

Notes on Matthew 24

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4-8: Many, like Schofield and Chaefer, see in these verses and the corresponding verses in Mark 13:5-8, a general summary of this present age, BUT I lean more to the view of Gaebelien, Pentecost, and English, who documents a very convincing parallelism of the verses with Revelation 6, where the first half of the tribulation is described (p. 279 T.T.C. & p. 416 Robert Thomas). Thus, I see the first 3 ½ years of the tribulation period in these verses, especially because the entire discourse is Jewish and seems to be addressed (via the disciples as representatives of Jewish believers in a pre-church era) to Jewish believers who are in the land (note v. 15f).

But I would restrict the passage in Matthew to the final 70th week; indeed also the passage in Mark 13:5-8, where the whole discourse there and in the subsequent verses follows pretty much exactly the chronology of the discourse here in Matt 24:4-8 and following. So, in the both Matthew 24:4-31 and Mark 13:5-27 the timeframe extends from the beginning of the tribulation period to the actual coming of the Lord in glory with all the chronological events paralleling exactly.

It is significant that Luke records (in chapter 21:8-11) the parallel passage to Matt 24:4-8, which also speaks of the first 3 ½ years of the 70th week, BUT there is a difference with what follows. Luke inserts Jesus' plain prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem (in answer to the disciples' question) in vv. 20-24. So, it is obvious that in Luke's gospel (unlike in Matthew and Mark) Jesus breaks off the sequence of eschatological events between his statements about the first 3 ½ years of the tribulation (ending v.11) and v. 20, which clearly reverts back 2000 odd years to Jerusalem's destruction. The key phrase which is different to the other two synoptics is found in v. 12: 'BUT BEFORE ALL THESE THINGS,' which introduces the reversion.

9-14: Now the wording of these verses (12-19) in Luke 21 is very similar to the wording and events of the passages here in Matthew and Mark where the second half of the tribulation is in view (Matt 24:9-14 and Mark 13:9-13). BUT I believe the events spoken of in Luke speak of a Jewish witness just after the 69th week closes, and the events recorded in Matthew and Mark speak of a Jewish witness in the 70th week. [See * further down]

1. Because of the use of the phrase 'BUT BEFORE ALL THESE THINGS' (Luke 21:12). It clearly indicates a backtracking, which is very necessary at some point here to introduce the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in v 20f.
2. By contrast, Matthew introduces the corresponding text (Matthew 24:9) with the word 'tote' (then), which is a time marker of sequence. The flow of time is uninterrupted, on into the Great Tribulation (i.e. 2nd 3 ½ year period).
3. We would expect the wording and events described in these passages (though separated by the church age) to be similar, for they are both times of severe Jewish persecution. In fact, the only times in Jewish history when significant numbers of Jewish Christians will be endangered in Jerusalem, because the wrath of God is about to fall on her for her transgression (Dan 9:24); one in Luke, just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the other in Matthew at the mid-point of the tribulation when Antichrist double crosses the Jews and begins openly persecuting them. We must remember that God's time clock has been stopped at the 69th week, while the church has been ushered in, and the only two times in Jewish history where significant numbers of them respond to Jesus are (1.) In the early Jerusalem church, just prior to their scattering, and (2.) After God removes the church as the light bearers and starts the Jewish clock at the tribulation period. Once again, God will begin to deal with His ancient people in that final 70th week. They will become the light

bearers of Jesus Christ and His coming kingdom in that age, or rather they will (since the church has been raptured) simply resume the responsibility Jesus gave to his Jewish disciples 2000 years before.

From the perspective of those early disciples, they were it! What I mean is they did not know about the mystery of the church that would take over the responsibility of the stewardship of the gospel from them as a nation for 2000 odd years. AND THE POINT IS Jesus addressed them as Jews, outlining to them only THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES. He could have done nothing else.

In Matthew 10:5-23 Jesus gives his Jewish disciples their marching orders. They are actually forbidden to go to the Gentiles and sent only to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' They were to 'preach saying the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' This injunction would not have been irrelevant to those Jews in the early church, who still lived in the land. They faced opposition from their countrymen for the message of the cross. While the focus is different, the KINGDOM is still implicit.

The responsibility of the Jews IN THEIR TIME (i.e. outside the church age) is primarily to herald a kingdom. (The end of the 69th week happened when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey, presenting himself to the nation as Messiah. They rejected JESUS AND THE KINGDOM: Matthew 21:1-16. After this time, the kingdom preaching was replaced by the cross, and both Jews and Gentiles in the church age preached the cross.) Here again, in this very Jewish context in Matthew 10:17-23, we have that familiar passage where the wording and events correlate with Matthew 24:9-14, Mark 13:9-13, and Luke 21:12-19. The merciless opposition described is to be the common experience of Jewish believers who stand up in the spirit of John the Baptist and herald the kingdom. This of course includes those Jewish witnesses who will stand up in the Great Tribulation and testify alongside the one anointed with the spirit of Elijah, that the Kingdom of Christ is about to appear. THESE PASSAGES ARE FOR THEM.

The 23rd verse of Matthew 10 seems to point to the situation as it will be in the Great Tribulation, since the coming of Christ is in view. The implication seems to be that they failed to cover all the cities in Israel by the time the nation is dispersed after 70 A.D., and will not even thoroughly cover them by the end of the 70th week. Whatever the case, it is very clear that we are to understand the merciless opposition described here in Matthew 10:17-23 (and reiterated again in Matthew 24:9-14, Mark 13:9-13, and Luke 21:12-19 with such close wording) as relating (according to Jesus Himself) to Jewish disciples, whether they be (1.) of the 12 sent forth by Christ's command in verse 5, during the 69th week, or whether they be (2.) amongst those Jewish disciples who 'shall not have gone over the cities of Israel' (with the message of the kingdom) by the time Christ comes at the end of the 70th week.

CLEARLY, THE PASSAGE WARNING OF PERSECUTION (vv. 17-23) MUST APPLY TO BOTH. In fact, Christ did not treat them as two separate groups, but one whole. Of course, it is hard for us Gentiles to see that, with the onset of the 2000 odd years of church age in the middle.

*Now Matthew 10:5-23 gives us PLAIN SCRIPTURAL WARRANT to view those three parallel passages in the 'Olivet discourse' in the synoptics as related to either the early Jewish church (before the destruction of Jerusalem), or believing Israel in the 70th week. This same passage (Matt 10:5-23), as an interpretive key, locks us into a very JEWISH context, and would argue against any view that sees a church age interpretation, such as Chafer and Schofield purport.

15-31: The Abomination of Desolation spoken of here [by] Jesus, and originally by Daniel (Dan 9:27) makes the timing clear. It is the midpoint of the tribulation, as Daniel says in 9:27: 'in the midst ([see also] Dan 12:11) of the week.' The 'he' of Daniel is Antichrist. He is the 'man of sin' (2 Thess 2:3-8),

the 'Beast' (Rev 13:4-7). This time period is described in verse 21 as 'great tribulation.' The appearance of the 'abomination of desolation' is thus possibly the trigger for, or at least roughly contemporaneous with, the events happening 'then' (tote) in verse 9: the mid-point of the tribulation.

Luke 21:20-24 refers to a similar crisis, the destruction of Jerusalem, by Titus in 70 A.D. The description there is very similar to verse 16f here. Scofield comments, 'As the circumstances in both cases will be similar, so are the warnings.' Some of the circumstances are the same, but not all. The specific details of the Great Tribulation (2nd 3 ½ years), according to Scofield are:

1. The abomination in the holy place (verse 15)
2. The warning (vv. 16-21) to believing Jews who will then be in Jerusalem
3. The Great Tribulation, with renewed warnings as to false Christs (vv. 21-26)
4. The sudden smiting of Gentile world power (vv. 27-28)
5. The glorious appearing of the Lord, visible to all nations, and the regathering of Israel (vv. 29-31)
6. The sign of the fig tree (vv. 32-33)
7. Warnings applicable to this present age, over which these events are ever impending (vv. 34-51; Phil 4:5)

V28: 'For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.' The context, both here, and in Luke 17:37, is one of judgement. Walvoord and Zuck: 'as a dead body causes vultures to gather on it, so (spiritually) dead people are consigned to judgement if they are not ready for the kingdom [end of quote?]. In Luke 17:37, a specific reference to one being taken and one left is made. The disciples asked 'where?' That is when Jesus gave his cryptic answer re: eagles.

There seems to be a number of angelic gatherings at this point just prior to the kingdom inauguration. The one in Luke 17:37 is probably the same as here in Matt 24:37-41, since it parallels Luke 17:26-37. It appears to be a gathering of unbelieving Jews who are not ready for the kingdom (Ezek 20:34-38). At the same time there appears to be an angelic gathering of all believing Jews, though it would appear this happens after, (perhaps only shortly after) since in Luke 17:37 the ones not consigned to judgement are left. Yet still it seems they will be gathered, since they indeed are present as 'these my brethren' at the sheep and goats judgment (Matt 25:40). And Ezekiel 20:37-38 clearly speaks of two groups: those brought 'into the bond of the covenant, and those 'rebels.' Verse 34 says both parties have been previously 'gathered.' This gathering is alluded to in the gathering of the wheat in the parable of the wheat and tares in the kingdom parables (Matt 13:30). An angelic gathering of the wicked is most clearly pictured in the parable of the dragnet (kingdom parables: Matt 13:49-50), where all nations are involved. It would appear that both the dragnet parable and the parable of the wheat and the tares may extend through the church age and up to the end of the Great Tribulation, where the sheep and goats judgments take place, since both parables teach angelic gathering to judgement at the end.

It is difficult to determine a distinction between the gathering of Israel, (both to judgment and to enter the kingdom) from the similar and necessary gathering for Gentiles. Most feel that Israel will be brought into judgment first, in a separate judgment, since she is the root stock, the one with whom the covenants were made. Pentecost feels this, and views the 'elect' of Matt 24:31 as believing Israel at the end of the Great Tribulation. (I tend to think he may be right, although Walvoord and Zuck believe this group include Gentile believers as well.) Pentecost's view makes both gatherings in Ch 24 (ie. verses 31 and 40-41) apply to Jews in the Great Tribulation, saved and lost respectively. This makes a lot of sense, because everything prior to this in ch 24 and after it, in ch 25, deals with Israel, and when we get to ch 25:30, the sheep and goats judgement, there is manifestly a gathering of 'all nations.' They as Gentiles now have a special category all of their own.

The timing of this event is when Jesus 'shall sit upon the throne of his glory'...and all the holy angels with him' at the inauguration of the kingdom (The angels, no doubt, have been involved in the gathering of the Gentiles to this great event.) (See kingdom parables: Matt 13). BY CONTRAST the earlier gathering (as we suspect) of Jews (both saved and lost in ch 24:31 and 40-41) is chronologically represented as taking place before the sheep and goats gathering. It seems that Matt 24:42-51 urges Jews to 'watch' and 'be...ready,' lest they be taken in the angelic judgment of unbelievers (24:41). The 10 VIRGINS PARABLE (Matt 25:1-13) simply ILLUSTRATES THE POINT OF HOW TO BE READY.

The angelic gathering of believing Jews in Matt 24:31 is presented almost as a DELIVERANCE from the hand of Antichrist (in the midst of cataclysmic events), immediately upon Christ's return, or at least very shortly prior to it. By contrast the angelic gathering of unbelieving Jews in Matt 24:40-41 (Luke's parallel passage—Luke 17:26-37—associates this event with Christ's cryptic condemnation re: 'carcasses' and 'eagles,' thus the gathering[s?] of unbelievers) is pictured as happening in a time when they are about normal daily business, and not expecting such things. For this reason, it may be that these unbelieving Jews are taken first (maybe even some months before the others? 8/6/12). [The date, question mark, and brackets inserted just here seem to indicate that Graham West since questioned this last statement] Obviously, thoughts of this happening are very far from their minds, while [an-]other group of believing Jews will, in hope, be longing for their Messiah to come and rescue them.

It would be right for God to thoroughly finish His dealings with Israel before He entered into judgment with the nations, though logically the time difference could be only a matter of hours or days between the angelic gatherings of Israel and the gatherings of the Gentiles, because both Jew and Gentile will be present at the sheep and goats judgment.

V 32f: **The Parable of the Fig Tree**

'when ye shall see all these things...' it is ...even at the door. 'All these things' refers BACK to the terrors Jesus has just described in vv. 4-29. 'This generation shall not pass' away—that is, the generation that sees 'all these things' in vv. 4-29. This adds weight to our understanding that this whole time is meant to be the 70th week of Daniel. '...of that day knoweth no man...but my Father only' (i.e. the exact timing of 'the son of man coming in the clouds'; v. 30)

The main thrust of vv. 37-39 (which parallel the days of Noe to the end of the age) is to emphasize the point made in v. 36: 'no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only' knows the exact timing of Jesus' return (v.30). Perhaps we ought not to press the literal 'eating and drinking and marrying,' etc., as if life in the Great Tribulation for Jews will be rosy, but definitely, Jesus intended to convey that they will be caught unawares.

Then, quit unexpectedly, 'one shall be taken (v. 40: i.e. away into judgment) and the other left' (These are Jews taken to judgment). The illustration is then given of the goodman of the house needing to KNOW when the thief might come. Likewise, the Jews are told, 'be ye also ready for in such an hour as ye think not the son of man cometh.'

45-51: Who is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has made ruler over his household? The context demands that these words apply to Jewish religious leaders in the 70th week, but there is a principle here for the stewards of God for all ages, although Wiersbe sees that from v. 45, the application is to the church age. His reason being, the phrase 'My lord delayeth his coming' as 2 Peter 3 speaks of (See Wiersbe, p. 180-181). However, I tend to agree with Walvoord and Zuck, who say (with reference to the whole of ch. 24 and 25), 'The church is not present in any sense in ch 24

and 25. The disciples' question related to Jerusalem, Israel, and the Lord's second coming in glory to establish his kingdom' ('what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?'). The responsibility of the Jewish servants (as I understand them to be) is 'to give them (God's household) in due season.' It seems the warning is against Jewish religious leaders (possibly even professing Christian Jewish leaders, and certainly rabbis, but there is a question in my mind which I can't answer at this stage—the circumstance doesn't seem to fit the context of the Great Tribulation. How will they get the perception that the 'lord delayeth his coming'? Will such a consensus of unbelief and hardened hypocrisy have had time to develop in the minds of those Messianic Jews in that age after just 7 years since the rapture? Perhaps the hypocritical leaders amongst Israel will be those who will become disillusioned through pursuing one false Messiah after another (there will be many surface during that time; 24:4-5, 23-24), and being unregenerate amongst the 'many' that shall 'be offended,' they shall betray one another and shall hate one another, just as it says in vv. 10-13. The more I write, the more I think I just answered my own questions and explained Wiersbe's objection to it being a Jewish context. The circumstances in that time according to Matt 24:4-26 are exactly conducive to such a test upon the would-be Jewish spiritual leaders.



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