminent Rapture, than the Second Coming which is preceded by various signs, and which is indicated by coming 1,260 days after the abomination. It appears that of all things, the Second Coming would not be a surprise.

### *The Rapture View*

1. Some in the Rapture view identify the “day and hour” as meaning the Day of the Lord. One form of this view is that both the Day of the Lord, interpreted as at least the entirety of Daniel’s seventieth week, is imminent, just as the Rapture is imminent, and therefore this verse indicates the Rapture and not the Second Coming.
2. This view is based on a specific interpretation of the *peri de* at the beginning of the verse. Problems with this view have been noted earlier.
3. Others argue simply on the basis of the signs and events within Daniel’s seventieth week, along with specific day numberings (Dan 9:27; Rev 12:6, 14;) that the timing of the Lord’s Second Coming would be clearly known. One writer summarizes this view:

Because believers in the future tribulation will know the day and the hour (they can calculate it: it will be exactly 1,260 days from the abomination of desolation and 2,520 days from the signing of the covenant between Israel and the Antichrist, Dan 9:27), the coming of the Lord described in this parable certainly cannot refer to His second coming to earth. Rather it is the sudden, unexpected, coming that occurs seven years earlier, the beginning of the *Parousia*, at the rapture of the church.<sup>76</sup>

Another states:

Second, no one will ever know the timing of the rapture. Yeshua noted the *the angels of heaven* do not know when it will occur (Mt. 24:36). Not even the Son in His humanity knew the timing. Only God the Father knows when the believers will be taken up to meet their Messiah in the air. This will always be true of the rapture. The second coming, on the other hand, will occur exactly seven years after the signing of the seven-year covenant and 42 months, or 1,260 days, after the abomination of desolation. Once the tribulation begins, the second coming can be accurately calculated, so the passage above must be dealing with the rapture and not the second coming.<sup>77</sup>

### *The No Rapture View*

1. The phrase “day and hour” indicates a specific time, not just the day.

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<sup>76</sup> Joseph C. Dillow, *Final Destiny* (Monument, CO: Paniym Group, Inc, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Nov 2012), 800

<sup>77</sup> Fruchtenbaum, 3:365.

While no one knows the specific day or hour in which Jesus Christ will return, people who properly understand and interpret the signs will know that they are living in the last days.<sup>78</sup>

2. Another view is that due to the Antichrist's attempt to change the calendar (Dan 7:25), it will be virtually impossible for the days to be accounted. Along this same line are arguments that due to the calamities, judgments, and crises, people will lose count of the days.

3. A third view is to argue that those who are taken by surprise like a thief, are those who are unbelievers. The believers are exhorted to watch and be ready, so they are not surprised like a thief. In this view, unbelievers in the Tribulation are compared to the unbelievers before the flood. They both had all of the information available to them about the coming judgment, but because they rejected it, denied its reality, and suppressed its truth, they will be living in darkness. And in such a dark, spiritual fantasy land, that just as those at the time of Noah were neither watching nor prepared, so, too, those unbelievers in the Tribulation period will be neither watching or prepared.

4. However believers even as close as after the 6<sup>th</sup> bowl judgment believers in the Tribulation are commanded

Rev. 16:15 ¶ “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”

Due to similarities with the letters to the church of Smyrna and church of Thyatira, some suggest this is directed to John's first century audience. The weakness with this view is that there is no other example between Rev 4:1 and Rev 22 where the author turns to his contemporary audience and addresses them. Further, there is nothing contextual to indicate such an “ejaculatory parenthesis.”<sup>79</sup>

### *Evaluation*

For many, this verse is the weakest part of the No Rapture view argument. Several attempts are made to resolve the apparent imminence of this “day and hour” with the obvious indications in Scripture that the Second Coming of the Lord should be known by counting down the days from the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and the anti-Christ, or counting down the days from the abomination of desolation. In fact, some argue that the very point of Matt 24:4-29 is to show the events that will enable Tribulation saints to approximate the coming of the Son of Man and be prepared.

These are some options.

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<sup>78</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, [\*The Words and Works of Jesus Christ\*](#), n.d., Mt 24:32–44.

<sup>79</sup> Robert L. Thomas, [\*Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary\*](#) (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1995), 266.

1. That the cutting short of the days indicates that the Lord's return will actually be sooner than the 1260 days. I add this because one pastor in my study group has advocated this, though his years of research on the topic shows that he is the only Pre-Trib dispensationalist who holds this position.

2. A second, more viable option is that there is an ambiguity at either the beginning or the end of Daniel's seventieth week, and thus Tribulation saints will be uncertain as to the exact, precise moment of the Lord's return (Barbieri, Mondragon<sup>80</sup>).

3. An even more appealing argument is present by Figart. The clause, "*But of that day and hour knoweth [] no man...*"

It was factual when these words were spoken by Christ, that no man, no angel not even the Lord Himself knew the time of His second advent to earth. Jesus was living in humiliation, or the time of His Kenosis ("emptying"; Philippians 2:7). He voluntarily restricted the independent exercise of divine attributes to fulfill the will of His Father. ... It should be obvious that after His resurrection, He no longer limited Himself, so that now He does know....

His second argument is that at the time Jesus spoke this the day and hour were unknown, but in the future, the day and hour will not be unknown. During the seven year Tribulation the countdown of the days will be apparent and the various signs related to the fig tree parable will be evident. These warning, thus give the believer clues so that he can watch and be prepared for the Lord's return at the Second coming.<sup>81</sup>

4. The Church Age is a timeless event, and is not related to the timetable of Israel. So in this age no one knows when the prophecy clock will begin to run again, don't know when the Rapture will come and thus we don't know when Daniel's seventieth week will begin, or the Second Coming will be. But once Daniel's seventieth week begins, the Trib saint can count down, and can follow the signs, and can know approximately when the coming will be and so he is to watch and be prepared.

## **Interpreting the Parables**

### *Introduction to the Issues*

There are two broad views: for some of those who hold to the Rapture in Matt 24 these judgments take place following the Rapture of the Church, and are judgments of Church Age believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ (the Bema). For others, these judgments are at the end of

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<sup>80</sup> Ray Mondragon is a member of the Pre-Trib study group and professor of Bible at Chafer Theological seminary. He presented his view in an online pastors study group I direct.

<sup>81</sup> Figart, 467.

the Tribulation following the Second Coming. Of those who take the second view, there are three views, the judgments described in the three parables are to determine the eternal destiny of all who survive the Tribulation; the judgments in the three parables are to determine the eternal destiny of Gentiles who survive the Tribulation; the judgments in the three parables are to determine the eternal destiny of Jews who survive the Tribulation. Following the parable of the talents is the final section in Matt 25:31-44 describing the judgment of the Gentile survivors of the Tribulation, the sheep and the goat judgment.

Within each of these views a myriad of differing and contrasting interpretations develop. For the purposes of this paper, only the overview interpretive issues related to whether the Rapture is, or is not present in Matthew 24 will be summarized.

### *The Rapture view*

- A. The three parables describe judgments on Church Age believers following the Rapture of the church, except for the judgment of the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:31-46).<sup>82</sup>

At the conclusion of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus' purpose was to apply the prophetic teaching to the lives of [Church Age] believers in view of the fact that He could return at any moment and no one knows the day or the hour.<sup>83</sup>

- B. A second view distinguishes these judgments by seeing an ABAB arrangement to the parables (the judgment of the sheep and the goats is viewed here is a quasi-parable).<sup>84</sup> In this view two of these parables involve Church Age believers and two involve Tribulation saints.

A-1 *Parable of the Faithful or Unfaithful Servant* Church Age believers

B-1 *Parable of the Ten Virgins* Tribulation saints with the midnight cry representing the abomination at the midpoint of the Trib.

A-2 *Parable of the Talents* Church Age believers (compare Luke 19:11-26)

B-2 (*Quasi*) *Parable of the Judgment of the Sheep and Goats* Gentile Tribulation believers (sheep) and unbelievers (goats).

The first three refer to only believers, the fourth separates believers and unbelievers.

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<sup>82</sup> Dillow, 809. There is a lot of discussion about whether the sheep and the goats is a parable or not. This is another area which calls for more clarity.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>84</sup> Zane Hodges with Bob Wilkin, "The Parable of the Talents, Matt 25:14-30," *Grace in Focus* (Denton, TX: GES, June 1, 2017); <https://faithalone.org/grace-in-focus-articles/the-parable-of-the-talents/>. This is Chapter 9 from the new book *Tough Texts: Did Jesus Teach Salvation by Works?* Prof Hodges position was clarified for me in a personal email from Bob Wilkin.

- C. The three parables describe end of the Tribulation judgments for Gentile believers only.<sup>85</sup>

*The No Rapture View*

- A. The Judgments are of all who survive the Tribulation, without distinguishing Jew or Gentile.<sup>86</sup>

Showers, Fruchtenbaum (in print) and Pentecost view the parable of the householder as relating to all who are alive when Christ returns.

- B. The judgments are to determine the eternal destiny of Gentiles who survive the Tribulation

Arguments in Favor

1. The Tribulation is the judgment on Israel, so the judgments described in the parables are for Gentiles.

Since God saves all Israel before the Second Coming and these judgments take place at the Second Coming, they cannot refer to Israel. In fact, Jesus will not return until the nation of Israel repents and acknowledges Him as Messiah (Leviticus 26:40–42; Jeremiah 3:16–17; Hosea 5:15–6:3; Zechariah 12–14; Matthew 23:39)<sup>87</sup>

2. All of the surviving Jews are saved at the end of the Tribulation based on Zech 13:8. In this argument “land” (*Aretz*) is understood to be the world. The one-third that is left is all saved.

Arguments against.

1. The judgment of the Tribulation on Israel is a historical judgment, a judgment in time, similar to the historical judgments which brought divine discipline on Israel in 722 and 586 BC, and in AD 70. In contrast, these parables describe the determination of the eternal destiny of those Jews who survive the Tribulation, outside of the land of Israel.

The essential point, which cannot be reasonably disputed, is this: the Mediatorial Kingdom of Old Testament prophecy, which was announced in our Lord’s early ministry was “at hand,” was not established because of Jewish unbelief, and its arrival is not set definitely at the second advent of the King. Furthermore, instead of the fullness of regal blessings promised

<sup>85</sup> This view was articulated to me in a conversation with Arnold Fruchtenbaum, April, 2017.

<sup>86</sup> In Fruchtenbaum’s *Footprints* and the very recent *Yeshua*, he does not distinguish whether these are Jewish or Gentile.

<sup>87</sup> Bigalke 131.

to the people of Israel, this nation must now suffer a period of judgments for its unbelief.<sup>88</sup>

2. In this view “land” (*Aretz*) is understood to be only the land of Israel. Of those Jews who survive the final Armageddon campaign, the one-third, will all be saved. (Zech 13:8-9)

#### Evaluation

The position needs to develop an argument showing that “land” in Zech 13:8-9 is indeed discussing the whole world.

The position also needs to strengthen the argument that every surviving Jew at the end of the Tribulation is a Tribulation saint.

#### Conclusions

1. As observed several times, the determinative differences reduce to factors of hermeneutics. The Rapture view advocates give little to any attention to relating the section to the far context and only limited, if in some cases erroneous, attention to the near context.
2. Principles of hermeneutics related to lexical studies are also in conflict. Ambiguous and non-standard terms are used to define syntactical categories. Broader discussion must be given to these in order to avoid the indictment of cherry-picking the data.
3. Similar issues related to the role of grammar also apply. Specifically in the role of syntax and grammar in the overall hermeneutic.
4. In reading on both sides, I observed some logical fallacies, specifically fallacies related appeal to authority, question begging, and equivocation.
5. More attention should be given on the No Rapture view side to answer objections related to the apparent immanence argument in Matt 24:36.
6. For both sides more granular analysis on the thief in the night imagery needs to be published. The popular view that this always relates to the Rapture, is not supportable.
7. Above all, the basis for suddenly introducing a Church Age doctrine into the midst of Jewish focused, Israel oriented context and question must be articulated. Simply asserting this apart from near or far contextual foundation fails to be convincing.
8. From my analysis to this point it appears that there is a reason the vast majority of dispensational futurists do not see a Rapture in Matt 24. The arguments and evidence are not sufficient to warrant such a conclusion.

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<sup>88</sup> Alva J. McClain *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1987), 355.



## Appendix A Advocates of the Two Positions

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* (San Antonio: Ariel Press, 1982), 446–47;

Joseph C. Dillow, *Final Destiny* (Monument, CO: Paniym Group, Inc, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Nov 2012)

Zane Hodges, *Jesus, God's Prophet*, 24–32;

Zane Hodges with Bob Wilkin, “The Parable of the Talents, Matt 25:14-30,” *Grace in Focus* (Denton, TX: GES, June 1, 2017); <https://faithalone.org/grace-in-focus-articles/the-parable-of-the-talents/>

Dave Hunt, *How Close Are We? Compelling Evidence for the Soon Return of Christ* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), 105–6, 210–11, 238, 314–15;

Wes Spradley, “Jesus is a Pre-Tribber,” unpublished paper presented at GES, Jan. 2017.

J. F. Strombeck, *First the Rapture* (Moline, IL: Strombeck Agency, 1950), 68–71;

Ray C. Stedman, *What on Earth's Going to Happen?* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, G/L Publications, 1970), 130–43.

Robert Thomas, ??????

Beechick understands the Discourse as a double reference, applying to both tribulation saints and the church. Allen Beechick, *The Pretribulation Rapture* (Denver: Accent Books, 1980), 231–68.

Leon Wood states that the Discourse implies the rapture in 24:42–44 and that Jesus' language has an unusual similarity to other passages on the pretribulation rapture. Leon J. Wood, *The Bible and Future Events: An Introductory Survey of Last-Day Events* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 91.<sup>89</sup>

### *No Rapture View Advocates*

Mark Bailey et al., [\*Nelson's New Testament Survey: Discover the Background, Theology and Meaning of Every Book in the New Testament\*](#) (Nashville: Word, 1999), 51.

Louis A. Barbieri Jr., “Matthew,” *Bible Knowledge Commentary, NT*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983), 76–79;

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<sup>89</sup> [\*Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society Volume 20\*](#) (2007).

Paul N. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy: A Comprehensive Approach* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 209;

Ron J. Bigalke Jr., “The Olivet Discourse: A Resolution of Time,” *Conservative Theological Seminary Journal* 9 (spring 2003): 106–40;

Tom Constable, [\*Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible\*](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 24:31.

Thomas R. Edgar, “An Exegesis of Rapture Passages,” in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. Wesley R. Willis, John R. Master, and Charles C. Ryrie (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 217, 221;

Paul D. Feinberg, “Dispensational Theology and the Rapture,” in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. Wesley R. Willis, John R. Master, and Charles C. Ryrie (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 242–43;

Paul D. Feinberg, “The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture,” *Three Views*, 80, 225, 229–31;

Thomas O. Figart, *The King of the Kingdom of Heaven* (Duluth, MN: Grace Gospel Press, 2016).

E. Schuyler English, *Rethinking the Rapture* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1954), 41–55;

Ed Glasscock, *Matthew*, Moody Gospel Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 476;

William K. Harrison, “The Time of the Rapture as Indicated by Certain Passages: Part III: The Time of the Rapture in the Light of Matthew 24,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 115 (April–June 1958): 109–19;

John MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 24–28* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 70–72;

Russell L. Penney, “Why the Church Is Not Referenced in the Olivet Discourse,” *Conservative Theological Journal* 1 (April 1997): 47–60;

J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study of Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 162, 275–85;

James F. Rand, “The Eschatology of the Olivet Discourse” (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1954), 126, 162;

Charles C. Ryrie, *Come Quickly, Lord Jesus: What You Need to Know about the Rapture* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1996), 94–97;

Ryrie, *What You Should Know about the Rapture* (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 82–84;

Renald Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord Comes!* (Bellmawr, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1995), 178–84;

Renald Showers, *The Sign of His Coming: Understanding the Olivet Discourse* (Bellmawr, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 2016), 77-124.

John A. Sproule, “An Exegetical Defense of Pretribulationism” (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), 56, 60;

Gerald B. Stanton, *Kept from the Hour* (Miami Springs, FL: Schoettle, 1991), 57–65;

David L. Turner, “The Structure and Sequence of Matt 24:1–41: Interaction with Evangelical Treatments,” *Grace Theological Journal* 10 (spring 1989): 21–22;

Stanley D. Toussaint, “Are the Church and the Rapture in Matthew 24?” in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, ed. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995), 235–50;

Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King* (Portland: Multnomah, 1980), 280–82;

John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 85–90;

John F. Walvoord, “Christ’s Olivet Discourse on the Time of the End: Part I,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 128 (April 1971): 116.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> [Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society Volume 20](#) (2007).