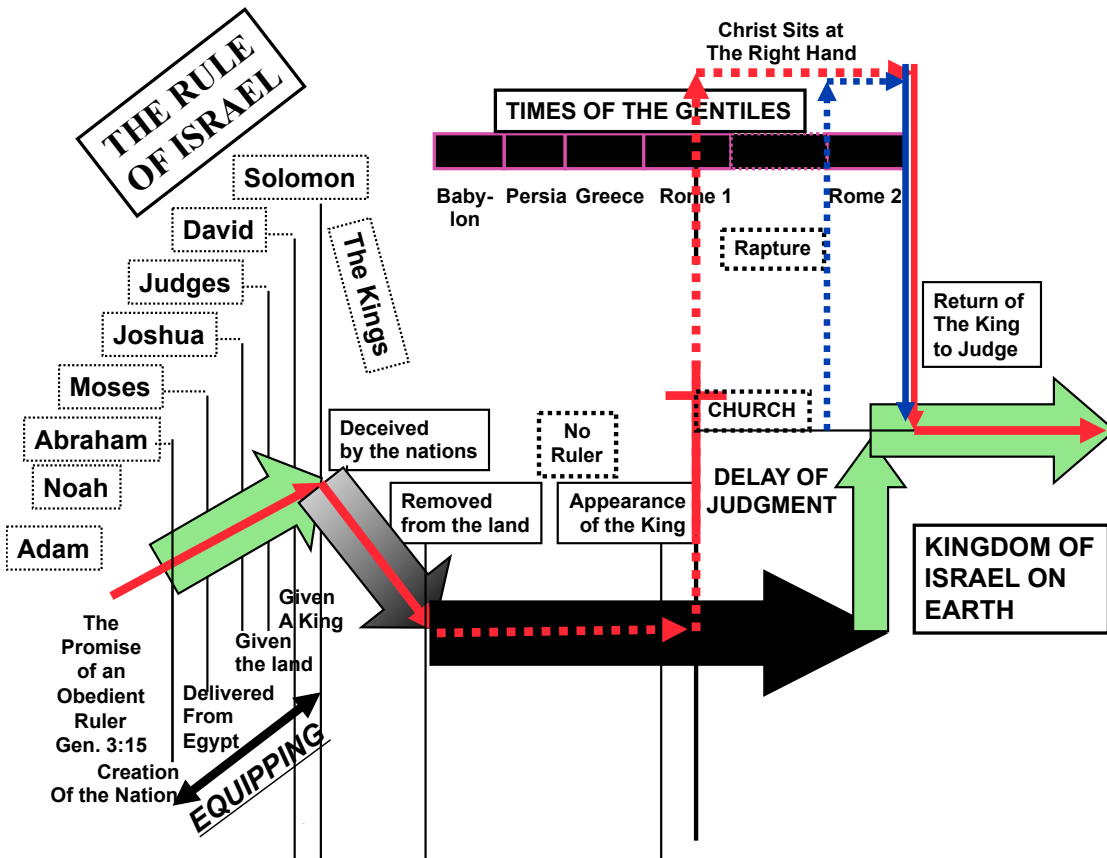


The Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24--25)

NOTE: The Olivet Discourse is only a part of the larger story of Matthew, which is only a larger part of the Biblical Story. To understand these parts, one must understand the overall plot in which they occur. Thus the reader of this section is forwarded to the notes and videos at www.TheBiblicalStory.org - Reference the "Resources" page for the following:

- Videos (14) on The Biblical Story (including the Gospels)
- Notes on the Book of Matthew
- Notes on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5—7)



The Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24--25)



The City of Jerusalem from The Mount of Olives (looking West)

- Picture taken from atop the Mount of Olives looking west (Jewish tombstones in immediate foreground, on slope down to Kidron Valley)
- Two small blue domes (Arrow) locate the site of the crucifixion and resurrection (The Church of the Holy Sepulcher)
- Dome of the Rock (Gold dome in center) identifies likely Temple location on top of the Temple Mount (where trees are)
- Eastern Gate is center right of picture in the City Wall.
- Kidron Valley is in the foreground at bottom of the slope in front of the City Wall. (Muslim graves on the slope in front of wall).
- Garden of Gethsemane is off the picture to the right, to the right of the trees in lower right of picture.
- City of David (David's Palace is off the picture to the left of the City Wall)



View from The Eastern Gate Looking East to the Mount of Olives

- Mount of Olives is on the Upper Right
- Garden of Gethesemene is the treed area on upper left
- Kidron Valley runs across the lower part of the picture

Introduction

In Matthew 24, Jesus had left the temple and was walking up to the top of the Mount of Olives looking back over the City of Jerusalem and the Temple. The disciples pointed out the temple and associated buildings.

Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him (24:1).

Jesus then surprises them with His prophecy that the Temple and buildings would be reduced to rubble, not even one stone would be left on another.

² And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down" (24:2)

When the Roman conqueror, Titus, entered the city some 37 years later in AD70, he burned the city down to the ground. Only the Temple Mount that Herod had built remained standing. Of the stones of the Temple, not one can even be found today, let alone stand on one another. In fact, the destruction of the Temple was so thorough that today archaeologists debate exactly where the Holy of Holies would have stood, since there are absolutely no relics left that would identify its location.¹

¹ There are three locations that men suggest as the location of the Holy of Holies.



The Western Wall of the Temple Mount (“The Wailing Wall”) with the Dome of the Rock in the background

In the Book of Matthew Jesus recorded five discourses. The first, and most famous, is the Sermon on the Mount (5—7). This Sermon revealed that Jesus was the long-awaited Christ, who would bring God’s righteousness to earth and impute it to those who believed in Him. Thus these would be able to enter the kingdom, having the same righteousness as the King Himself. All others would be judged and rejected.

It is in this Olivet Discourse that Jesus explains that He is going to return to the Mount of Olives to judge the world for their unbelief. The discourse will detail how God brings back His nation, Israel, to Him in the last of the seven-year tribulation period. That period will end with His Second Coming as He will arrive in time to save Israel from the antichrist, whose sole object is to destroy Israel and rule the world for Satan.

Jesus will then discuss two primary judgments, those of living Jews and those of living Gentiles. Those who have His righteousness will enter the Kingdom. Those who do not will enter the eternal fire. Israel will be judgments will be described in “The Parable of the Evil Slave” (24:45-51) where evil Israelites will be judged because they reject those Israelites who are believers. The Parable of the Virgins (25:1-13) points out that one Israel will be divided between those who have enough righteousness (that of the King symbolized by the oil) and those who do not have enough (self-righteousness, symbolized by not enough oil). The Parable of the Talents continues the judgment of

Israel by showing that those who understand the value of the Word of the Sermon on the Mount and believe in His imputed righteousness are rewarded. Those who do not value it, but fear judgment on their self-righteousness, will end up in the eternal punishment.

Finally, the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats will explain the judgment basis of the living Gentiles. It will be that they will either enter the kingdom or be rejected based on their response to the apostolic doctrine, likely delivered by Israel in the last period of the Great Tribulation. That response will indicate their faith in the Messiah of the message.

The Lord then sits down at the very place where He will return in His second coming.

24:3 And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"²

The disciples ask three things which will form the outline of the first part of chapter 24.

⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. (24:4)

24:4-14: "When will these things be? (Destruction of Temple - Israel's judgment)

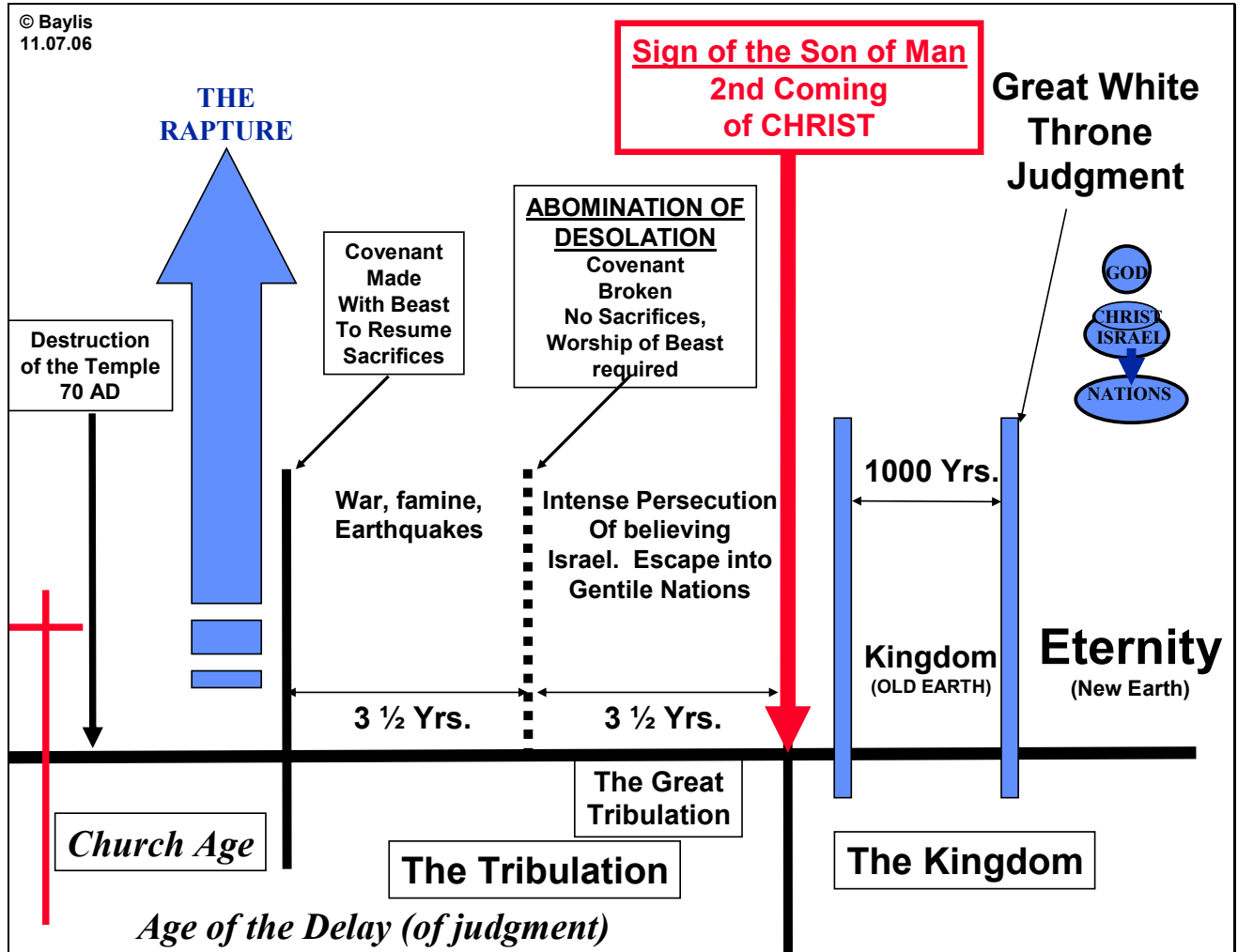
24:5-8: The beginning of birth pangs (first 1/2 of tribulation: 3-1/2 years)

24:9--14: Then they will deliver you up to tribulation . . . (last 1/2 of tribulation)

24:15--28: "What is the sign of your coming and the end of the age"

- a. First the abomination of desolation (15-22)
- b. Sign of coming of Son of Man (23-31)

² Although the Greek is somewhat different (ημερον, Dan.; αιωνος, Matt.), it appears as though this might refer to the time of Daniel's resurrection and reward in the kingdom of Dan 12:13.



The Olivet Discourse
Matthew 24–25

I. Introduction: The disciples inquire regarding the destruction of the temple, and the return of Jesus as King (24:1-3).

24:1 And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2 And He answered and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down." 3 And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

“When will these things be” is the question of, when will the temple be destroyed? While the Pharisees thought everything was fine with the Temple

intact, nevertheless the temple would be destroyed shortly after the Messiah was cut off. Daniel states,

Daniel 9:26 "Then **after** the sixty-two weeks (Note: 483 years from the order to rebuild the temple ending on the day of the Triumphal Entry)³ the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people (Rome) of the prince who is to come (antichrist to come) will destroy the city and the sanctuary.

Thus it is clear that it is following the removal of the Messiah by Rome (Gentile control) that the temple will be destroyed by Rome also.

Daniel 9:27 then details the last seven years before the coming of Christ to end the Times of the Gentiles and bring in the Kingdom. It begins with the covenant with the antichrist and Israel to allow them to resume sacrifices. Three and one-half years later he breaks the covenant and declares himself to be god. The end of the final three and one-half years will be marked by the coming of Christ to destroy this antichrist and his followers.

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

II. The events prior to the ‘end’ are not to be mistaken to validate “another” or “the end”. (24:4-14)

Jesus is referencing the first 3-1/2 years of the tribulation from Daniel 9:24-27, particularly verse 27. It begins with the antichrist’s 10-kingdom federation making a covenant with Israel to restore their temple worship (Daniel 9:26-27). For 3-1/2 years Israel is able to continue their temple worship, but at the end of that period the antichrist, also known as “The Beast,”⁴ enters the temple and declares himself to be god and requires all worship come to him. This is known as the “Abomination of Desolation.” This then begins the second 3-1/2 year period, called “The Great Tribulation.” This is what is referred to in Matthew 24 as the “end,” when the pinnacle of Gentile, Satanic rule, will occur in a renewed nation, Rome.⁵

³ Refer to the Notes on Daniel for the explanation of the “Seventy Sevens of Years” in Daniel 9:24-27.

⁴ He is called “The Beast” because he is the ultimate “seed of the serpent” of Genesis 3:15.

⁵ The Times of the Gentiles are indirectly being referred to here. The same period of time referred to in 24:15ff. is paralleled in Luke 21:20-24 where the “Times of the Gentiles” phrase is utilized. Refer to www.TheBiblicalStory.org , video sessions #1--#3

A. Do not mistake the sign of another to be the Christ (24:4-5).

⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you.
⁵ "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

Jesus is referencing people coming and claiming to be "The Christ," which is culminated in the one claiming to be the Christ, the antichrist. Thus Israel will follow another, the antichrist, who is ruling for Satan. This is the one with whom they make the covenant of Dan. 9:27. This is Israel's apostasy."⁶

B. Do not mistake the judgments during the first period of tribulation be the end (last half of the tribulation), for God is cursing Israel to bring them back to Him. (24:6-8)

Matthew 24:6 "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end.

First note that most of references in the Gospels are references to the Old Testament, declaring their fulfillment in Christ. Thus these references are also from the Old Testament, particularly Leviticus 26:16-33. In that passage God details the specific curses that He will place on Israel during their disobedience, to bring them back to Him. Thus when these are mentioned, the references are not to world-wide judgments, but specifically relate these judgments to Israel and their return.

where the overview of the Bible is presented and defines "The Times of the Gentiles" as the time from the exile of Israel into Babylon, through three more Gentile kingdoms (Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome), until the Jewish King arrives (Jesus) to destroy their rule and return the rule to Israel.

⁶ This apostasy is referenced in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 where it is stated that "³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for it (the "Day of the Lord") will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction. The views on "apostasy" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 are many. Some (J. D. Pentecost) held that it was the rapture and would be translated the "departing." Others hold that it is the "apostasy" of the church (probably in Revelation 17—18 where they would hold that Babylon is a symbol of the false church.) But the passage in 2 Thessalonians 2 is a summary of Daniel referenced events, and so also this one. Thus the covenant with the Beast is the point at which Israel declares formally its apostasy. However, another alternate view is at the middle of the tribulation when the beast enters the temple and (some of) Israel follow him.

Judgments #1 (wars) and #2 (famines) are among those listed in Leviticus 26 (and Deuteronomy 28) as judgments on Israel to bring them back to God. Earthquakes, while not listed among the war, famine and death trilogy of Leviticus 26, are also a judgment on Jerusalem (cf. Zech. 14:5, Amos 1:1, Isaiah 29:6, Rev. 11).

1. The judgment of war (24:6; see Leviticus 26:17, 25, 33)

Matthew 24:6 "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end. 24:7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,

God will plague Israel with wars so that they will return to God and repent. This is reflected in Leviticus 26, 17, 25, 33, and detailed historically in Daniel 11.

Daniel 11:36 "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. 37 "And he will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any *other* god; for he will magnify himself above *them* all. 38 "But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor *him* with gold, silver, costly stones, and treasures. 39 "And he will take action against the strongest of fortresses with *the help of* a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge *him*, and he will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price. 40 "And at the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen, and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow *them*, and pass through. 41 "He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many *countries* will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. 42 "Then he will stretch out his hand against *other* countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. 43 "But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians *will follow* at his heels. 44 "But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many. 45 "And he will pitch

the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

2. The judgment of famines (24:7, see Leviticus 26: 16, 19, 20, 26)

and in various places there will be famines

Again, God will bring famines on Israel to get them to return.

3. The judgment of earthquakes (24:7; see Zech. 14:5, Amos 1:1, Isaiah 29:6, Rev. 11)

and earthquakes.

4. Conclusion: These are only the beginning of the events that indicate the ‘end.’ (24:8).

⁸ "But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

The “end” is used here for the final 3-1/2 years of the tribulation, the “Time of Jacob’s trouble.” It is God’s final move to establish His kingdom by calling Israel to repentance and beginning to crush the Gentile powers and the antichrist who opposes Him. The “birth pangs” are the pain that Israel will have to go through to bring forth the re-birth. The end is where God now moves to remove finally the threat of the Gentile armies and restore the kingdom to Israel. Before this the judgments on Gentiles have always been of temporary value, always requiring a further judgment. Now this will end all the judgments.⁷

C. The persecution of the elect will be the deceit of “another” and the “end,” but is the time still prior to the end (24:9-14)

The deceit of Satan is strong. Israelites will turn on their own as many begin to trust Christ. These Jewish believers will be suffering while those who worship the antichrist will have pleasure. These unbelievers will take this to be apparent blessing and an enjoyable life and they will feel that they are indeed following God. Thus the Antichrist will use these things (physical blessing, and judgment on believers) as an indicator of His Messiah-ship.

1. Death and hatred will occur on those faithful to the King (24:9)

⁷ There is one other uprising against Jerusalem following the millennial kingdom in Revelation 20, but this one will be met with quick and decisive “fire from heaven” destruction.

24:9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name.

Daniel 11:33⁸ "And those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder, for *many* days.

Zechariah 12:2 "Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.

2. Apostasy and betrayal by those unbelieving Israelites against the Jewish believers) (24:10)

24:10 "And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another.

3. The increase of false prophets who promote self-righteousness (24:11).

¹¹ "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.

Jesus had warned of false prophets (identified by their teaching of self-works or other gods apart from the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ the King, see "The Sermon on the Mount" notes, Matthew 7:15-24). The antichrist and his followers will promote their own self-righteousness and so teach others. Their identity is clear if one understands the "Sermon on the Mount" since they are known by their "fruits," which is their teaching of justification (whether self-justification or imputed righteousness as their justification.)

4. The increase of covenant rebellion against the Law of the King (24:12)

12 "And because lawlessness⁹ is increased, most people's love will grow cold.

⁸ Technically this occurs during the Greek phase of the times of the Gentiles, yet the similarities carried to the end times are similar since the oppression of the Gentiles is similar and characteristics of all the kingdoms are found in the final manifestation.

⁹ Recall in Matthew 7:23 that Jesus had warned against false prophets whom He called 'lawless' in their rejection of the righteousness of God through the King.

These false prophets who promote self-righteousness, and a rejection of the imputed righteousness of the king, are lawless. Jesus called them this in Matthew 7:23, and thus this anti-christ movement of self-pleasure fighting against God and His Christ will increase greatly.

5. Those who understand the words of the king will persevere in faithfulness to be saved into the kingdom. (24:13).

¹³ "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

It is not saying that all who persevere will be kept alive until the kingdom, but that of those who have remained alive at the end, the one who has persevered will be the one who is saved into the kingdom. In other words it is affirming that the physical kingdom will be kept alive in a believing physical remnant to establish the Kingdom, and that this physical remnant will be made up of those who have persevered, based on the understanding of the King (Matt. 5--7).¹⁰

24:13 "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.

Matthew

10:22 "And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end¹¹ who will be saved.

24:22 "And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.

¹⁰ It might be more easily understood if the contrary was stated. The one who does not persevere (understand) will not be the one who establishes his presence in the Kingdom. Thus perseverance in understanding is valued by the King. And it is clear that the elect will persevere in the Great Tribulation. It does not appear as though any believers will turn away from Christ during this period of time.

¹¹ The word here for "to the end" may be translated continually, i.e., without letup as it is in Luke 18:5. Of course, that would be without cessation.

6. The ministry of the remnant to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant prior to the end, that is they will preach the gospel of the King (24:14)

14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations¹², and then the end shall come.

The "Gospel of the Kingdom" is the gospel preached here in the Gospel of Matthew, that of the King, particularly in Matt. 5--7. In short the world will be presented the truth of God's righteousness, man's depravity and most importantly the imminent appearance of Jesus as King to judge.¹³

III. The Great Tribulation: The events of 'the end' will bring judgment and escape of the elect. (24:15-22)

A. Begun by the Abomination of Desolation, the identification of "another" (24:15).

24:15 "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),¹⁴

The Abomination of Desolation is when the antichrist enters the temple and declares himself to be God (Daniel 9:27). He stops all worship of other gods and their sacrifices, and all men must worship him or die.

¹² Note here that Jesus refers to judgments on those who have various responses to the seed in Matt. 13. However, the reader might be in question as to those who have not heard the Sermon on the Mount. What is their response? This apparently answers the question. For the gospel will be known by all in the world at that time and they will have a blatant choice between the antichrist and Christ. Everything will be open and known.

¹³ This is likely a reference to Dan. 12:4: "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase." "Knowledge is increased" indicates the fullness of times coming in the revelation of God in man (Jesus Christ). This revelation will go forth (better translation than the literary "to and fro") through the apostles in the church age and in Israel in the tribulation ("many" in Daniel indicates the Jewish remnant of believers).

¹⁴ The 'abomination of desolation' is referred to in Dan. 9:27, 11:36-38, prefigured by Antiochus Epiphanes.

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

Daniel 11:36-38: "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.
³⁷ "He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any *other* god; for he will magnify himself above *them* all.³⁸ "But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor *him* with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures.

B. The recognition of the false messiah and the fleeing of the remnant (24:16-22)

1. The revelation of the false messiah and his imminent wrath (24:16).

24:16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains;

The abomination of desolation is the sign of the false messiah. As his forces come to Jerusalem, Jesus instructs the believers of that day to flee into exile into the Gentile nations to avoid subjection to the Beast and subsequent death. At least 144,000 are in this number (Rev. 7:1-8) and flee to the nations for protection.

2. The fleeing of the remnant (24:17-20).

17 let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; 18 and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. 19 "But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! 20 "But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath;

The details of the flight are now given to show the immense fear that this antichrist brings. Escape must be made without care for anything else. Believers in Israel now flee to the nations of the world to protect themselves from the persecuting antichrist who is advancing on the city with his armies. The Gentile nations, not at this time under the direct control of the

antichrist, take the Jewish believers in, not being threatened by them or the antichrist, since his rule is over the 10 kingdom federation and against Israel.

Like Israel entered Egypt for protection from the famine in Genesis 37—50 to be delivered by Joseph, now Israel is going into the nations for protection from the antichrist. This is a setup for the New (and ultimate) Exodus from the Gentile Nations back to the land under the New Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15), Jesus. Hosea and Isaiah particularly saw this exodus from Assyria (Israel) and Babylon (Judah), which now had progressed under the Times of the Gentiles to this renewed Roman government.

3. The intensity of persecution on the remnant (24:21).

21 for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.

Yet the antichrist pursues this believing remnant into the nations of the world. He becomes a fearful world leader. Following his gathering these nations under his control, he then insists that they persecute these believing Israelites.

4. The preservation of the remnant for the Kingdom (24:22).

22 "And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.

The last half of the tribulation will be so bad that God will have to cut it short¹⁵ with Christ's return. Otherwise there would be no Israel left to populate the kingdom.

IV. The Sign of the Son of Man is the visible coming of the King to earth (24:23-31)

A. Not to be verified by signs and wonders since the false prophet(s) will do signs¹⁶ (24:24-25).

¹⁵ The point is that the 3-1/2 years will still be the length of time of the Great Tribulation. Cutting it short is not that the 3-1/2 years will be cut short, but that God will intervene at 3-1/2 years since if it continued the antichrist would totally destroy the remnant. Thus God is saying He is intervening to stop what would happen if He had not.

²⁴ "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ "Behold, I have told you in advance.

According to Deut. 13:1ff. a false prophet was not to be identified by his signs and wonders but by his word. Jesus reaffirmed this in the Sermon in chapter 7. However, the identification of the true and false Christ was by knowing His word in the O.T. and in the Sermon. This would allow them not to be deceived by the antichrist and his self-righteous propaganda.

Deuteronomy 13:1-3: "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, ² and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' ³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams;

B. Not to be a philosophical or unseen judgment, but His identity will be clear as there will be a specific appearance by the King in the sky to come and judge the earth (24:26-28).

²⁶ "If therefore they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go forth, *or*, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms, 'do not believe *them*. ²⁷ "For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures¹⁷ will gather.

The identity of the Son of Man will be clear for He will appear like lightning, that is, in the sky and visible to all.

The indication of the messiah in the “wilderness” or the “inner rooms” is that they will say he has come in secret (unable to be validated) or is invisible, i.e., philosophical). This would be a philosophical coming (unseen) but testified.¹⁸ A sample of this would be when people advocate

¹⁶ Refer to Deut. 13:1-5, 18:20-22, for the Law’s statement on the identity of false prophets.

¹⁷ Note that this term may equally be translated “eagles”.

¹⁸ This is the problem in 2 Thessalonians, where they argue that the “Day of the Lord” has already come. The Day of the Lord was the day of visitation of the Lord to the earth. It was fairly common in the Old Testament that this meant a judgment (not the literal visitation), which would establish His desires on earth. Thus, it was quite common

there is no heaven or hell or there is no Kingdom and judgment. Their belief would be something like “you get what is coming to you in the here and now” or “what goes around, comes around”. This type of belief espouses blessing (riches, good things happening) now for good works (self-righteousness) as well as a judgment (poverty, ill health, bad events happening) now for being unspiritual. Jesus is clear. His sign will be His own personal appearance in the sky with the mighty angels to do judgment on the earth. (See 2 Thessalonians 1:1-10 for the same argument by Paul.)

C. The validation is a fulfillment of prophecy (24:27-31)

1. Not an earthly presence but a heavenly appearance (24:27-28)

27 "For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 "Wherever the corpse¹⁹ is, there the vultures will gather.²⁰

Jesus points out clearly that He will be seen as the King of the earth in a visible coming in the air referenced also in Zechariah 14. The reference to the corpse is a reference to the dying of Israel at the hand of the antichrist and his armies (Zechariah 14:1-4), where these Gentile armies are the vultures (literally: “eagles”).

for Israel to think that the Day of the Lord might be only spiritual and not a physical visitation. Thus, they would think that the Day of the Lord had come (in a spiritual sense) and since they were prospering they judged themselves as righteous and felt that was the judgment (i.e., no ultimate judgment). 2 Peter 3:1ff. talks about this very attitude, “. . . where is the promise of His coming . . . “ which is a denial of a cataclysmic, physical, appearance of the Messiah as the mighty warrior Judge.

This is also the case in 2 Timothy 2:18 where Hymaeneus and Alexander are saying the “resurrection has already taken place.” In Philippians 3:12 Paul asserts that he has not “attained it (the bodily resurrection) yet,” since the antagonists were claiming a health and wealth gospel (3:2-3, 18-19), which proclaimed a “philosophical” resurrection (no physical cataclysmic judgment in Messiah’s presence), but a present tense judgment/reward.

¹⁹ The ‘corpse’ likely refers to Israel and their imminent death at the hands of the antichrist. The ‘vultures’ are the armies of the world gathered together against Israel (Zech. 14). It appears here that this is the point when Christ will come to defend Israel. Deut. 28:49 refers to an ‘eagle swooping down’ as a nation from afar come to kill Israel. Daniel 7:4 refers to Babylon as an eagle.

²⁰ Note that this could also refer to the great bird supper of Ezekiel 38—39 which is also referenced in Revelation 19:21 which is the conquering of the beast and his armies as well as Gog and Magog.

2. **The accompanying heavenly signs (24:28-31).**

a. **The creation: sun, moon and stars (24:29)**

29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken,

The point that is being made is that things do not continue as normal. These are supernatural occurrences so as to make one pay attention to something that is very important in relationship to God. Multiple Old Testament passages are being alluded to here. They reference the final judgment of God on the Gentile nations, which is accompanied by these great signs in the heavens.

b. **The Son of Man: Coming on the clouds**

³⁰ and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. (Mat 24:30)

No one has the ability to come on the clouds of heaven but Jesus. The "coming on the clouds" is a reference to His coming to remove the rule of the Gentiles from Daniel 7, particularly verse 13. It is referenced by Jesus when He is on trial in Matthew 26:64 to answer the High Priest's inquiry as to whether He is the Son of God of Psalm 2:7 and the Christ of Psalm 2:2 who was to come and judge the nations? By answering from Daniel 7:13, he pointed out that He indeed was this One who would destroy the enemies and set up the Kingdom of God.

The appearance of the Christ in the sky will be visible to all. Israel, having begun to repent earlier in the tribulation as individuals, now has a national mourning as they see the One whom they pierced. (Also referenced in Revelation 1:7).

So now in quoting Daniel 7:13 He is pointing out that this is the return of the King to judge the Gentile opposition according to Psalm 2:8-9.

Psalm 2:8-9: "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. ⁹ 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'"

Revelation 1:7: BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.
(Revelation 1:7)

Daniel 7:9-14: "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His vesture *was* like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne *was* ablaze with flames, Its wheels *were* a burning fire. ¹⁰ "A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened." ¹¹ "Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. ¹² "As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time. ¹³ "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴ "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Zech. 12:9-14: And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. ¹⁰ "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of

supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. ¹¹ "In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ¹² "The land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves; ¹³ the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves; ¹⁴ all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves.

c. The Elect: Gathered to return to the land supernaturally.

³¹ "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

It is at the same time that the angels will go throughout the nations and gather the elect²¹ of Israel for the return to the land prophesied. In the physical realm the nation of Israel is returning to the land, guided by the call of the Greater Moses (Jesus) as He returns to the Mount of Olives.

At the appearance of the Christ in the sky, He calls Israel to move back to the land and a massive exodus begins to return to the land under the New Moses.

This is at the same time as the "Trumpet" judgments of Revelation 8—9, which are plagues on the Gentile nations, where they have sought refuge, to release Israel to return to the land under the New Moses who is descending in the clouds approaching the Mount of Olives. Just as in the first exodus when Moses led out the Children

²¹ The "elect" here is referring to Israel. It is not that Gentiles are not "elect" as well, but only that Jesus is referencing Israel here to show that God is sovereignly protecting a remnant to continue into the kingdom.

of Israel, so now the New Moses is leading them back to the land from the Gentile nations.

Psalm 107:2-3: Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary³ And gathered from the lands, From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south.

Isaiah 35:10: “And the ransomed of the LORD will return And come with joyful shouting to Zion, With everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Isaiah 43:5-7: “Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west.⁶ “I will say to the north, ‘Give *them* up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not hold *them* back.’ Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth,⁷ Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”

V. The signs of the coming with respect to the identity of the Sons of the Kingdom (24:32--25:46).

A. The Parable of the Fig Tree: The sign of the coming perceived by Israel prior to the end: Israel to return to God (24:32-35).

24:32 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree²²: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near;³³ even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door.³⁴ "Truly I say to you, this generation²³ will not pass

²² Note that earlier in the book (21:18-22), Jesus had cursed the fig tree, symbolizing Israel, since it would not bring forth fruit. Now the fig tree brings forth leaves and so one is assured that the figs are about to follow.

²³ While this could mean "race", it frequently means (especially with the article) the present generation of Israelites (during Jesus' day) that would reject Him. This is the way "this generation" is used throughout the book and so is not likely to take on different meaning here. Probably the better way to see this is in the word translated "take place". The word at its basis means, "come into being", "be born". This would indicate that all these things would be placed in Him, that He was at the core of all these events, being the empowered One, and that all fulfillments were in this present Messiah, Jesus. This then

away until all these things take place.³⁵ "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away.

One should recall the fig tree that had been cursed earlier by Jesus in 21:19 which represented Israel. The meaning of "fruits" comes from Matt. 7 and is confession of Christ and imputed righteousness. Now Jesus states that Israel is approaching their confession of Jesus Christ. This would be indicated by the fact that many Israelites are coming to Christ and the nation as a whole is about to confess Christ publicly and undergo great persecution from the antichrist.

"This generation" is the generation of Christ's day, as it is throughout the book; the generation of those who were hearing His words and the Sermon, and who would reject Him. The words "until all these things take place" should be translated "until all these things are born (generated)". In other words, Jesus death on the cross and resurrection would bring forth the beginning (particularly Jesus as the Firstborn from the dead), thus initiating the resurrection life for believers to be realized finally in their own bodily resurrection later. Since Jesus was the ideal Israelite, He would be the firstborn of many to come. Now that the Jewish Messiah was here, Israel would begin their return. It would be a trickle at

is the "fullness of times," the "last days." In other words, Israel's condemnation, and their deliverance would be born in Him. It would then be delayed (past this generation) to another generation who would respond to Him (as in the fig tree). Thus this generation has the opportunity to respond, since all these things are birthed, since the "last days" have now appeared and the new life and the forgiveness of sins. The word normally does not imply finality, but more as in "coming to being" as in birth. Note also the next verse uses the same words indicating that the reality (life) is in His words. Thus everything would be birthed in Him and His words would carry them on until the delay was over.

Objections to this would be the phrase "these things" in the passage, which seems to reference the things of the days just prior to the Second Coming. The difficulty is that "these things" would include the return of the Son of Man which is not just near in this text, but is actually happening. The use of the term "near", used only in this chapter in Matthew (along with 26:18) is the question. In a similar context of eschatology, Revelation uses the term to indicate that the Second Coming is "near" (1:3, 22:10) and thus is as so often the case, times are indicated by ages, not by a few days. Thus, it would appear (especially in light of Revelation) that He is pointing out that it is imminent, but not near in terms of counting days. This would go along with the context of not knowing the times. It appears as though He is doing what Peter did in Acts 2; that is introducing the delay; the end of which is imminent. James 5:9 uses the term "door" which is the same, and points out that the Judge is "right at the door". This generally indicates that we are in the age of the imminence of the second coming. Thus the "these things" referenced indicates that the things are birthed in Messiah, making the age a "near" age to the Second Coming.

first, but nevertheless it would begin a Jewish repentance that would culminate in a national repentance prior to the return of Christ.

B. The Time of His Coming: One should be prepared at any time by obtaining the imputed righteousness of the King (24:36-51)

24:36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.³⁷ "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.^{24 38} "For as in those days which

²⁴ Noah here would represent the Son who is the Mediator of the judgment. While Noah did not know the day nor the hour, he did also have an extent of time given to him that God was delaying His judgment, 120 years. It is possible here that there is differentiation in "know" that involves experience. In other words, this had never occurred before, there was no physical indication that it was coming, so no one "knew," that is, was able to perceive it through either experience or visibility. The Father would "know" since He has superior knowledge even to the point of knowing to the same height as experiencing (i.e., knowing good and evil without experiencing it). Thus, the Son had not experienced it, but had faith in the Father's Words, as Noah. However, this requires a differentiation in the knowledge of the Father and the Son, which presents a difficulty, yet is explained in that the Son was human and human experience was His sole task. This requires that the "know" be simply that it could not be known by physical indications (e.g., to those on the earth using their senses).

However, another option is to note the following context. Unbelievers will not know the day or the hour is clear and thus will not be prepared. The day or hour is also not known by believers, so they are prepared at any time. In other words, the imperative here is to get ready for a visit at any time. The believer grasps this and gets imputed righteousness. The parable of the virgins is indicating exactly this. Now the question is, why is it that the Son does not know? The answer is that this is a figure of speech, which actually is not to be taken literally, but taken for what it implies. It implies that since one "does not know the time," that they should be ready at all times . . . thus have imputed righteousness. In addition, the issue of not knowing since there would be no physical indication is part of this. The point is to be prepared for the judgment at any time. The Son "did not know the day nor the hour" but was prepared at any time, meaning He was totally righteous, not dependent on timing. Believers will also be prepared by getting His imputed righteousness. Unbelievers will not be prepared as they will think it is not coming.

Another possibility is that "know" means "determination of" as in "knowing good and evil". Thus, the Son is not the determiner of the judgment but the Father. The term "know" may mean to determine as source. In other words, "pre-knowledge" is not experiential nor even education, but a determination as source; thus the believer is selected by God to be one He knows in time. In the case of "the knowledge of good and evil" it turns out that what it means is that one is the determiner of what good and evil is. Thus, the Father is the determiner, not the Son, nor the people of the world. This concept would indicate that the source of the judgment day and hour is the Father, not the Son,

were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,³⁹ and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away²⁵; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.⁴⁰ "Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken²⁶, and one will be left²⁷.⁴¹ "Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.⁴² "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.⁴³ "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.⁴⁴ "For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*.⁴⁵ "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?⁴⁶ "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.⁴⁷ "Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.⁴⁸ "But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,'⁴⁹ and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards;⁵⁰ the master of that slave will come on a day

nor anyone in the world. In other words they had no bearing on what day it was and thus had to be prepared since they could not affect it. They spent their time just living on their own ignorant of the end and the believer however realizes he cannot do anything to change it since it has been determined and thus gets imputed righteousness. This also would explain the essence of the prediction of 120 years in Noah's case and 7 years in the case of the tribulation, which determined the date of the end.

²⁵ This word is "*areo*" and has the sense of 'lift up' or 'take out of' or 'take away from'. It is not used in Matthew in a special technical sense and thus would be contextually bound. Here it is in an evil sense when Jesus returns, that they are taken away (to somewhere else than the face of the earth, likely Gehenna). Or perhaps, as in Noah's day, it is simply that the flood waters came in and lifted them up from their place on the land.

²⁶ This has the sense of "taken along with". Thus someone is always doing the taking, and the person taken is joining the taker on a journey to somewhere. The word is used like this in Matthew consistently, but in and of itself does not imply a taking that is bad or one that is good, but neutral. This may have the sense of gathering the elect from the four corners of the earth in 24:31 where "gather" is used. In the sense of that sense in 24:31, it would be Jesus who is sending the angels to "take along with them" these elect. Since there does not seem to be a context for someone evil taking them somewhere, it would seem best to be the re-gathering of Israel according to the angels gathering the elect. The scenario fits the rapture, but the context seems to be dealing exclusively with Israel and not the church here, so the rapture would seem somewhat out of context.

²⁷ This is the word, "*afiami*" indicating 'left' or 'forsaken'. It seems to have the meaning of cutting off a connection with whatever is there before.

when he does not expect *him* and at an hour which he does not know,⁵¹ and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth.

The 'time of His coming' is related to the Old Testament. God's "coming to earth" signified God's presence to the world to judge. He had 'come' in the Old Testament but it was an unseen coming, only seen by its effects, i.e., the Exodus, or famine, etc. to Israel. Thus, Israel does not think He (the Father) is coming for a long time, i.e., there is no physical and actual judgment, only a philosophical one. Thus they feel they can continue in their own self-righteousness since the judgment, in their eyes, is not coming in a blaze of angelic warriors and God coming to earth.

In the days of Noah, it was not that Noah did not know what 'time', but the wicked world did not believe it was coming at all (and thus did not know what time). The point of "not knowing the time" is another way of saying "one should be prepared at any time." Thus Noah was prepared as if he "didn't know the time," while the wicked world was not since they "didn't know the time" and assumed it wasn't coming.

The context of 24—25 does not seem to be limited in its principles, but is limited in its application. Thus the Gospel of the Kingdom is the Gospel from the Sermon on the Mount, which is not different when preached in the Tribulation. However the focus of 24—25 is the Tribulation period and the Second Coming. Thus this slave who the master puts in charge of his household (i.e., Israel is the "household of God;" Numbers 12:7) to give them food at the proper time is an Israelite (like the Pharisee) who is to give believing persecuted Israelites food and mercy from God in the Sermon's Gospel. This is similar to Matthew 10 where the believing remnant is identified by the fact that it takes care of those who are announcing the presence of Messiah. It is specifically related to the ones who give Israel the message and whatever else they need as they are being persecuted. Note the connection to the Judgment of the Sheep and Goats where they are to feed them (Israel in this story). But, the servant who rejects the remnant and persecutes them is also identified as one who is to be identified with the enemies of God and thus to eternal judgment. Note also the connection to the Parable of the Talents where one is also judged by what he does with the Gospel of the Sermon on the Mount.

C. The parable of the virgins: Those Israelites who are not prepared for the return of the Messiah (believe in His return and His righteousness in judgment) will not be able to enter the kingdom. (25:1-13).

This parable is a parallel to the wise and foolish man in Matt. 7:24-27, where the wise man was one who built his house on the rock (the

gospel of imputed righteousness in Christ) and the foolish man was one who built his house on the sand (self-righteousness).

The virgin symbol is used for Israel in Jeremiah as well as other places. Israel was to be betrothed as a virgin only to YHWH. However, here the question of her worthiness to enter the kingdom is based on her preparation for this kingdom by having the full righteousness required (see Matthew 5:17-20). There are 10 virgins. Five are foolish (from the Sermon we know they have not perceived the words of the King and are self-righteous). Five are wise and thus perceive the words of the King and have asked for His righteousness.

Note that all have oil in their lamps, but the wise take some extra along with them. Thus the foolish perceive that their righteousness is enough for the present and do not perceive that the true righteousness requirement of the kingdom is beyond them (cf. Matt. 5:17-20). When the Bridegroom appears, they do not have enough to enter the Kingdom (like the Scribes and Pharisees in 5:20). The wise virgins tell them to depart and get their own (purchase it²⁸) since they cannot share theirs (it could not be given by the wise virgins since the foolish did not value it . . . like the swine in the “pearls before swine,” 7:6²⁹). The foolish then approach the Bridegroom later and request entry, but the King does not recognize them as His own (no relationship to Messiah’s character by obtaining His righteousness).

Definition: Virgins, Lamps, Bridegroom

24:1: "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Virgins: The definition of “virgins” alludes primarily to the Old Testament reference of Israel as the virgin daughter of Zion, most frequently from Jeremiah (8 times) and Lamentations of Jeremiah (7 times).

²⁸ It does not appear here that the “purchase” is a negative thing, since it is likely the wise virgins purchased theirs as well, only that they purchased enough. Thus the foolish are told to go back to the source and purchase it. Their statement is that their own righteousness that they received cannot be shared. Each individual must go to the source to receive their own. This refers to the Sermon on the Mount where one cannot cast their “pearls before swine” (7:6). In other words one cannot give their righteousness (from God) to someone who does not value it.

²⁹ See the commentary on “The Sermon on the Mount,” for this explanation (www.BiblicalStory.org “Resources,” “Commentaries”).

Here then the reference is to a judgment on the nation, Israel. They are seen as those who “heard” the sermon and the question raised is did they understand and value it as God’s righteousness in the Christ? And then, having valued it they would have “asked” for it (see 7:7).

Lamps: There is a difficulty here since the word used for “lamp” in the Greek is used only here in Matthew. The imagery of “light” however appears in the Sermon in “let your light so shine before men.” The light is the light of the message of God’s righteousness, now in the Christ. Israel was to be the “light of the world,” and now the question is whether they understand the value of the light by knowing the value of the source (righteousness as the oil). The Pharisees had oil and light, but it was their own righteousness, which was to be seen by men (6:1). The wise virgins light (confession) was before men but glorified the Father who was in heaven when they did merciful works (5:14-16).

Definition of “Bridegroom”

The bridegroom here is Christ (9:15). The virgins are those who are either attending to the wedding feast (Israel) and the bride is the church, or the bride is Israel³⁰ (virgins as collective for the virgin daughter of Israel, Isaiah 62:1-7).³¹ So the point is that not all of Israel is going into the kingdom. But the virgin (here represented by five) of Israel is to meet the bridegroom. But not all Israel as the Book of Matthew proclaims, only those who hear His words and *act* on them, i.e., believe.

³⁰ Some would see that Israel was the Old Testament bride of the Father while the Church was the New Testament bride of the Son. Others would hold that there are two brides of Messiah. One is Israel, while the other is the church. But the imagery would not be of two brides at the same time, but different functions for each imagery.

³¹ Clearly in Matthew Jesus is the bridegroom who is returning. Who is the bride? Israel here is the virgins and so the question is whether they are meant to be the bride. The image of virgin was for the nation, Israel, and this imagery carried into a marriage with God who would be represented by His Christ (Isaiah 62:1-7), which appears in Revelation 21 where the City of Jerusalem (Israelite city) is referenced as the bride (of Christ). On her gates are the twelve tribes and on her foundations are the twelve apostles (i.e., which relate to the church). Thus the question is whether the church (established in Matthew 16) is in view here, or whether the nation Israel, or perhaps both (as different images of brides; one national and the other a group of individuals unidentified by ethnicity, that is the church). Probably the church fits best here since Matthew 16 initiates the future church through Peter on the Rock of Christ. The church was the receiver of the Book of Matthew and the apostolic doctrine, which would be the foundational criteria for becoming a “son of the kingdom.” Since the Son had already obtained His bride, the church, when He returned was the great wedding supper and the living Israelites would be attendants at it.

9:15 And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the **bridegroom** cannot mourn as long as the **bridegroom** is with them, can they? But the days will come when the **bridegroom** is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Definition of "Wise and foolish":

² "And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent.

The "wise" and "foolish" are the same terms identified in the Sermon on the Mount as those who have understanding of the words of the king (wise) and those who hear but did not understand (foolish) in the "wise man and the foolish man (7:24-27). This is the same as those in the parable of the soils. Some heard and understood, some just heard, and did not understand.

'Hearing' in Matthew is open to any man. In fact all the Jews of Jesus' day are identified as those who 'heard' His words. The question of whether they would 'act' upon them is based on their belief of who Jesus is and if He is the King, the rightful interpreter of God's word, who will come in judgment to execute those words.

If one does believe who Jesus is then he will act on them Jesus words (i.e., trust). That means that he understands who Jesus says God is (holy), who man is (sinner), and that he needs to act on behalf of God, yet needs imputed righteousness through God's Christ for his failings.

Matthew 7:24-27: "Therefore everyone who *hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them*, may be compared to a **wise** man, who built his house upon the rock. ²⁵ "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and *yet* it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. "And everyone who *hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them*, will be like a **foolish** man, who built his house upon the sand. ²⁷ "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."

Oil in flasks: Not enough oil (foolish) or extra oil (wise)

³ "For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.

Preparation is not based on the knowledge of time, but on the value of the King's words enforced by His return. The difference between the wise virgins and the foolish virgins is that the wise virgins had enough oil (note that they both had oil) to last until the return. The foolish virgins had not perceived the amount of oil needed to last. This relates to the Sermon and "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (5:20). Thus Jesus acknowledges the Pharisees give themselves credit for their self-righteousness, but it was not enough. The righteousness of God is 100% always. Thus giving them some credit did not mean they were like God. It identifies them as unlike God.

The Delay of the Bridegroom's Coming

⁵ "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep. ⁶ "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him*.' ⁷ "Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps.

The Master delaying His coming is directly related to the Parables of Matt. 12 and the delay of the kingdom.³² The period of delay is from Jesus first coming to His second. But this delay makes some think that there is nothing ever going to happen. In 2 Peter 2:2, is a similar statement, ". . . where is the promise of His coming . . . ?" to indicate that they do not feel judgment is coming and thus are not prepared.

Like the foolish virgins one should not mistake the delay to be that He (God) is not coming and thus not actually expecting a real judgment. If one does not expect the judgment to come then whatever righteousness they have is considered enough. If one does expect Him to come but does not know the time they will be prepared for Him at any time, not matter how long, and will have enough oil in the lamps and in the flasks. The only way this can come about is to have enough righteousness and that is "imputed" through the King.

The Coming of the Bridegroom and the Response of the Virgins

³² The point is that the delay was taken by the Pharisees to mean no judgment, particularly as related to Jesus; that is, if He had been someone significant in their mind they would have seen something significant in His words of judgment. But they didn't, (ignoring the resurrection) so they felt they were alright.

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

The perception (or valuing) of the Bridegroom here is of utmost importance so that they also feel that His arrival is important. They should have perceived the value of the Sermon as it reveals Christ and the judgment. They thus are prepared at any time making sure they have enough righteousness, which is what someone would do if they wanted to be prepared at any time. The issue of buying righteousness (oil) from the dealers is simply where one gets their oil. Thus it is not that one "buys" (as opposed to free) or that one gets it from a source (as opposed to God), but that they all simply got what they needed from the source that provided it. Thus, the wise virgins had enough while the foolish did not. The Pharisees perception of God was that He was not that righteous and thus they did not need much to please Him. So they only obtained what they needed or perceived they needed. The others got more. So the issue is not where they got it or how, but that they got it. It is likely an allusion to Isaiah 55:1-2.

Isaiah 55:1-2: "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. ² "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance.

The Request of the Virgins and the Rejection by the Bridegroom:

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

Note that they show up, like the requestors of Matt. 7:21-32 and say, "Lord, Lord". And like the requestors of Matt. 7, they are rejected because the Judge does not "know" them. (See the commentary on "The Sermon on the Mount").

Jesus defines 'know' in the Sermon as He relates it to a recognition regarding their behavior. What is this behavior? It is acting on the words which He has stated. These words are the understanding of God as delivered in the Scriptures. This relates to Jesus as the King, imputed righteousness, the holiness of God. Pharisees act on the basis of self-righteousness. Thus Jesus never "knows" them because they never recognized Him as this Messiah who would deliver the righteousness of God.

"Lord, Lord" is what they cry out to get into the wedding feast. Yet He states that He never knew them. This is exactly what is the statement in Matthew 7 where the false teachers stand before Him for entry into the kingdom.

7:16 "You will **know** them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes*, nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "So then, you will **know** them by their fruits. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, '**Lord, Lord,**' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, '**Lord, Lord,** did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.**'

Relationship to the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22

22:1-14: Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, ² "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. ³ "And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. ⁴ "Again he sent out

other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are *all* butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.'" ⁵ "But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, ⁶ and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ "But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. ⁸ "Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹ 'Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find *there*, invite to the wedding feast.' ¹⁰ "Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. ¹¹ "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, ¹² and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. ¹³ "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴ "For many are called, but few *are* chosen."

Note here that both “evil and good” were invited to the wedding. Yet when the evaluation came it was not based on their ‘evil’ or ‘good’ but on having wedding clothes. Thus in a major surprise to Pharisees it is not personal righteousness that counts but the clothes given to the guests, which is what God gives to them to cover their sin, the righteousness of Christ.

D. The Parable of the talents: The “Sons of the Kingdom” enter based on their understanding of the value of the King’s words (25:14-30).

¹⁴ "For *it is* just like a man *about* to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵ "To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶ "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. ¹⁷ "In the same manner the one who *had received* the two *talents* gained two more. ¹⁸ "But he who received the one *talent* went away, and dug *a hole* in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ "The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' ²¹ "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²² "Also the one who *had received* the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' ²³ "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few

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

Like the former parable, the talents also relate to the value of the message of the King in the Sermon. Two slaves (slaves are Israelites) value it as having the ability to reproduce more life while the third does not value it as able to produce, but sees it as something with which not to identify. Thus he hides it rendering it useless for this period of time. When the Master shows up, the first two are rewarded based on the use of the Sermon as the Word of Life, while the third felt it was death (persecution, etc., see the Parable of the Soils, Matthew 13, soil #2, #3), preferring rather to be judged on his own righteousness to stand before the harshness of the judgment. Thus, he is rejected since he is judged on the basis of his own perspective (7:1-2) of his righteousness against the Master's criteria (God's righteousness).

"The Hard Master:" The issue of his identification of the Master as "a hard Master, reaping where He did not sow, and gathering where He scattered no seed . . ." is, in fact, correct. The Master (God) acknowledges that in the next verse, "you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no *seed*. ²⁷ 'Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my *money* back with interest."

While most, when questioned, would deny that God was like that, the Master Himself acknowledges that this is true, and that He is indeed a "hard Master." The point is clear. One **MUST** have the full righteousness of God, no less, not even a little bit (5:17-20). Thus He is very judgmental on those who have anything less (see 5:22 for the fact that one who calls his brother a fool deserves hell fire.)

“Reaping where you did not sow:” As to the issue of “reaping where He did not sow,” this is simply that God, in judgment, takes everything from His enemies so that they end up with absolutely nothing . . . and then He gives it to His people. He took from the Egyptians when Israel left in the Exodus as they gave to the escaping Israelites booty. When the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, they did not have to plant or build since the Canaanites were planting and building for them before they arrived. God was going to take it from the Canaanites and give it to His people.

Deuteronomy 6:10-11: Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build,¹¹ and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied . . .

Joshua 24:13: “I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.’

He notes that God reaps where He did not sow, relating God to His judgment of the Canaanites where the Israelites entered and were given mature fruit trees, etc. This “third slave” is like the Canaanites in Jericho (Joshua 2) who knew that YHWH’s people were going to demolish their city (a hard Master), but they stood and fought, and died. They decided to stand on their own abilities against the abilities of YHWH (since all they could see was a physical army). Rahab demonstrated the one who was like the first and second slave. She recognized the value of YHWH and took what she had, the opportunity to participate, and was saved.

“Understanding and valuing:” The difference between the slaves was the perception of the value of the talents given to them based on their perception of the Master. Each used them as he perceived their value for expansion (or worth) of the kingdom. Thus the first two perceived their representative position and expanded the talents in the same way the Master had given them the talents. They understood and valued them as “life” and able to produce “life”. The third however misperceived his Master as a man who was a hard man taking things that were not gained through the proper channels. This actually was true of the master as he affirms later. But the response of the man was to fear the judgment and take measures to avoid it by trying to keep it from the master or from anyone else. He did not perceive the value of this mercy as being given to others as an investment. Thus he became fearful (of judgment as an enemy) of this hard master and sought to preserve what he had, not realizing its very value was to utilize it (did not perceive that those who

are the Master's are those who have received mercy). However the Master states that the man ended up judging himself, since he knew the Master required results. He should have been sure to have given him back something for His investment.

The Master requires that his talent is invested on his behalf. Thus, if one does not perceive the value of mercy and does not utilize it, he then does not perceive it for himself as well and thus does not give it out. If one does perceive mercy then one gives it out (since the very nature of it is that it is to be given and is not the property of the one possessing it) and thus gives a return for the investment.

The lesson here is that a believer has perceived the worth of the Master's righteousness and has asked for it. He then, as the mercy has been awarded Him, awards it to others on behalf of the King. He does not hide it since mercy is by definition to be given.

- E. **Jesus to judge the sheep and the goats:³³ The “Sons of the Kingdom” enter based on their perception of Jesus as the King in the treatment of His followers (25:31-46).**



The Kidron Valley in front of the Eastern Gate (upper right).

Also known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3), the Valley of the Kings (Genesis 14). This is the location of the Judgment of the Sheep and Goats of Matthew 25.

This mirrors the judgments in Joel 3 where God judges the Gentile nations for their treatment of Israel. This will occur in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, otherwise known as the Kidron Valley outside the Eastern Gate of the City of Jerusalem (cf. Joel 3:13).

This “sheep and goats” is a reference to Ezekiel 34:17 which is the judgment of the Sheep and Goats, although not a direct quotation. The passage in Ezekiel refers to the Jews who have taken God’s blessings and have fouled the streams for others. In other words, their mercy has been received from the hand of God and has not manifested as was intended,

³³ Note here that the way that men extend mercy to the unbelievers (or believers) is the manner in which they perceive their own forgiveness. These are the true representatives of God.

but they have kept it for themselves, feeling they had deserved it, and thus others did not.

1. Jesus will judge when He returns with His angels (a reference to Zechariah 14) and the return to judge as He then sits on His Davidic throne.

³¹ "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

This is a very premillennial verse and the fulfillment of the Davidic promise in 2 Samuel 7 when the Davidic Heir will sit on the eternal throne. This throne is, of course, in Jerusalem and begins the rule of Christ on earth.

2. The King will separate those Gentiles who enter the Kingdom against those who do not have that right.

³² "And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³ and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

“Judgment of Gentiles Alive on Earth:” The question of who is involved here is important. Most see the word for “nations” as *ethnos* and interpret it correctly as “Gentiles,” and so its use in the plural throughout Matthew (except 21:43, where its sense is debated.) In addition, this would agree with Joel 3, where the Gentile nations are gathered together and judged since they came against Israel. Note specifically that these are judgments of those who have lived through the Great Tribulation and are on this earth in the Adamic bodies at the time.³⁴

“Treatment of Apostolic Doctrine:” Notice in Matt. 10—12 as the disciples take the message to Judah, they are told that they will continue to take it to the cities of Judah until the Son of Man returns. Thus, Israel has been taking the gospel to the nations when they become saved and exile from Jerusalem at the mid-point

³⁴ It is interesting that the readership of the Book of Matthew is the church and thus the reader will not be in any of these judgments since the member would not be part of living Israel, nor the living Gentile nations.

of the Tribulation. However, it is the Apostolic Doctrine of Matthew 10 that they are carrying, and now being judged on their treatment of these messengers and the message.

3. The basis of the judgment is how they responded to the least of Jesus' brethren, which indicates that they acted on behalf of Jesus fulfilling His desires (25:34—26:1).

25:34—26:1: "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' ³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? ³⁸ 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹ 'And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even* the least *of them*, you did it to Me.' ⁴¹ "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' ⁴⁴ "Then they themselves also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' ⁴⁵ "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' ⁴⁶ "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." ^{NAS} **Matthew 26:1** And it came about that when Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples,

“Who are the “Least of these, My brethren?” When considered against the parable of the (Israelite) slave at the end of chapter 24, who treated believing Israel badly, now these Gentiles are being judged on their treatment of the “least of these.”

Who are the “least of these my brethren?” There are three options here; the nation Israel, apostles, and/or other believers.

Apostles (i.e., Apostolic Doctrine):

Apostles are referenced with the “little” adjective in 10:42 when the disciples are taking the gospel of the “Sermon on the Mount” to Israel.

Matthew 10:40-42: “He (*Israelite, or later a Gentile*) who receives you (*disciples*) receives Me (*Jesus*), and he (*Israelite*) who receives Me (*Jesus*), receives Him (*God the Father*) who sent Me.⁴¹ “He who receives a prophet (*disciples from Jesus*) in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward (*disciples from Jesus from God*); and he who receives a righteous man (*disciples from Jesus from God*) in the name of a righteous man (*disciples from Jesus from God*) shall receive a righteous man's reward.⁴² “And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones (*appears to be the apostles from its parallel with the last two sentences*) even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.”

In Matthew 10 where the disciples take the word of the present Messiah to Israel, it is by taking care of the disciples that one demonstrates their acceptance of the apostolic doctrine. This is the only place in Matthew where the giving of food or other necessities is an indication of one’s trust in their message.

Matthew 10:9-14: “Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts,¹⁰ or a bag for *your* journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.¹¹ “And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave *that city*.¹² “As you enter the house, give it your greeting.¹³ “If the house is worthy, give it your *blessing of peace*. But if it is not worthy, take back your *blessing of peace*.¹⁴ “Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet.

In addition, the term, “My brothers,” is used in Matthew, but only in one paragraph where He refers to the disciples (but then appears to broaden it to all believers) (12:46-49).

Matthew 12:46-49: While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him.⁴⁷ Someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing

outside seeking to speak to You." ⁴⁸ But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" ⁴⁹ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers!" ⁵⁰ "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

The summary of this is that the Gentile here is being judged on his reception of the gospel as he took care of those who brought him the message and helped them whether, apostle or Israel. There is no record in Matthew of encouraging anyone to give sustenance, visit prisoners or otherwise, except in the case of the apostles in Matt. 10 and Israel (the household) at the end of Matt. 24. However, the apostles and the message of Messiah have acted instead of the rejecting Israel in their rejection (Matt. 13—28), but Israel comes back to minister the apostolic word in the 2nd half of the tribulation.

Israel:

This goes back to the evil (Israelite) slave at the end of chapter 24. Likewise this judgment then would be a judgment on the Gentile nations for their treatment of Israel during the last part of the tribulation when they were on the run from the antichrist. They would exhibit their trust in Christ by the helping of these Jews, who bear the message of the Apostles during this time of need. This would parallel the same test of the faith as they respond to the Apostles in Judea in Chapter 10. There the true Israelite believers showed that they received the message of the Messiah by receiving the Apostles and feeding and clothing them. In this chapter it would be the Gentiles receiving the message through Israel who are carrying the Apostolic Doctrine of the Christ.

Fellow Believers

While this seems to naturally fit since one is always to take care of his brother, it is the least likely in terms of Matthew defining his own terms. The only thing going for this is that "little" ones is used in Matthew 18 for new (or naïve) believers. However, there is no exhortation to take care of them in any physical way, but only a warning not to teach them self-righteous behavior and doctrine.

One could go systematic theology on this case and see that Jesus is referring to His brothers as those of humanity who have become children of God and thus share with Him in the family. In addition, the term, “My brothers,” is used in Matthew, but only in one paragraph where He refers to the disciples, but then appears to broaden it to all believers (12:46-49).

Conclusion:

1. Apostles (and/or apostolic doctrine)

- A. On the basis of the “taking care” of the apostles in Matt. 10 by showing the acceptance of the message by feeding and clothing them, this would lend itself as the main reason to see the apostles and their doctrine as the issue.
- B. Also the reference in Matthew 10 to the “cup of cold water” to the “little ones,” who appear to be the apostles. Here the “little” ones is an adjective meaning “small.” The word in Matthew 25 is “littler” or “smaller” ones as in a comparative.
- C. The other relationship is that the apostles are the “true prophets” of the Sermon on the Mount, as opposed to the false prophets who teach self-righteousness. Israel was a false prophet in the Gospel, and thus the apostles went as true prophets to Israel and to the Gentiles. Therefore, the apostolic doctrine is going to the Gentiles, and it would be appropriate for the Gentiles to be determined on their treatment of the apostolic doctrine.

2. Israel

In Matthew 24, the unjust steward is judged for his treatment of believers in Israel during the tribulation. The unjust slave seems to be a leader of Israel, but nevertheless he is judged for his treatment of Israel to give them their food at the proper time.

In the last part of the tribulation it would seem that Israel resumes their function of taking the Gospel to the Gentiles

and in this case it is the apostolic doctrine. Thus the reception of these believing Israelite proclaimers of the Gospel could be a measure of their reception of Jesus.³⁵

3. Fellow Believers

- A. Primarily this has the “My brothers” use and the “little” ones which is similar to the use for the apostles in Matthew 10. This seems to be the less likely.

Definitions:

“From the foundation of the world”;

The earthly kingdom was made from Genesis 1—2, and it was made for the Son. Thus, Jesus statement, about whether you did it for Me, is that all things in the kingdom are related to the Son.

“hungry . . .eat”, thirsty . . . drink, stranger . . . invited in, naked . . . clothed, sick . . . visited Me, in prison . . . came to Me”

Many of these are set up in Matthew 10, which is the King’s ministry through the disciples to Judah. As Jesus said, this will continue until the Son of Man returns. They were not to take anything for their journey, as it would be supplied for them by those who received them as messengers of Messiah. So also, the physical test of the Sons of the Kingdom is their treatment of those who bring the message; the apostles.

Note also that in Matthew 18, the “little ones who believe in Me” (the same word as used for the disciples in Matt. 10:42) reference believers. In Matthew 18, it uses the word for “little” while here it uses the word for “least”. It is a common use of the word for little to move it to the superlative and thus here. So the judgment is an extreme demonstration of how much the King rewards. In contrast to those who hold the value system of the world and reward the rich, now the least of these, persecuted

³⁵ Refer to Dr. Eugene Pond’s dissertation on this view of the Judgment of the Sheep and Goats. It can be found in the Dallas Theological Seminary Library.

brothers, are held up as being the beneficiaries of the acts that are rewarded.³⁶

³⁶ The question of literalness with the “hungry”, “thirsty”, etc., is a viable question here. Note that in some responses, they are placed two by two in three groups.

The terms “hungry” and “thirsty” are both used in the Sermon in 5:6 for a hunger and a thirst for righteousness of God which is missing on the earth and longing to see the Messiah and His Kingdom. It could be that these are more than literal in the sense of giving the little ones the message of imputed righteousness.

The terms “stranger” and “naked” are likely practical since the term “naked” does not occur in Matthew, and “stranger” only occurs once in the literal “alien” sense. “Stranger” here is the same word as “alien” and is only used as such in 27:7 and is difficult to relate to a symbolic meaning. The “stranger” or alien would more than likely relate to a Gentile in Jewish lands, but could mean a Jew in Gentile lands (although the term alien is not used with Jews even when exiled in Deuteronomy. It is only used of a Jew as an alien in their own land since God owns it and of the time in Egypt (Deuteronomy 18). It would seem best here to see this as a Gentile believer taking a Jewish believer in, and that would fit best into the context. It may be in the sense of the apostles in Matthew 10 who were taken in by those who received their message as a confirmation of their belief. “Naked”, not used by Matthew, is used in the subsequent “Sermon” book, James, when he says that if one sees a brother or sister in need of clothing . . . (lit. “naked”) and thus seems to imply a practical meaning.

The terms “sick” and “prison” are also interesting. Prison is both literal (real prison on earth) and as a related term to God’s judgment (whether for an unbeliever or believer). Sick is used in Matthew 10 as in “heal the sick”, but never elsewhere. However, the word “sick” is used in James 5 when relating to the elders visiting the man under judgment and anointing him with oil. These terms may relate to the forgiveness of an errant brother (Matt. 18). However, using “sick” for this is difficult in Matthew as it is not used in that sense. However, a synonym for sick is used interchangeably with evil, in that he healed the sick (evil).

Isaiah 58:7, 10 refers to the hungry, the homeless and the naked.

Isaiah 58:7-10 "Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh? ⁸ "Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. ⁹ "Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, ¹⁰ And if you give yourself to the hungry, And satisfy the desire of the afflicted, Then your light will rise in darkness, And your gloom *will become* like midday.

The Book of James: Since James is similar to the Sermon (5—7) and also Matthew 18, it is important to see if James contributes to this question.

Since James is not an apostle, there are no apostolic references in the book, nor does James indicate any similarity to an apostle.

James does, however, note that the treatment of the poor brother with food and clothing (2:14—17) should be an outflow of the new character that is merciful and represents God.

Probably the closest thing to the treatment of messengers is the example of Rahab who clearly is an example of one who exhibited her faith in YHWH by taking care of the spies. (Interestingly James uses “messengers.”).

Conclusion (02.09.10)

It appears that Jesus is here, as in chapter 7, sitting on the throne and testing the applicants for the kingdom as to whether they possess the requirement of Matthew 5:17-20, that of full righteousness. That full righteousness is the character of mercy given to them through imputation.

However, as the Pharisees these deeds of mercy (alms, chapter 6) were done in public to glorify themselves. The contrast here in chapter 25 is that the deeds are done for the King, and were unknown to others (in secret only to God as in 6:1-18).

In Chapter 10 the response of the faithful was to take care of the apostles. As they treat the apostles so also they are treating Christ. This is the only place in Matthew (that I know of) where this is emphasized that they are representing Christ and thus treatment of them is treatment of Christ. However, 18:1-6 has a similar phrase, that is, “little ones.” Thus it would seem that what Jesus is saying is that the first thing is the treatment of the apostles as representatives of God. Then comes (perhaps) the extension of the apostles to the family of believers – any treatment of them

is a treatment of Christ, and thus James 2:14-18 seems to enter to some degree.

Now there is another question, and that is that these righteous (and the unrighteous) do not seem to be aware of how they got (or did not get) into the kingdom. First of all they were pondering how they could have done these deeds for Jesus when He wasn't present. And that lack of presence is accounted for by apostles and the apostolic doctrine. Thus, how they treated the apostles (and the apostolic doctrine) which testified of Jesus, while He isn't here, is the issue.

In addition, they did not let their left hand know what their right hand was doing. They did their deeds in secret, which in Chapter 6, meant that they were doing them for God and not the acknowledgement of men. Thus, they were doing them from their character, because they wanted to, not because they got credit from men. Thus, they seem not to know that God was counting, since they weren't.

Mercy, when it is given, is not measured by the receiver since it is his character. His deeds also are done in secret since they are a natural response of his character (i.e., his desires). As such, one does not think of them as measurable, but simply one getting to do what one wants to do. Also as such, they are not done to be seen by men (ch. 6), but done in secret – not to be seen by God, but they are seen by God. Thus as in ch. 6, one does not let his left hand know what his right hand is doing. They did not even give themselves credit but God, who saw in secret rewarded them.