A look at

Matthew 24

and its

Context

But the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

-Habakkuk 2:14

By Pastor Ovid Need

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http://www.biblicalexaminer.org
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Introduction

There seems to be a vast amount of confusion on our Lord’s words of Matthew 24. His words there have given rise to many unique and strange, such as Scofieldism (I know the roots of Scofieldism; much of his teaching can easily be traced back to a document offered to the Protestants in 1791 by a Roman Jesuit. The doctrine became a major foundation of the Plymouth Brethren movement. The Scofield Reference Bible clearly sets forth Plymouth Brethren Doctrine, a point clearly made by the Plymouth Brethren minister, H.A. Ironside. See The Death of Victory, King and Kingdom Publishers, by this pastor.) This pastor was trained up in Baptist churches that believed and taught with the attitude that C.I. Scofield’s notes were part of the original autographs. I heard more than one speaker mock from the pulpit those of his hearers who did not have Scofield Bibles with them.

Though my mother had given me, as a young per son, a Scofield Bible as a gift, it was not my first serious study Bible. After discharge from the Navy Sea Bees in 1965, I worked as a lay man in a bus ministry. Bus ministries basically exist upon exciting emotions and promotions. I won a workers’ promotion, and the prize was a good, new Bible. I asked my dad what kind of a Bible I should get, and he suggested a Thompson Chain-Reference. So the Bible I started with for serious reading and study was not a Scofield; therefore, I did not have the influence of Scofield’s notes. However, his notes were regularly taught by every Baptist pastor and Bible teacher I came into contact with.

Divine Providence placed my wife and I in the “full time” ministry. Impressed to read the Scriptures, I set the early mornings aside to spend several hours just reading the Scripture in the Thompson Bible. After a few years, I felt I should start writing down what I believed was being said by what I was reading. Doing that and not having “notes” to influence my perception of God’s word, I noticed what I was seeing from Scripture was many times not in accord with what was being preached and taught from the same thing I was reading, particularly in the area of “last things.” (It was implied from the teachers that the Old and New Testament were two separate books from God, and the Old Testament was not for us today, but I was insulated from the influence of the radical Scofield stand in that area by not having his book.)

The pastors under whom I served and Bible teachers under whom I sat were, more or less, teaching Scofield’s notes, though they would deny doing any such thing. They taught what they had been taught by those they considered good men. However, those good men taught, knowingly or unknowingly, Scofield’s version of the word of God. Those men under whom I sat were convinced they were being true to Scripture, when in reality they were being more true to the men whom they respected highly, e.g., Several years ago, I raised a question regarding a favorite “end time” passage to a very close pastor friend. I asked him what he was going to do with the clear teaching of the passage. I was surprised when he said, “This is the way I was taught by men I respect. This is the way I have taught it, and I am not going to change now.” He admitted that the passage did not say what he had been taught, yet he was willing to reject the clear teaching of the passage in favor of what he was taught by men he respected.

I soon learned that if I expressed anything contrary to what was “Politically Correct” according to Scofield (though the pastors would never admit that is what they were teaching, for they felt they were teaching Scripture), I would be mocked for not believing the word of God. However, being under the authority of the pastors of the churches we worked in, I kept the concerns to myself. But I did write down the questions and obvious contradictions between what was being taught and what I was convinced Scripture was saying. I then did serious research from Scripture concerning what appeared to me to be those contradictions.
Because what I heard and what I was reading differed so radically (e.g., Dispensationalism, among other things), I remained very quiet about the matter. I had collected books "along the way," but the books were, with few exceptions (e.g., MH) dogmatically and radically dispensational, e.g., Oliver B. Green.

I knew of no other system of exegesis. Any departure from Scofield’s Arminianism was mocked and ridiculed from every acquaintance I had. Because what I was seeing from the Scripture and what all my friends and teachers were saying differed so radically, I kept quiet. I was sure I was a heretic, for I knew of no one who followed anything except Scofield’s Dispensationalism.

Divine Providence moved us into the pastorate in 1983. Out from under the strong Dispensational influence of pastors and teachers, I still could not bring myself to teach anything contrary to what was “PC” to the Dispensational crowd. I could find nothing to confirm what I was confident Scripture was teaching. Though I could not present Dispensationalism with a clear conscience, I had to do it. I was not going to present anything that could be considered new with me.

A very close pastor friend got “cross ways” with the Lord, and in about 1984, I bought much of his library. In his library, I found books that confirmed what I had been seeing from Scripture for the past several years, but had been afraid to teach. Thus started my progressive departure from Scofield’s Dispensationalism. A copy of The London Baptist Confession of 1689 confirmed that I was not a heretic, for what I had been seeing from Scripture fit very well within that Confession. I soon learned that the earlier the books were first published, the more likely they were to be free of Scofield’s Dispensationalism. So I started rebuilding my library with authors from before Scofield’s time. I am especially partial to reprints, such as the ones by Klock & Klock or Sprinkle. (Preferred book list upon request. Spurgeon’s commentary on the book of Matthew helped free this Baptist pastor from the Plymouth Brethrenism in which he had been trained—Matthew, The Gospel Of The Kingdom is thus quoted freely.)

The vast majority of my pastor friends, obviously, remain Darbyites/Scofieldites. The fellowships I attend are dominated by Scofieldites, so I continually hear messages according to Darby/Scofield on Matthew 24. In fact, since my public departure from what is “Politically Correct” among Darbyite/Scofieldite Baptists, and my public non-Darbyite teaching, I have even been accused of attempting to personally destroy other pastors who dogmatically hold to the Darby/Scofield version of Matthew 24.

Being continually confronted with the Scofield version of Matthew 24, and having serious problems with the consistency of what was being presented, I came to the conclusion that I needed to do something to support what I was confident was being taught by the Spirit in that passage. So about 1988, I decided to seriously study out the passage to settle in my mind what the Spirit was indeed saying in that passage: According to Scripture, was the Darby/Scofield Dispensational view right or not? The following lengthy document is a result of that study. It, along with some other things, forced me to finally lay aside Scofield’s Dispensationalism, i.e., Plymouth Brethrenism.

When I realized that an honest examination of Matthew 24 did not confirm Scofield’s vision, I had to face facts and change some beliefs. The context of Matthew 24 clearly tells us that Matthew 24 was basically fulfilled in 70 AD. The problem I then had to confront was that if Matthew 24 is basically fulfilled, then many of the theories built on Matthew 24 being future had to be wrong.

The following is based upon these already documented facts:

First, Scofield’s notes are the codification of Plymouth Brethren doctrine. Scofield collected and summarized John Nelson Darby’s voluminous notes, and placed Darby’s teachings as notes and cross references in the King James Bible. (I will have to complement CIS for that task alone, for Darby’s writings are as redundant and confusing as any this pastor has ever read. CIS had to have supernatural aid to make any kind of order from Darby’s horrid disarray!) Darby claimed to be the fountain head of what is now known as the Plymouth Brethren. However, not only are Scofield’s notes not original with him, they were not original with Darby. Darby picked up his Dis-
pen-sational teaching from Edward Irving, who acquired a very large portion of it from a 1700s Jesuit priest, La cunza, who wrote under the Jewish name, Ben- Ezra. In a book by the is pastor, The Death of Victory, the preceding facts are throughly documented.

Second, the Gospel Church is the new Israel of God. The Gospel Church is the new nation of God through which the Lord God now shows himself strong midst the evils of this world. With the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem, the old nation of Israel was cut off, and the new nation—the church made up of both Jews and Gentiles—was grafted into the root. The root is Christ. This fact that the Gospel Church has replaced the old nation of Israel is throughly documented in another book by this pastor, Israel's Identity/Israel's Conversion. My book on Identifying Identity also contains documentation that the Gospel Church has replaced the old nation of Israel.

The Death of Victory consists of over 360 formatted pages (in standard hard cover book format), and Israel's Identity consists of 90 8½ x 11 spiral bound pages. Thus both are far too long to even begin to summarize or develop again. Therefore, because the above facts are already well documented, we will develop neither in the following say, but we will build on both.

Both The Death of Victory and Israel's Identity, as well as the following study in Matthew 24, were out growths of my serious examination of the Scofield faith I had been taught.

**Chapter I**

**Prophecy**

There is probably more confusion about the Lord's words in Matthew 24 than there is about any other portion of Scripture. The question arises, "Are teachers using Matthew 24 according to its context?" To answer this question, we must examine Matthew 24 in the light of its context. Matthew 24 was not given "out of the blue;" rather, it was the final statement of a message that started in Matthew 21.

Example: I was told of a man who was teaching a history class in an education seminar. He had spend the entire session developing a point he made in the final few minutes of his class. However, just before he made his concluding statement, other classes had let out, and several people from the other classes entered his class. All that those folks heard was his final few statements that he had worked hard to build to. The conclusion of what he said was fully documented, fitting perfectly into the preceding teaching. Never the less, those who stepped in on the conclusion did not hear the previous teaching, so to them, what he said was totally misunderstood. And the pastor has been in "hot water" every since with those who heard only his concluding statement, though the statement was totally correct. The pastor's concluding statement was clearly taken out of its context, and every pastor has had the same thing happen to him.

Clearly, those who use the statements by Christ given in Matthew 24 without the context of the passages leading up to it will misunderstand what he said. Intentional or unintentional ignorance of the context of Christ's final statements in Matthew 24 will lead to a false understanding, as it did for the pastor above.

Though there are several passages within Matthew 24 that are commonly used as prophetic passages, a close examination of the context shows that they have already been fulfilled. Prophecy is not foretelling events from the time of the reader; rather, prophecy is foretelling events from the time of the writer and/or speaker. It seems that many of the understandings of Matthew 24 making their rounds to day are based on the misconception that prophecy is from the time of the modern reader.
A quick Overview

Matthew 21 takes place 5 days before his death as the Passover lamb. In Matthew 21, he offers himself to the “Jewish church” (MH), which rejects him according to prophecy. Christ then foretells “the doom of Jewish church,” with his final words of doom given in Matthew 24. So we must pick up the message at the beginning and listen to it all if we will understand his concluding statements in Matthew 24.

The Lord offered himself as the King, and the common people heard him gladly. (Mt. 21:1-11.) He then exercised his authority as King when he cleansed the temple. (vv. 12-14.) It is important to note that his Kingship must start in the “temple,” both in the individual temple of God’s Spirit and in the public assembly. The chief priests and scribes saw what he did and how the people loved him, and they were displeased. They question him, but he does not satisfactorily answer them, starting the final conflict that will end in his prophesied death. (vv. 15, 16, Ac. 2:23.) He departs to Bethany for the night. On his return to Jerusalem the next morning, he “cursed” the fig tree. While teaching in the temple, the chief priests and the elders confront him again; this time, they challenge his authority to teach. Rather than justify his authority, he questions them, and gives some parables. (Mt. 21:23-41.)

Then in v. 42, the Lord quotes to these men challenging his authority an Old Testament prophetic passage from Psalms 118:22 (“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.”) The quote created quite a stir, and the chief priests and Pharisees (the Jewish religious leaders were the builders of Ps. 118:22) clearly that he was talking about them. Peter also created a stir when he said the same thing to the same men, the Jewish religious leaders. (Ac. 4:11. Peter used again, 1 Pet 2:4ff. Paul also made reference to it, Eph 2:20; therefore, it is not a statement to be taken lightly.)

Closer Look

Let us now examine the events leading up to our Lord’s usage of Psalms 118:22. As we look at these things, we will also have a better understanding of Matthew 24. The events leading up to Matt. 24:21 actually start with Mattew 16:21, From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples... However, we will pick the events up starting in Matthew 21:1 (Mk. 11:1; Lk. 19:29; Jn. 12:12).

Matthew 21:1-11

Matthew’s account of the order of events appears a little confusing: vv. 12 & 13 apparently are misplaced. We will, therefore, try to place it in the best or possible. The order is important, but not important enough to over ride what the Lord is teaching in each instance. We will follow A.T. Rober son’s A Harmony of the Gospels. I will number the days, but will not call them by their places in the week:

Chapter II

Day one

Christ’s triumphal entry on colt, weeping over city, healing in the temple:

Our Lord had a habit of spending the night in Bethany. On the morning recorded in Mark 11:1 (Matt. 21:1), as they were going to Jerusalem from Bethany, our Lord sent two disciples to get a colt. They brought the colt to him, and he sat upon it, and rode into Jerusalem. As He entered the
city riding on the colt, many of those around spread in the way their garments and branches they had cut.

The account of Jesus entering Jerusalem is recorded in John 12. John 12 opens by mentioning about Lazarus; thus the multitude was here because they heard about Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead, v. 9.

As he rode into Jerusalem, the very great multitude began to rejoice and praise God, and said, Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest, v. 9 (Lk. 19:37,38). What took place here fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. (Isa. 62:11; Zech. 9:9.) John 12:16-18 points out that the disciples did not understand at this time what was taking place.

Luke 19:39, some of the Pharisees among the crowd saw what was going on, and asked Christ to rebuke those who were praising Him. Of course, the Pharisees saw this praise as blasphemy. V. 40, Jesus tells them that if the people do not praise Him, the stones will cry out in praise.

The religious leaders become fearful of Christ’s power over the people. (Jn. 12:19.) Evil men fear any one, truth or not, that might undermine their own evil power over people; this is one reason wicked civil authorities stand against Christianity, for genuine Christianity recognizes another King, Jesus. (Ac. 17:7.)

Drawing near to Jerusalem, Christ wept over it. (Lk. 19:41ff.) He wept because the offer of peace brought by its King (himself) was rejected; he wept because he saw the terrible destruction that was to come upon the city because it rejected its King, v. 44. The twelve were with him as he rode into the city; they heard what he said. So Matthew 24 opens with Christ reminding the disciples of his words of Luke 19:41—the city was very soon going to be destroyed, so the disciples questioned him as to “when?”.

We should notice what Christ did not weep over: He did not weep over what they were going to do to him; rather, he wept over the judgment of God against them for what they were going to do to him.

Note: We probably get far too concerned about what might happen to us at the hands of the ungodly, anti-christ crowd; on the other hand, we have very little concern over what is going to happen to us and to those around us at the hands of God. If we had more concern to ward the Lord, no doubt we would try harder to reach others with the gospel of peace, as well as teaching them God’s law.

Matthew 21:10, 11, as Jesus rode into town, the question was asked, Who is this? The answer was, This is the prophet, Jesus... The point is that they did not say, “This is the Promised Messiah” despite the mighty miracles he did that day after arriving in Jerusalem, v. 14ff. He is doing the mighty works and the people are praising Him as the son of David in the temple before the eyes of the builders, the religious leaders, vv. 14-16. The religious leaders were moved with indignation, and Christ quotes the Old Testament to them, Ps 8:2. The crowd this day at the temple contained many who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Matthew 21:17, Christ returns back to Bethany, Lazarus’ home, and lodged there that evening.

Chapter III

Day two

Christ curses the tree, cleanses the temple, teaches the great multitude, and the Greeks ask to see Christ.
On the first day, Christ, riding on a colt of an ass, offered himself as the right ful king. The people rejoiced, and some of the religious leaders asked him to rebuke the disciples who were exalting him. Christ proceeds to a spot over looking Jerusalem, and seeing its coming ribledes truction, weeps. Jesus then entered into Jerusalem, into the temple. He heals the blind and the lame who came to him in the temple. The religious leaders were moved with indignation, and again rebuked Christ. Christ then quoted Psalms 8:2 to them. Noting what is going on in the temple in the name of the “Lord,” he departs for the night.

The next morning, Christ returns to Jerusalem from Bethany. (Mk. 11:12ff. This is where Mt. 21:18, 19 fits.) Walking toward Jerusalem with the twelve, he hungered. And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves and thus promising figs, he went to it, expecting to find figs on it to satisfy his hunger. Upon arrival at the tree, he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season of figs. Finding no fruit on the tree that appeared from a distance to have fruit, he says unto the tree in the presence of the twelve, No man eat fruit from thee hence forward for ever. (Mk 11:14. Matthew says, Let there be no fruit from thee henceforward for ever, 21:19.)

Mark makes an interesting comment about this tree (11:13): it had many leaves but no fruit, for it was not the season of figs. Then in Matthew 21:20, we read, when the disciples saw it. According to Mark’s account (11:20ff.), they passed that way again the next morning. In other words, they did not see the withered tree until the next morning (the third morning in our counting).

The account of the fig tree is one of the more significant events of Christ’s ministry, it opens the way for some very hostile confrontations with the religious leaders. Our Lord was in a habit of presenting a teaching, and then illustrating his teaching in a manner easily understood by the average person. The instance with the tree is one of those times.

The Fig Tree

The picture of the fig tree is used at times to illustrate the nation of Israel. (Mk. 13:28, Mk. 24:32, Lk. 21:29.) So let us observe a few basic points concerning this account of the fig tree:

First, the Lord was hungry, and desired fruit from it.

Second, he walked to it, expecting to find fruit for his enjoyment though he knew it was not the season for figs. Why did Christ expect to find figs when he knew it was not time for figs? An answer is given by John Gill:

And when he saw a fig tree, &c.] In the Greek text it is “one fig tree”, one remarkable fig tree: he must see a great many, as he went along; for a large tract of the Mount of Olives was full of fig trees, and therefore called “Bethphage”: and notice has been taken already of the figs of Bethany: but he saw none that had such large and spreading leaves as this; for it was the time when the fig tree was just budding, and putting forth its leaves: wherefore he took notice of it; and though it was “afar off”, as Mark says, yet being hungry, he made up to it, expecting, from its promising appearance, to find fruit on it. This fig tree was “in the way”; by the road side, and probably had no owner; was common to anybody, and so no injury was done to any person by losing it: he came to it, and found nothing thereon but leaves only: Mark says, “he came, if haply he might find anything thereon”; which must have been the case; for as he hungered as man, so he judged and expected as man, from the appearance of this fig tree, that he might find fruit upon it; and which is no contradiction to his deity, and his having the spirit of God, as the Jew objects; and especially since, as Bishop Kidder observes, such an expectation is attributed to God himself, in Isa 5:2,4 and it may be added, and with regard to that people, of which this fig tree was an emblem, and designed by Christ to be considered as such in what he did to it. The same evangelist further observes, “and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet”. The word “yet” is not in the original text; which last clause is a reason, either why he found no fruit, or nothing but leaves upon it, because it was not a time, or season of figs: it was not a good fig year, so Dr. Hammond in terrisset; and yet though it was not, since this tree was so very flourishing, fruit might have been expected upon it: and also, it furnishes a reason why Christ took so much pains to go to it, seeing there were very few figs to be had elsewhere, and this bid very fair to supply him with some in this time of scarcity: or else, as a reason why, besides its promising appearance, he expected fruit upon it, because the time of figs, that is, of the gathering of the figs, was not come: in which sense the phrase is used in Mt 21:34: [And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husb and men, that they might receive the fruit of it.] and is Bishop Kidder’s inter pretation of the passage: and since therefore the time was not come for the gathering of the figs, none had been taken off of it, the more might be expected upon it. This sense would be
very probable, did it appear that figs were usually ripe about this time; but the contrary seems manifest, both from Scripture, which represents the fig tree putting forth its leaves, as a sign the summer is nigh, Mt 24:32; and from the Talmudists, who say (w), that the beginning of leaves, or putting forth of the leaves of trees, is in the month Nisan, the month in which the Passover was kept, and so therein present time of the year; and who, from this time, reckon three times fifty days, or five full months before the figs are ripe (x): so that these words are rather a reason why Christ did not expect to find figs on other trees, which he saw in great abundance as he passed along, because the time of common, or ordinary figs being ripe, was not come; and why he particularly expected to find some on this tree, because it being full of leaves, appeared to be of a different kind from other fig trees; and was either of such sort which they call ..., “Benoth Shuach,” as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures which were a kind of white figs that were not ripe till the third year (y). This tree put forth its fruit the first year, which hung on it the second, and were brought to perfection on the third; so that when it was three years old, it had fruit of the first, second, and third year on it: this being such a tree, by its being full of leaves, when others had none, or were just putting out, fruit, of one year, or more might have been expected on it, when it had none at all, and therefore was cursed: or it might be one of that sort which brought forth fruit twice a year; for of such sort of fig trees we read in the Jewish writings (z): and therefore though it was not the time of the common figs being ripe, yet this being one of the sea sons, in which this tree bore ripe fruit, and being so very flourishing, might reasonably be expected from it: but there being none, he said unto it, “Let no fruit grow on thee hereafter for ever; or, as it is expressed in Mark, “No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever”: for if none grew on it henceforth, no man could hereafter eat of it. Both expressions design the same thing, the perpetual barrenness of the fig tree:

and presently the fig tree withered away: immediately, upon Christ’s saying these words, its sap was dried up, it lost its verdure; its leaves were shrivelled and shrunken up, and dropped off, and the whole was blasted. This tree was an emblem of the Jews: Christ being hungry, and very desirous of the salvation of men, came first to them, from whom, on account of their large profession of religion, and great pretensions to holiness, and the many advantages they enjoyed, humanly speaking, much fruit of righteousness might have been expected; but, alas! he found nothing but mere words, empty boasts, an outward show of religion, an external profession, and a bare performance of trifling ceremonies, and oral traditions; wherefore Christ rejected them, and in a little time after, the kingdom of God, the Gospel, was taken away from them, and their temple, city, and nation, entirely destroyed.

“...This tree was an emblem of the Jews...” The man Christ Jesus came to his own people, the Jewish nation. Having no fruit of righteousness and having only “meretru words, empty boasts, an outward show of religion, an external profession, and a bare performance of trifling ceremonies, and oral traditions,” Christ rejected them. “The Kingdom of God, the Gospel, was taken from them,” and they were entirely destroyed. There will be several illustrations between this point of the fig tree and Matthew 24 that will illustrate the coming total destruction of the nation represented by the fig tree.

Third, all he found on this tree were leaves. The tree looked good from a distance; it looked like there was fruit on it; it would have fooled the casual observer; it looked like a healthy, fruit-bearing fruit tree except when our Lord went to it, there was none.

Fourth, be cause there was no fruit on it for our Lord, he cursed it.

Fifth, the tree withered up and died.

Sixth, the Lord was the one who was hungry, not his disciples. He went to the tree for his own benefit, expecting fruit for his own self.

We need to keep the points about the tree in mind because it illustrates what was going to take place—the activities, sermons, and confrontations with the leaders of Israel—over the next days.

Cleansing the Temple

Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15 and Luke 19:45 all say that Christ went to Jerusalem, and, upon entering the temple, He cleansed it again as He did at the start of His ministry. (Jn. 2:13-22.) Christ casts out the ones buying and selling, changing money and those casually walking through the temple as a short cut. (Mk. 11:15-18.) After cleansing the temple, He taught the people. Christ

1 John Gill, Online Bible. I strongly urge the reader to check “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” The Anti-Nicene Fathers, 1.514-518. Irenaeus deals with not only the fig tree, but the parables from Mt. 21-Mt. 24.
also healed all who came to him; the healing of the blind and the lame refuted his author ity from the Father, the God of the temple, to both cleanse it and teach God's word in it. (Jn. 14:11.) Those who claimed the author ity that they now saw Christ removing from them could not do what he was doing. All they could do was get an gry with him. (Mt. 21:14,15.) Luke 19:47, says that he was teaching daily in the temple implying more than one day. (Luke tells us that Christ re turned each evening to the mount of Olives, ap par ently the same place as Beth any, 21:37.)

Greek Worshipers

Having cleansed the temple with out their author ity, the religious lead ers were mad. Though they desired to destroy him, the crowd gath ered around listen ing to Christ prevented them from moving at this time. Now John 12:20-50 fits in. Before returning to Beth any (or the mount of Olives) the night of the second day after he had cleansed the temple, certain Greeks, i.e., Gentiles, who had come to the temple for the feast asked to see Jesus. We know their desire was sincere, for they were in Jerusalem at the time of the feast to worship God. Upto this point, the Lord had continually refused to permit non-Jews to approach him, but now he appar ently wel comes the Greeks. The Lord, v. 32ff., tells the disciples that from the point that will shortly arrive, all men everywhere will be called to himself by the Spirit. The Lord's message in this pas sage (vv. 22-50), speaks of the very soon opening of the way of life to all nation because of the rejection by the Jews (v. 48).

In response, Jesus preaches another message, saying that the time of his glorification is at hand. His soul is troubled over the hardness of the Jews and their reaction of him, and over the coming destruction of the Jews, their religion and their city for their hard ness of heart—he had wept over the city. His soul is troubled over the suffering and death he is about to endure, but for this cause he came to this point in his life. His voice his desire was to glorify the heavenly Father, and the Father voiced his approval in the hearing of all present. The heavenly voice, which some attributed to an angel or to thunder, was for the benefit of the people: it left all the people, leaders included, with out excuse.

He spoke of the manner of his death, lifted up from the earth. He spoke of the judgment of the world and the condemnation of the prince of this world:

Ver. 31. Now is the judgment of this world, &c.] That is, in a very short time will be the judgment either of the Jewish world, when that shall be reproved, con vinced, and condemned for their sin of rejecting Christ, and crucifying him, by the Spirit; in the administration of the Gospel; and they still continuing in their impeni tence and unbelief, in process of time wrath will come upon them, upon their nation, city, and temple, to the uttermost; or of the Gentile world, when there shall be a dis cipline, and separation made in it, of the chosen of God, who shall be called by special grace, and with the converted and believing Jews, shall form a Gospel church state, separate from the world of the un godly; or of the world of God's elect among Jews and Gentiles, whose cause, being un der taken by Christ, he will now vindicate it, and redeem them from sin and Satan, who have usurped a power and dominion over them: hence it follows, now shall the prince of this world be cast out. The phrase,..., “the prince of the world”, is much used by Jewish writers {d}, by whom an angel is meant; and they seem to design the angel of death, which is the devil: and it is certain, that he is here in tended, and is so called, not be cause he has any legal power and authority over the world; but because he has usurped a dominion over it, and has great power and efficacy in the hearts of the children of disobedience, who yield a voluntary subjection to him, as if he was their proper lord and sovereign: now the time was at hand, when he should be cast out of the empire of the world he had as sumed, and out of the temples of the Gentiles, and out of the hearts of God's elect among them.

Gill verifies our conclusions:

First, the world judged was the Jewish world that rejected Christ (pictured by the cursed fig tree).

Second, when the Lord spoke at this point, Satan's usurped power and dominion over the world and its inhabitants was about to be broken by the Lord by his death and restriction.

Note 2 Corinthians 4:4:
In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

But the Lord in John 12:31 identifies Satan as the prince of this world. Therefore, the god of v. 4 is the Lord God, creator of heaven and earth.

The Gospel Door

Christ is saying that the door of the gospel is about to be opened to all the peoples of the world, whosoever will. Clearly implied is that these Greeks, i.e., Gentiles, who are seeking to worship the true God at the temple and who are wanting to see Jesus are a forerunner of what will come—the door to the kingdom of God is about to be opened to all the peoples of the world, and the Gentiles will “flood” into the kingdom. He gives the terms of admission to the kingdom of God, and the terms have nothing to do with any physical relationship to the saints of old, nor with any kind of temple ritual. Christ is the new temple, a fact he has made abundantly clear, and will make several more times.

The request of the Greeks to see Christ brought about his message. Christ clearly spoke all these things, yet his antagonists could not understand what he was saying—they could not understand that he was the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. Christ’s words, his actions (miracles) and even the heavenly voice could not get through to them that he was the Promised One of the Old Testament. Christ warned many times that their rejection of himself would lead to the annihilation of their nation. Though they well understood that he spoke against them, they could not understand the truth about Christ. So for his own safety, he had to hide himself from the religious leaders. He probably retired to Bethany.

The author gives the reason that the leaders of the people could not see who Jesus was, and, accordingly, were unable to believe on him. John inserts this statement, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled (v. 38, Isa. 53:1). Christ so clearly fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning himself that the blindness of the leaders had to be supernatural. For this cause (v. 39, Isa. 6:10, etc.). However, John also points out that many of the Jewish rulers did believe upon Christ, yet they loved the praise of men more than the glory, praise of God. (Jn. 12:40-43.) Christ continues to plead with the hardened people to believe on him. (Jn. 12:44-50.)

A short time later, after the restriction, Peter points out (Ac. 2:23) that it was the counsel and foreknowledge of God that prevented their belief. God prevented their believing upon Christ so his eternal purpose would be accomplished. Yet some did believe, but not enough though to change God’s eternal purpose. If enough leaders to sway the vote for Christ had believed, Christ would not have been put to death.

Election

God’s eternal purpose prevented those from believing, which would change his plan for the ages. So what about the obvious hardness of hearts to the word of God and the gospel today? Scripture is clear—God is working his eternal purpose and plan. Therefore, the salvation of souls will be done within the sovereign Tri-UNE God’s purpose and plan.

“Okay! So what’s the use of working so hard to reach everyone?”

Answers:
1) We are commanded to.
2) Christ did. He preached consistently to those who he knew were blinded to who and what he was.
3) Among the hardened ones (hardened by God) were ones who would believe. Therefore, we have no way of knowing who will believe and who will not.
4) We also have Peter’s example, as well as Stephen’s and Paul’s. These men continued preaching to those hardened in their rebellion against Christ. God kept pulling a few at a time out of the antichrist crowd.

Though the antichrist crowd may be as hard as it was in Christ’s day, we must continue on doing all we can to reach and teach them for God’s glory. We can be as sured that after we have done our very best for him, standing firm upon his word, that his eternal purpose is being accomplished, even in and through the antichrist crowd.

Jesus cleansed the temple of their religious, and preached a powerful and pleading sermon (Jn. 20:44-50.) He then returned to Bethany for the evening.

Chapter IV

Day three

Christ returns to Jerusalem, his disciples see the tree withered, Christ teaches on faith, and he very pointedly confronts the Jewish religious leaders, the chief priests and the elders of the people (i.e., Sanhedrin), the builders.

Mark 11:19ff., Matthew 21:19-22, Christ departs on the evening of the day he cleansed the temple, the day he preached the message when the Greeks came to him. He returns the next morning (the third day), and the disciples see the tree that the Lord spoke to the previous morning—it is totally withered away. When Peter comments on it, the Lord uses it as a teaching example on prayer: all things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believing that ye have received them, and ye shall have them, Mark 11:24 (Mt. 21:19-22. We also should look for and even make opportunities to teach about prayer.)

Matthew 21:23ff. (Mk. 11:27ff., Lk. 20:1ff.)

They enter into the temple again, and Christ continues teaching. Remember, the previous day Christ had cleansed out the temple of its robbers and thieves. In doing so, Christ claimed authority from the God of the temple to do such a thing, he claimed authority over the temple, which was at that time identified as the house of God. When Christ cleansed the temple, he also claimed the authority to judge—that is, to pass judgment on what was taking place in the “house of God” and in the hearts of the people. He called them thieves and robbers. The people knew what was going on with these merchants, for they were being robbed. They loved what he did, and their support prevented the leaders from forcing Christ to quit his healing and teaching.

Christ’s authority to do these things in the temple is challenged by the rulers of the Israelite nation, the chief priests and the elders of the people. They demand of him, By what authority dost thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

Observe:

First, those in power have always done everything within their power at every opportunity to disgrace Christ before the people, to undermine his message and win them away from Christ the Saviour.

Second, the question, “Who gave you the authority to do what you have done and are doing here in the temple?” is the same question asked of Peter, “Who gave you authority to teach here in the temple?” (Ac. 4.) They might as well have added to their question, “We didn’t give the authority; therefore, you had and have no authority.”
Third, the answer: “Where did John get his authority to baptize? You didn’t give it to him, so who did? God or man (the religious leaders or Rome)?” These men were not about to answear him because they knew if they said, “From men,” the people would stone them. They knew if they said, “From God,” then Jesus would say, “Why did you not believe him?” They took the safe way out, and said, “We don’t know” (Mt. 21:23-27, Lk. 20:1-8). Christ said, “Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Actually, he had many times already made it clear by what authority he taught and acted, e.g., John 12:20-50. (Cf., Jn. 9:27.) So, obviously, they intended to use the answer they were sure he would give, “My Father in Heaven,” to accuse him of blasphemy before the people, but our Lord turned it on them.

The Parables

The Two Sons, Matthew 21:28ff.

Christ continues to confront the wicked religious leaders, this time with a parable of a man with two sons. He concludes the parable by telling the religious leaders that the worse of sinners would enter the kingdom before they would, for they refused to realize their sinful condition and repent despite Christ’s mighty works.

Following Matthew’s account, we are told that a man had two sons, both of whom he told to go work in the vineyard. One had the outward formality of obedience (the leaves on the tree), saying, “Okay Dad, I’ll do it.” However, inwardly he was disobedient—he did not do the will of his father. (See The Biblical Examiner, “The New Pharisees.”) Contrariwise, the other son first said, “No, Dad I won’t do it.” However, inwardly he repented of his disobedient spirit—he did the will of his father.

Note the contrast, which had already been made for the disciples. Referring back to the fig tree, the Lord of the vineyard sought fruit from a tree that looked good, yet he found none. There was no fruit on the tree that looked like it should have had fruit.

Jesus then pins them down: “The publicans (sinners) and harlots are better than you, for they had no appearance of fruit (obedience). Yet they repented, and became fruit-bearers at John’s preaching of repentance. Whereas you have all of the outward signs of a fruitful tree, yet you refused to believe John’s preaching. Therefore, the ones who said ‘no’ yet repented and obeyed, are better than you who said ‘yes’ yet disobey. You reject the one John preached to you about.”

The Vineyard, Matthew 21:33ff.

Our Lord does not stop. Remember the fig tree! All of his messages this third day in the temple fit within the illustration of the fig tree from the day before. The illustration for his parables is the fig tree, which was cursed for having no fruit on it even though it looked fruitful—it withered away to nothing.

He continues to speak specifically to the chief priests, scribes, elders (rulers and leaders of the Hebrew nation), moving right on to another parable, “Listen to me” (v. 33). Continuing, he says, A certain householder... (Doing all he could for his vineyard to keep it alive, he planted it, and hedged it about for protection from its enemies. He also prepared a place to receive the fruit from it.

Isaiah 5:1ff., clearly tells us that this vineyard was the congregation of the Lord or the Old Testament Jewish Church:

In this parable a certain householder did all that could be done for his vineyard: it was well planted, and hedged round about, provided with a wine-press dugged in the rock, and guarded by a tower built for the purpose. Even so the Jewish Church had been created, trained, guarded, and fully furnished by the Lord: “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant” (Isaiah v. 7). Everything was in good order for the production of fruit, so that the Lord was able to say, “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” (Isaiah v. 4.)
The owner went into a far country, and committed the estate to husbandmen, who were to take care of it for him, and yield to him a certain share of the produce as the rent. Thus the great Lord of Israel left the nation under the care of priests, and kings, and men of learning, who should have cultivated this heritage of Jehovah for him, and yielded up to him the fruit of this choice vineyard. God for a while seemed gone from his chosen people, for miracles had ceased; but this should have made the scribes and priests the more watchful, even as good servants are the more awake to guard the estate of their master when he is away.

The Lord created, trained, guarded and fully equipped it to bring praise to Himself, Isa. 5:4-7. The householder let out the vineyard (turned it over to the care of others), and went into a far country. The men were to take care of the vineyard (his heritage) while he was gone; they were to cultivate and protect it. Then upon his return, they were to give his portion to him.

The Old Testament congregation of the Lord (OT Israel) was left in the care of priests, kings and men of learning. For a time, God seemed to have departed from Israel. Though the owner’s absence should have caused these men to be even more watchful and faithful over his estate, it did not. Rather, they became very lax, and failed to give the householder his just due (observe the parables of our Lord in Mt. 25).

V. 34, the householder left his vineyard in the care of the husbandmen until the time when he could expect the vineyard to bear fruit. The leaders of the nation (the husbandmen) were not giving to their owner (the Lord) his just honor, love, nor service, his legitimate inheritance. Rather, these husbandmen did all they could to retain it, their inheritance, for themselves. Therefore, the householder sent his servants—the prophets—to the nation with his message to give unto the householder, the Lord of Glory, his due. The prophets of old continually called the nation to repentance.

V. 35, his servants delivered the warnings to give the householder what belonged to him (e.g., Ps. 80, Isa. 5, Jer. 2, 19, Hos. 4). However, the leaders of the people, desiring to keep the vineyard (Lord’s heritage) and its fruit to themselves, not only rejected the warnings, but they killed the messengers (see Mt. 23:34-37, Heb. 11:36-38). The religious leaders of the nation resisted every effort by the ser vants of God to call his people back to the Lord, and render obedient service to the householder according to his law. The husbandmen enjoyed the fruits for themselves by keeping the people in terrible bondage. (Cf. Lk. 11:37ff.)

V. 36, the householder, being an exceptionally patient man, sent more servants to plead with them to return and submit to the householder. No doubt the householder thought, “Surely, if I warn them enough, they will listen, repent and turn back.” But no! they continued to reject the messengers.

Note: Those attempting to overthrow God not only will refuse to listen to reason, but will persecute and kill those who try to reason with them. Not only does the ungodly crowd to day desire to rebel against God and take what is right fully his, but they will persecute and even kill his messengers who try to call the “vineyard” back to its owner—unjust stewards will not tolerate any attempt to call into Scriptural account their actions against the householder.

There is another interesting point here that continually appears throughout Scripture. It appears several times in this short confrontation with these unjust Jewish leaders—v. 33, And let it out to husbandmen. Romans 13:1—God ordained the powers that be; God is the one who placed the wicked husbandmen in the position of authority over his heritage. Rather, these religion and civil author ity was to protect the vineyard and to render to the him the fruit, the honor and glory. God placed the author ities, religious and civil, here, and the authorities did not do right.

When they did not do right, God sent his prophets to warn both the leaders and the people. Not only did the leaders reject the warning (they loved their place of authority, book of Zeph.), but the people loved to be without the law of God, so they could follow after their own lusts (book of Hos. See Jer. 5:31).

God warned both the husbandman (the religious and civil rulers) and the vineyard (the people) to repent, or he would destroy them. Both refused to heed his warning, so not only did he hold the
leaders responsible for refusing to glorify God as God (Rom. 1:21), but He also held the people responsible for refusing to glorify God as God. The people followed the leaders in their rebellion, which also moved God to bring judgment. (Jer. 15:4, Hos. 5:21; 8:4.)

Yes, the householder established the husbandmen in their places of power and authority. In their places, they rebelled against the land owner, bringing his wrath against them. The people followed the husbandmen in their rebellion against the householder, making his wrath even more terrible. (See Rom. 2.)

Illustration

A householder planted grapevines, setting keepers over the vines. The one who planted the vines knew what laws were required to protect the vines and for the vines to grow properly and bear good fruit. He gave these laws to the keepers, telling them what they had to do to keep the vines save, healthy and prosperous. As the keepers departed from the laws established by the householder, the vines grew toward the unjust keepers. When the keepers failed to follow the laws established by the householder for the good of the vines, the vines went wild. With out pruning (with the Sword of the Spirit, the word of God), the vines became useless. Over a period of time, the vines became so wild and useless that all that could be done with them was cut them off and graft in new ones. However, though the unjust husbandmen allowed the vines to go wild, there were a few vines that remained good; there were a few (a remnant if you please) that continued to bear fruit—they welcomed the householder with his fruit, and they were praised by the householder.

Thus we see that just because husbandmen are established by God (for all power is established by him according to his good pleasure and for our good) does not mean that the vines are to follow them. Though the husbandmen depart from the instructions of the householder, the vine still belongs to the householder, and is still responsible to glorify the householder. The vine must fear him who has the power to kill both body and soul, and the husbandmen do not have that power. All who refuse to glorify God as God will receive the just reward.

Matthew 21:33-36 was specifically spoken to the Jewish nation that Christ is confronting through its leaders. The application is as broad as all of time and space—God is God over everyone and everything. Accordingly, all who refuse to glorify God as God over everything will be destroyed, v. 41. Might God in his mercy see fit to give us the grace to remain faithful to himself.

Note also that the failure of the servants (i.e., the prophets sent by God) to bring the fruit back to the householder was not their fault. They were faithful to the owner even to the death of some. The fault was with the husbandmen. The requirement of all time is to be faithful. (1 Cor. 4:2.)

V. 37, the householder could have determined to punish and destroy the wicked husbandmen for treating his servants so mean, but he did not. Rather, he had mercy, and in that mercy, he sent his son to them, hoping the husbandmen would show respect to the son.

This was the last chance for these wicked husbandmen who had been given charge over the vineyard: “Surely, they will reverence my son, and give to him what they refused to give to the servants whom I have already sent. He is the heir to it all, so surely they will realize who he is and honor him. He can not fail.”

V. 38, our Lord brought out into the open what was going on in the secret recesses of the heart with out ever calling a name—this is preaching at its best. Notice what he said.

1) The chief priests, Pharisees and the elders of the people knew who Christ was. They knew he was the Messiah. In this exchange with them (21:23-23:39), Christ plainly told them that he knew what they were doing. They knew the way into the kingdom of heaven, yet they not only refused to enter, but they did all they could to prevent others from entering, 23:13.

2) After they saw the son and knowing who he was (this is the heir), they secretly counseled among themselves how to get rid of him. (See P’s 2.) Matthew 26:3-5 records one account of their secret consulting against the son—daring not to do it openly, they did it among themselves.
3) Envy was the reason for their secret counsel—they wanted what the son had. Even Pilate realized that envy was the motive for their desire to kill the son. (Mt. 27:18.)

4) They saw his murder as their means to take what was rightfully his—they longed (lusted) after what Christ had. They saw him as a threat to their power and authority, so their goal was to get rid of the one whom all the people were following. They were willing to do anything to get the people to again follow themselves. (Jn. 12:19.)

Note: Evil men have not changed, whether inside or outside the religious community. Carnal men have only one goal and motive behind their actions, i.e., “Gold, glory and gals.” Carnal men will not only compromise but boldly “sell out” our Lord for any of these things. I could not count the number of “godly” people who have departed from Scripture to follow any of these things.

From the time of the fall of the evil one, men have been trying every means possible to cast off the bands and cords of his law. (Ps. 2.) And secret counsels are not new today. The exposure of the secret counsels may renew, but the counsels have always existed. These secret counsels will continue as long as there are carnal men who walk after the desires of their own hearts. (Ja. 4:1-5. Note the conspiracy is evil men operating in the “name of the Lord” against the law-word of God, Jer. 11:9, Ez. 22:25.)

The Word of God, Christ, laid the secrets of the heart right out in the light for all to see. Needless to say, he had not read, “How to Win Friends and Influence People,” because his words caused serious hostility. (Mt. 21:46.)

A purpose of the word of God is to reveal and expose the secret things of the heart to the light of the Son. (Heb. 4:12. Paul made even professed Christians his enemy with the truth, which is typical of carnal men, Ga. 4:16. Moreover, the amount of offense taken over the truth shows the love for God’s word, viz. the more love, the less offense, Ps. 119:165.)

Though they claimed to love God and his law, the wicked sought to put Christ to death as he exposed their evil deeds done in darkness. They sought to do away with the one whom they saw as a threat to their power and position. Men have not changed: 1) The carnal will become offended with the truth; 2) those with the wrong motive will stand against anyone or anything threatening to their positions; and 3) there will be persecution (even to the point of death) of all kinds against those who not only reveal secret wicked devices, but who counter them with the word of God. (Mk. 13:13, Lk. 21:17, Jn. 15:18-27, 17:14.)

John 15 is a very powerful passage along this line, especially vv. 18-20. Our Lord makes it clear that his message delivered for use by his servants will cause hatred from the world toward his servants. Observe: The “gospel” (death, burial, resurrection, justification) does not cause hatred; rather, hatred is stirred when the truth of God’s word is used to expose sin. (Jn. 15:24, 25.) The hatred is not because his followers have done wrong or said the wrong thing; the hatred is from his followers doing the right thing and speaking the truth in the face of the departure from God’s law-word, apostasy. Hatred is excited when the word of God is used to call sin sin. (1 Jn. 3:4.)

When the word of God exposes the secret, hidden things of the heart, it will get the same response Christ received. Why do the ones in volved in sin hate the righteous with out a cause? Because their deeds (or hearts) are evil—they hate any one or any thing that might expose their evil.

Attempting to retain their hold on sin and on the people, these evil men made their secret plans to get the Truth away from them.

V. 39, speaking as a prophet, our Lord clearly tells these men what they are going to do, and they did it. They caught him in the garden of Gethsemane; they cast him out in their council in the hall of Caiaphas; they led him out of the city of Jerusalem, and they slew him at Calvary. They slew the heir, resulting in their swift judgment less than a generation (i.e., 40 years) later.
Notice: Not only does he tell them what they are going to do, but he tells them what they have done in private. Evidently, it has not occurred to them at this point that he is clearly exposing the thoughts and intents of their hearts before the multitudes.

V. 40, he puts the question straight to them. Instead of caring for the vineyard, the husbandmen usurped the vineyard; they then mistreated and abused every messenger the householder sent to them. Finally, they killed the only son of the owner, hoping to seize the inheritance. Christ then asks, When therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

Evidently, our Lord seems to have caught them off guard. They may have been so intent on catching a wrong word from him that they were not really paying any attention to what he was saying. Vv. 23-27, they sought to trap our Lord with words, but he reversed the trap—the hunters became the hunted. They saw the first trap (John the Baptist, v. 27), and avoided it. But now the experts at words are caught in the trap of words. Men may make their best attempts to make Christ (Christianity) look foolish, but they will be caught in their own vain attempts. Therefore, they speak right up with the answer in v. 41, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Out of their own mouths they condemn themselves.

Three points to notice from v. 41:

First, they called the husbandmen wicked men. They could not avoid this answer, for the parable was clear and plain. The word of God always causes fallen man to condemn himself, convicting of sin. (Jn. 16:8.)

Second, they call for the destruction of the husbandmen by the householder. Any person in his right mind would do as they said the householder would do. The householder had been abundantly patient with these husbandmen, sending a many servants to them. In fact, the average man would have moved against these wicked men at the first or second abuse of a servant. The Lord's parable clearly gave the land owner the right to move against the wicked men. As the facts were presented to the hearers, it was so clear that even they had to admit it was just to destroy the wicked men. (The application seems to be hidden from them at this time.)

The justly deserved destruction called for in this parable came with their utter destruction when the God of heaven visited Jerusalem. He sent his army (Rome, the most powerful army of the day) in the terrible avenging of the blood of His righteous servants and of His son. (See 23:34-39.)

Third, the householder will take the vineyard from the wicked men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, which will render him the fruits in their seasons. The facts again are so obvious that even these wicked men had to agree the householder is right.

Note that our Lord boiled down well over four thousand years of history into just seven verses (from Abel to Christ), which, no doubt, kept the application hidden. We are so used to time restrictions that it is very difficult for us to grasp something like the Lord did. Here our Lord used thousands of years as though it were but a few days. We seem to feel that if an event does not happen within a few days, it will not happen at all. Worse yet, if we do not see promised results almost immediately, we have a hard time getting excited over the promises found in God's word.

On the other hand, the devils crowd gets very excited over plans reaching hundreds of years into the future. They will joyfully invest unlimited money, time and energy in something they know will not bring results for hundreds of years. Christians see nothing but fail to invest in the kingdom of God while the pagans see nothing but success in invest in the kingdom of men. Seemingly, the average Christian just cannot see past his or her own generation or maybe the children's. God help us to see past our lifetime. (See "The Death of Victory," by Pastor Need.) Christian shortsightedness is costing us the world, and is bringing sure judgment against unfaithful stewardship.
Note again the answer by the wicked in v. 41: Back in v. 25, they were able to reason out their answer concerning John, avoiding the trap; yet here they rushed headlong into the trap. Obviously, their eyes were blinded.

Now the second part of the answer in v. 41: Let out this vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him fruit in their season. The Lord's vineyard passed from these wicked men to men who would be faithful in their trust—it passed from these religious leaders to the Apostles and on to the Gospel Church.

Matthew 13:11 (Mk. 4:11, Isa 29:10) points out that Jesus spoke in parables in order that the wicked husbandmen could not understand, resulting in the kingdom being transferred to the Apostles, and then to the Gospel Church. Matthew 5 describes the laws governing the kingdom of God, and those abiding by those laws are the keepers and heirs of this kingdom. The Jewish religious rulers were contrary to the laws of God's kingdom (see also, Jn. 3).

We are told of the transfer of God's kingdom from Old Testament Israel to the New Testament Israel of God (Gal. 6:16. See Israel's Identity/Israel's Conversion by this author) in a great many other passages, e.g.,

Matthew 8:12 talks about the children of the kingdom being cast out because they rejected the Son; they were to be replaced by those who receive the Son. The kingdom (vineyard) is given to those who will return the praise, honor and glory back to the Son; they were to be replaced by those who receive the Son. The kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness, speaking speaking of the religious (as well as civil) leaders of the people of God (Jewish nation) who absolutely refused Him (Mt. 21:41.)

St. Peter and the Keys

Matthew 16:19, Christ gives to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven: The keys being, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God—the salvation profession. (The Gentile version is Rom. 10:9-15.) The keys can be defined thusly:

A metaphor taken from stewards who carry the keys: and here is set forth the power of the ministers of the word, as Isa 22:22 says, and that power is common to all ministers, as Mt 18:18 says, and therefore in the ministry of the gospel may rightly be called the key of the kingdom of heaven.

They are bound whose sins are retained; heaven is shut against them, because they do not receive Christ by faith: on the other hand, how happy are they to whom heaven is open, who embrace Christ and are delivered by him, and become fellow heirs with him! (Geneva, OnlineBible)

The Keys of the kingdom (tas klei das basilei as). Here again we have the figure of a building with keys to open from the outside. The question is raised at once if Jesus does not here mean the same thing by "kingdom" that he did by "church" in verse 18. In Re 1:18; 3:7 Christ the Risen Lord has "the keys of death and of Hades." He has also the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" which he has handed over to Peter as "gatekeeper" or "stew a rd" (exokonemos) provided we do not understand it as a special and peculiar prerogative belonging to Peter. The same power here given to Peter belongs to every disciple of Jesus in all the ages. Advocates of papal supremacy insist on the primacy of Peter here and the power of Peter to pass on this supposed sovereignty to others. But this is all quite beside the mark. We shall soon see the disciples actually disputing again (Mt 18:1) as to which of them is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven as they will again (20:21) and even on the night before Christ's death. Clearly neither Peter nor the rest un der stood Jesus to say here that Peter was to have supreme authority. What is added shows that Peter held the keys precisely as every preacher and teacher does. To "bind" (dēsās) in rabbinic cal language is to forbid, to "loose" (lūsās) is to per mit. Peter would be like a rabbi who passes on many points. Rabbis of the school of Hillel "loosed" many things that the school of Schamai "bound." The teaching of Jesus is the standard for Peter and for all preachers of Christ. Note the future perfect indicative (estai deadememon, estai elumenon), a state of completion. All this as a sum of course, that Peter's use of the keys will be in accord with the teaching and mind of Christ. The binding and loosing is repeated by Jesus to all the disciples (18:18). Later after the Resurrection, Christ will use this same language to all the disciples (Joh 20:23), showing that it was not a special prerogative of Peter. He is simply first among equals, primus inter pares, because on this occasion he was spokesman for the faith of all. It is a violent leap in logic to claim power to give sins, to pronounce abolution, by reason of the technical rabbinic cal language that Jesus employed about binding and loosing. Every preacher uses the keys of the kingdom when he proclaims the terms of salvation in Christ. The proclamation of these terms when accepted by faith in Christ has the sanction and approval of God the Father. The more personal we make these great words the nearer we come to the mind of Christ. The more ecclesiastical we make them the further we drift away from him.5

The keys of the kingdom are thus held by every Christian—it is the gospel message. The unsaved are “locked out” of the kingdom without the gospel message. (1 Cor. 1:21.)

Peter’s profession is the only way into the kingdom of heaven, and the Jewish leaders, as a whole, absolutely refused to enter. How ever, many did enter on an individual basis. The leaders knew the way; they knew he was the son. (Mt. 21:38, 23:13.) Rather than making the way clear to the people to enable them to enter into the kingdom, they did their best to prevent others from entering. They knew the key, but “beat others back” from using it.

Paul points out, Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8). The princes of this world, using all of their worldly wisdom, sought to slay the son and seize the inheritance. God brought all of their wisdom to nought, exalting the Son through the resurrection, and thus making him the heir of all things. (Heb. 1:2.)

A Mystery

Paul tells us that the wicked husbandmen thought that murdering the son would secure their position and give them the vineyard (kingdom). But the Father used the murder of the son to secure the son’s inheritance (kingdom). If the princes of this world had known this mystery, that the murder of the Son would secure the inheritance, they would not have done it. But it was hidden from them. Though this method of securing the inheritance was planned from before the foundation of the world, it was kept a mystery, so it would be accomplished.

Murder, Death and Victory

The husbandmen were totally convinced that his murder would solve their problem and secure their inheritance (the praise, honor and glory due to the Lord God) for themselves. This is why they fought the resurrection so hard—all the way from paying the guards to lie about the resurrection to persecuting the early church as it taught the resurrection. (See Ac. 5:27-33.)

The Messiah’s death was called for many times (e.g., Ps 22, Isa. 53), but the resurrection was well hidden; understanding it required supernatural enlightenment. (Lk. 24:44, 45.) Thus the Jewish nation missed it, and lost the kingdom. They did not expect the Messiah to have to die and be raised from the dead in order to claim his inheritance (kingdom).

The gospel is not just the death of Christ for sinners. The world will readily agree to (and encourage) the death of Christ as long as it goes no further. The Church of Rome loves the doctrine of the death of Christ, keeping him on the cross, i.e., the Crucifix. The anti-Christ socialists (e.g., Communists) will even encourage the preaching of the death of Christ.

The Resurrection

However, the resurrection is where justification takes place. (Rom. 4:25.) With out the resurrection (the risen Christ), we are of all men most miserable. (1 Cor. 15:19.) The saving power of Christ is confirmed in the resurrection. He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgressions of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, but with out the resurrection, there can be no salvation nor for forgiveness of sins. It is Christ’s victory over death and the grave that provides his people’s victory over sin. (See Rev. 1:18.)

His heirship is based not only in his creation of all things, but also in his resurrection. (Ac. 5:31.) He was exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high from the grave. (Eph. 1:20-23.) His pre-eminence is based in his resurrection. (Col. 1:18.) Our hope of victory in this world over the world and the spirit of antichrist (1 Jn. 4 and 5) is founded in his resurrection. (Eph. 2:1-6; Col. 3:1-3.) In fact, every ounce of hope we have, whether in this world or in the world to come is found in the resurrection. The resurrection and the power of it for his people was a mystery to the Old Testament saints.
Un doubtedly, the necessity of Christ’s death and resurrection is as “senseless” to the wisdom of this world as anything can be—power over death through death! Power over all the things of this life through death! There would be no greater mystery to the natural man. The most foolish thing ever in vened would be the doctrine of power and victory through what would seem to be the ultimate defeat, death. (1 Cor. 1:27-2:16.)

Paul tells us that had the wicked men known the fact of the resurrection, they would not have killed the Lord of glory. This basic doctrine remained a mystery, hidden from them, so they killed him. Moreover, this gospel is hidden from the unsaved man. The payment for sin secured through the resurrection must be revealed to the natural man by the power of the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor. 4:1-6.)

Though Christ’s followers knew what had happened in his death and burial, the necessity and purpose of the resurrection was beyond their grasp until he opened their understanding of it. (Lk. 24.)

**Death and Victory**

This basic doctrine of life, power and hope in death remains hidden to the natural man today: 1) power through the death, burial and resurrection for salvation, and 2) power to live above (victorious over) the things of this world. (Col. 2:20; 3:3. We are not left dead in Col. 3:3, but Paul takes us on—by faith, we reckon our selves dead to the things of the flesh, doing in stead the things pleasing in his sight.)

Power and victory through the ultimate defeat, death? How foolish to the natural man! Power and victory, peace and joy through death to our own desires? Nothing will create scorn in the heart of the natural man quicker than this doctrine of death. Yet here alone does the victory lie for God’s people. The ultimate foolishness to the world brings the ultimate victory to the people of God—a mystery if there ever was one. (See Mt. 16:24, etc.)

To these wicked husbandmen, death to the son would solve their problem. Yet death to the son only as sured to them the very worse and ultimate judgment against them. Is it any wonder that the message of the resurrection caused such hostility? It was the preaching of the resurrection that grieved these wicked leaders, causing them to lay hold on those who preached it. (Ac. 4:1-2; 5:28.)

Let us add that the mystery of victory through Christ’s death and resurrection seems to be a well-hidden mystery even today; a vast majority of Christians see only defeat ahead. 1) John 4:3, 4, as well as John 5:4 has been removed from the biblical theology of most Christians—rather than visualizing victory resulting from death to self, we see a death to the vision of the promised victory. (To me, there is no doubt that this is a result of Darby’s influence. Victory through death in Christ to sin and self is the only means of victory over all things, Gal. 2:20; Ph. 4:13. See my book, The Death of Victory.)

Our enemy has been quite successful at making the victory which is ours through death a mystery, hiding it from God’s people. We certainly need the Holy Spirit to show us: 1) The necessity of death to self, our desires, motives, goals, etc; 2) The necessity of identifying with the death of Christ, and 3) the need for His grace to work in us that we might walk in His victory over the world, flesh and the devil. (2 Cor. 4:1-6.)

To those who claim the power of the resurrection, there can be only victory in Christ Jesus our Lord (God’s word defines victory).

Matthew 16:19

Our Lord “gave” the keys (plural) to God’s kingdom to Peter. Another key given to the apostles which was hidden from the leaders (from whom the kingdom [vineyard] was being removed) is found in v. 18—it would be upon this profession that Christ would build His church.

The religious leaders prided themselves in being the builders (as we will see), and Christ’s claim that he would be the builder was part of removing the kingdom from them.
Matthew 21 effectively took the vineyard from the wicked husbandmen, giving it to an other group of husbandmen who would give the fruits to the householder in due season.

Matthew 18:3, (Jn. 3) gives the formula for entering into God's kingdom (vineyard). This formula is also repeated many times throughout Scripture. It requires repentance (turning from our way) and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, i.e., trusting in his payment for our sins as well as submitting to his authority over every area of thought and action. The leaders refused to do these things; therefore, the vineyard went to those who would do them. An absolutely required was/is humility.

John 18:36 shows us an other major point that "locked" the Jewish leaders out of the kingdom, viz. Their lust for physical power and authority. The kingdom (vineyard) was/is spiritual; therefore, those desiring physical power and authority refused the King, thereby refusing the kingdom.

Before returning to Matthew 21:41, we should cover another point from the parable of the vineyard. Though mentioned elsewhere, it is good to be reminded of Psalms 2. We are told that evil men who do not want to be bound by God's laws (obedience of which brings glory to him as man admits his ways are not right and that God's ways are) have all ways at tempted to throw the Son out—they have all ways at tempted to seize the inheritance. Of course, Nimrod was a good example, though it goes back to Adam.

Since Adam, man's basic instinct is to act in dependent of God. Only the grace of God through Christ can restore a proper attitude toward the landowner.

Accordingly, as we look around us, we see the total dedication to remove all evidence of the householder, the one who made the whole thing. Yet we are as sure that their efforts against God, his laws and his people will not succeed. We know from Scripture as well as from past history, that the householder will judge all wicked men who at tempt to throw out the son (heir to all things), so they can seize the vineyard. Scripture clearly speaks: the vines who yield their fruit to these wicked men will be judged also. They are a wild vine (unsaved), or they have been deluded to follow false teachers.

As already mentioned, those willingly walking after the ways of the wicked leaders will be judged with the leaders; those who do not lift their voice in protest will be trod under foot with the wicked. No doubt, they also will be uprooted (judged) when the householder comes against the wicked husbandmen. (Jer. 15:4, Hos. 5:11.) On the other hand, we have the ones in the vineyard who have at tempted to remain faithful—these will have praise from the householder.

Though these passages from Matthew chapters 20-24 were fulfilled (as we will see), the principles contained therein are as permanent as the word of God itself.

**Matthew 21:41**

The facts were so obvious that these wicked men who Christ was addressing pronounced their own sentence. In Luke's words:

He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid (Lk. 20:16).

Gill comments thusly:

He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, &c.] Which had its accomplishment at the destruction of Jerusalem: according to the other evangelists, these words are the answer of the chief priests, Scribes, and elders, to the above questions put to them by Christ, after he had delivered theparable; but here they seem to be the words of Christ, who also said the same, and confirmed what they had observed, and could not but own, that it was just and right, and what might be expected, with what follows:

and shall give the vineyard to others; the land of Judaea to the Romans in particular, and the church state, with the Gospel and or di nances of it, to the Gentiles in general, sometimes called "others"; see Gill on "Lu 5:29" and see Gill on "Lu 18:11".
and when they heard it, they said, God for bid; though they were their own words, yet repeated and confirmed by Christ, and per ceiv ing that they were the persons in tended, deprecate the ful fill ment of them; at least so far as they un der stood they related to the killing of the Messiah, and to the de struc tion of their nation, city, and tem ple.\(^6\)

The householder did return and de stroyed the wicked, as prom ised in Mat thew 24. Mat hew 21:41, which shall ren der him the fruits in their sea sons. This refers to return ing all of the glory for everything done back to the householder:

- The hall mark of a faith ful min is ter is his giving to God all the glory of any work that he is en abled to do. That which does not mag nify the Lord will not bless men.\(^7\)

- Returning of all the praise, honor and glory to the one who made it all possible is a work of God’s so v er eign grace, for though it is re quired of him, the natu ral man has no de sire to return all to God. (Phil. 3.)

- How much is being done for God to day through the world ly wisdom and hu man per son al ity of a leader and how much is being done through his Spir it, only the Lord knows. Notice John 15: Godly fruit can be borne only through com plete de pend ence upon him, yet it is quite ob vi ous that great and huge “works” can be built with out him. Ob serve the many “large” works that are accom plished by many who openly deny Christ, e.g., report edly, 1/4 of the world is Mos lem.

- The natu ral man not only will keep the praise, honor and glory for himself, but he will do many mar vel ous works so he can receive the praise, honor and glory. Many times (most of the time), only the in di vid ual knows his true mo tive, un less the in di vid ual es pouses openly false doc trine. Then it is ob vi ous for all who will ex am ine the Scrip tures to see.

- Might we also add that many times peo ple can be as sin cere as a heart at tack and still be as wrong as the devil him self. They may truly be lie ve in their hearts they are return ing the fruit to the house holder, yet the facts can be well hid den from them. This is why we have the word of God and pas sages such as Philip pi ans 3:15 and He brews 4:12.\(^8\)

Chapter V

The Builders

The Jewish religious leaders in Christ’s time consisted of the chief priests, the elders (San- hedrin), the scribes, the Phari sees, the Sad du ees and the Herodians. (Mt. 21:23, 22:16, 23, 45, Lk. 20:1, 19, 20, 27, etc.) [The Herodians were “Those who with Herod made a new religion, com posed of both hea then and Jew ish religion.” Geneva. “A Jew ish political party who sympa thized with #Mr 3:6 12:13 Mt 22:16 #Lu 20:20 the Herodian rulers in their general policy of govern ment, and in the so cial cus toms which they in tro duced from Rome. They were at one with the Sad du ees in hold ing the duty of sub mis sion to Rome, and of sup port ing the Herods on the throne. (Comp.) #Mr 8:15 Mt 16:6.” On line Bible.] The re li gious lead ers of the Old Tes ta ment na tion of God con sid ered them selves the builders of that nation.

These religious leaders prided them selves in their self- professed office as the build ers of God’s kingdom on earth—a liter al kingdom made up of men and women who re pre sented God in the world (national Is rael in the Old Tes ta ment). They were con fident that everything done in the name of the Old Tes ta ment God of Is rael had to be done un der their author ity. (Mt. 21:23, 42.) The con sistent atti tude as God’s “official” builders of his kingdom is easily traced through out the New Tes ta ment, es pa cially the book of Acts. The judges con tin ually at tacked Paul’s au thor ity and teach ing; every one of Paul’s let ters deal with the evil ef forts to get new Chris tians to sup port and re turn to Jew ish ism. In the build ers’ opin ion, they were the peo ple, and no one could lay a brick in

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\(^6\) John Gill, Online Bible
\(^7\) CHS.
\(^8\) See The Other Jesus, by this pastor.
God’s kingdom without their authority (approval). Their attitude prevailed until the destruction of the Jewish nation and religion in 70 AD, foretold by Christ in Matthew 24. No doubt one reason for destroying the old nation led by the builders was that if not destroyed, the Judaizers would have seriously infected the new church.

**Peter, the Keys and the Builders**

In fulfillment of Christ’s promise to Peter (Mt. 16:19), Peter was the first to use the keys. He “unlocked” the kingdom of God for the Jews, including the religious leaders who put Christ to death. (Ac. 2.) Being in the same location, Jerusalem, and shortly after Christ’s crucifixion, it is safe to say that a great many present were among those who took part in the crucifixion. It is also safe to say that there were many present who were also at the Matthew 21 exchange with the religious leaders, including some of the builders. Peter told the Old Testament house of Israel, including some of its builders, that the one they crucified is now on high as both Lord and Christ. He is now the judge of all the earth, v. 36. The door to the kingdom was unlocked, and many of Old Testament Israel flooded in, v. 41. Following the preaching of the gospel in the book of Acts and the tremendous response to it, it is worthy of notice that the gospel message always included the enthronement of Christ as the presently seated Lord and judge of the whole earth and all that is in it.

Over five thousand became believers when Peter preached the death, burial, resurrection, and enthronement of Christ over all things. His message caused deep grief among the Jewish religious leaders, the builders. When he was hauled before the same men whom Christ had confronted, i.e., the religious leaders or builders, Peter used Christ’s words of Matthew 21:42, 43 to preach the same message Christ had preached to them only a short time previously, Acts chapter 4.

**Christ and the Builders**

In Matthew 21, Christ quotes the Old Testament. (Ps. 118:22, 23, Isa. 28:16.) With these powerful passages, Christ looks the religious leaders, the builders, right in the eye, and asks them, “Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?”

Notices some interesting points from Christ’s statement:

First, Christ said that the one whom these self-proclaimed builders reject will be the head of the corner (corner stone—the stone upon which the rest of the building is built upon). Christ tells these men that the son thrown out and killed by the wicked husbandmen will be the one with whom they will have to deal.

Second, Christ said that everything will be built upon the one they reject. Their desire (and any attempt) to build apart from him is not only doomed to utter failure, but everything built apart from him will be judged. (Mt. 7:24-29, 21:44, Heb. 12:27-29.)

**A Marvelous Work**

Third, Christ said that both the building the kingdom of God and the judgment against its enemies will be the Lord’s doing. The wicked men of this world can (and will) exert every possible human effort within their power to prevent the Lord’s doing, but they must fail. Because of their tremendous efforts to do away with the son and to prevent his claiming his inheritance, the kingdom work of the Lord will continue unimpeded. Its success despite the best efforts of man and devils will be marvelous in our eyes, v. 42.

His sufferings, death, resurrection and glorification are indeed marvelous—all that relates to Christ is marvelous. His marvelous work goes much farther than just his work on Calvary and his ascension to the right hand of power on high. (Cf. 1 Pet. 1:12.)

The kingdom builders today are doing all that is within their power to overthrow the Son, so they can build apart from him. They have a tremendous hatred against the Son. If the Son were
visibility alive today, they would find some trumped-up charges and murder him again. Though
they loudly proclaim they are against capital punishment, if he were here, they would surely
change their belief. The freedoms sought by the anti-christ crowd is their freedom to carry their
anti-god activities with out fear of punishment.

However, Christ points out to these builders who desire to build apart from him (his law-word)
that all their efforts will fail. Not only will they fail, but the wicked builders of our day will be
judged. The kingdoms of this world that are in rebellion against the LORD, and against his
anointed, and against his king dom will fail. Their best efforts that all their money and power can
produce will fail. The king dom of God will prevail, and it will be mar vel ous in our eyes.

**God’s Kingdom Prevails**

How can the kingdom of God prevail in the face of tremendous odds? The answer is beyond hu-
man comprehension; we can only say that it will be marvelous in our eyes. Daniel 2:44 tells us that
the stone cut out with out hands destroys the king doms of men, grinding them to dust. The king-
doms the builders who have built apart from the Son will fall; they will be crushed by the stone,
and it will be marvelous in our eyes. It will obvious that their destruction is the Lord’s doing.

We can only speculate how the Lord will bring to nought all the wisdom of the world that is
gathered together against him. However, the dear implication in 1 Cor in his ans chapters 1 and 2 is
that the king doms will be subdued by the gospel, the power of God working through the Spirit of
Grace. Yet the work can not be apart from judgment against sin. (See Ps. 45.) Will the wrath of God
against sin cause men to turn to Him? What ever means he sees fit to use to over turn the wicked
builders will be marvelous in our eyes.

The Lord continues, telling these builders that the work of God (Kingdom) is going to be taken
from them and given to an other nation who will do all for the glory of God, v. 43. They rejected the
gospel, refused to spread the gospel (build the kingdom), or let anyone else into the kingdom.
Therefore, they would lose the honor of spreading the gospel. (In fact, it had already been given to
the apostles, Mt. 16:13-20.)

Note: Though the hope of advancing the kingdom of God was removed from the Jewish nation,
they have not abandoned that hope. They still look for ward to the day when the Messiah will setup
his throne in their “nation,” and build the kingdom through them. Many of God’s people encourage
them in that hope. We also notice that many of God’s people support the old nation of Israel
above the new Israel of God. If those support port ers perceive a threat to the old Jewish hope of a nation
and a Messiah to rule the world, there is a very loud cry, and money pours in to support the hope
that Christ removed in this confrontation with the Jewish leaders.

This is obviously another tactic of the enemy (the builders) in his attempt to overthrow the
kingdom of God. If he can keep the world’s attention on a kingdom of fallen men, then he can do his
best to war against the true king dom of God. He will fail, and his fail ure will be mar vel ous in
our eyes. That is a glorious day to look for ward to—the day when all of the wicked plans of wicked men
will be al lowed to come out into the open, and then the Lord will over turn them as though they
were nothing. He will dash them all in pieces like a potter’s ves sel falls un der a rod of iron.

Are we today seeing the Lord allow the nations to gather together for their “best shot” at him
before he dashes them to pieces? (Zechariah 3:8-20 presents an interesting thought along this line.
See the Examiner, “The Gathering of the Nations”.)

We know this for sure: what ever our Lord sees fit to do, what ever he has planned for the rebell-
ious against his kingdom (law-word), how ever he sees best to do it, it will be the Lord’s doing, and
it is mar vel ous in our eyes.

Notice, moreover, that our Lord spoke as though it had already taken place. The over turning of
the nations who have gathered, are gathering and will gather to gether against him is as sure as
though it had already taken place. In fact, in God’s eyes, it has al ready taken place.
In Acts 4, Peter speaks in the same tone of voice—his faith in God’s word gave him tremendous confidence as he stood against the ungodly powers. His words should also give us tremendous confidence as we stand against the wicked who desire to overthrow God. We know that even though they might triumph for a season, in God’s eyes, they are already overthrown. We will see that overthrow; maybe not on this side of death but we will see it.

While man who love God support the nation of men, the new nation (v. 43) is ignored. The new nation is the church, the new Israel of God. It is made up of both “Jews” and “Gentiles,” having a common united goal to render him the fruits in their season, to do all for the glory of God, to submit all to him, and to acknowledge his authority and superiority in all thing.

**God’s New Nation**

Peter identifies the church as this new nation. The church is called to be faithful stewards. (1 Cor. 4:2.) As the church faith fully renders the fruits to the householder, it will be blessed. (1 Cor. 1:29-31. See 1 Cor. 3:6, 7.) The Epistles abound with parallel verses to what Christ tells these wicked “builders”. (See Israel’s Identity/Israel’s Conversion.)

Peter sums up the teaching in 1 Peter 2:1-10: The kingdom of God is removed from the Jewish leaders and given to the church, with the apostles as the first “builders.” (1 Cor. 3:10.) Christ is the foundation, and through the written word of God, preaching and the power of the Holy Spirit, the building is built upon Christ.

Both Christ and Peter spoke to men who prided themselves in being the builders. Because of unbelief, they are removed and replaced with the 12 apostles. (Mt. 21, Ac. 4. See also 2 Cor. 5, Eph. 2:21, Heb. 9:11, 3:4, 11:10, etc.)

**Take and Give**

Another point mentioned by Christ: Taken from you and given to another nation. Spurgeon comments:

“What a warning is this to our own country! We, too, are seeing the sacrifice and deity of our Lord questioned, and his sacred word as sailed by those who should have been its advocates. Unless there is a speedy amendment, the Lord may take away the candlestick out of its place, and find another race which will prove more faithful to him and to his gospel than our own has.”

Apparently, our Lord did according to Spurgeon’s warning, as England grew cold, hard and indifferent. It seems as though he gave the candlestick to America for a time, but it is just as apparent that he is now removing it from America.

I read that England enacted legislation to make her state education “distinctly Christian in character.” [Chalcedon Report, No. 280, Nov. 88.] Such action would be in major opposition to the trend we see in America where a large percentage claim to be “Christians.” [See R.J. Rushdoony, The Messianic Character of American Education.] We send missionaries to England, while it appears they need to send missionaries here to teach our “Christians” the importance of education “distinctly Christian in character.”

God is no respecter of persons nor nations. He will remove his candlestick from unfaithful nations, leaving them in darkness and at the mercy of the powers of darkness. We need to be pleading with our God that his Spirit of grace will work again in the hearts of Americans, and especially that he will open the eyes of those who are called by his name.

**Christ, the Stone**

Matthew 21:24, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner... The religious leaders Christ is speaking to, i.e., the builders, rejected Christ, the stone. They caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. The result of his humility and obed-
ence to the death of the cross was that God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:8-10.)

In the presence of a large multitude, Christ exposes the evil motives and wicked ways of the builders. The leaders of the nation perceived that he spake of them, and they sought to lay hands on him to kill him. Because they feared the multitude, they were unable to do it at this time. (Mt. 21:46.) Therefore, they sought for a time when the multitude would not be present, and Judas led them to that time.

In the presence of the multitude, Christ tells the builders that the stone (Christ) they rejected (killed) will be placed as the corner stone; he will be made the very foundation of the entire kingdom of God by the Father. (Mt. 21:44.)

Fourth, Christ said that the nation which cast out and rejected the stone (at its leaders urging) will be judged and cast off (miserably destroyed). The privilege of representing the kingdom of God on earth will be taken from them and given to another nation (the church) which will give the proper glory to its King.

Fifth, Christ said that the stone they worked so hard to do away with will be the stone which they will have to deal with. In Spurgeon’s words,

Those who stumble over Christ, the chief corner stone of the church, are in injured: they suffer grievous bruising and breaking, but he remains un hurt. Opposition to Jesus is injury to ourselves. These upon whom he falls in wrath are ground to powder; for the results of his anger are overpowering, fatal, irretrievable. Oppose him, and you suffer; but when he arises in his might, and opposes you, destruction has already come to you.  

**Stone of Stumbling**

Christ’s reference to the stone which the builders rejected clearly referred to the stone of Daniel 2. The stone crushed the image of a man, and ground it into powder to be scattered by the winds of heaven. These leaders, i.e., builders, stumbled over Christ—they could not accept the fact that the promised Messiah was a humble man who claimed to be the long expected king of God’s kingdom. (See Isa. 8:14, 1 Pet. 2:7, 8.)

The builders’ preconceived notions of a glorious, literal king, as was David and Solomon, and a glorified temporal Jewish kingdom, as existed under David and Solomon, caused them to reject Christ. (Cf. Mt. 12:42, Lk. 11:31.) They sought, and succeeded, to kill him because he was a humble man who claimed to be equal with God. This humble, poor man could not possibly be the promised, glorious king, so they stumbled, and fell over his humanity. Though they stumbled, there was no permanent— it was through their stumbling that the gospel went to the Gentiles. However, the kingdom was not closed to them, for they could enter in the same way as did the Gentiles, through faith in Christ. (Rom. chaps. 9-11.)

It is interesting that though Christ referred to himself as the Son of Man, no apostle ever made such a reference. When Christ spoke of his future coming judgment against the kingdoms of men, the hearers just could not comprehend his words coming from such a meek and lowly person. (Mt. 20:28. See also, Mt. 10:23, 16:27, 28, 19:28, 24:30, 25:31, 26:64.) Christ warned his people not to stumble at his humility, for it did not prevent his being the Son of God. Rather, it was in perfect and complete harmony with the Old Testament prophecies, especially Daniel’s. Being the humble Son of Man did not and will not hinder his reign as the Glorious King.

When the lowly Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, his humility was no longer a stumbling block, and multitudes entered the kingdom. (Ac. 2.) Yet while he dwelled among men, his appearance spoke powerfully against him. In fact, as we see from Peter’s confession, his appearance was so strong against his divinity that only the Spirit of the Father could reveal the truth behind his appearance—he was the Son of God. (Mt. 16:16, 17.) (This fact is unimaginable to the
human mind—the Ever lasting Father and God of all creation became flesh, so humble that it took a supernatural act of the Spirit of God to separt his human appearance.)

Only remembering Christ as a humble servant was one reason for the hardness of those who called Peter into question. (Ac. 4:6.) Peter now claims that the humble servant is risen from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the majesty on high with all power in heaven and earth given to him. The very idea was so absurd that early on they felt the message was really no threat to them. They were sure that the new gospel preachers were only deceiving the poor masses of ignorant people. However, soon realizing the power of the gospel of the risen Christ to strip them of their power, they sought to stop it. They used every means at their disposal: physical threats, e.g., Saul’s efforts against the new church, and false teachings to get the new Christians to support and rejoin the Jew’s religion at Jerusalem’s temple. The efforts of the enemy of the Christian Gospel have changed very little.11

Matthew 21:44, when the Lord spoke of the stone grinding the wicked to powder, the builders clearly understood his condemnation of them. Knowing the book of Daniel and its prophecies, they had to make the connection between the stone Christ spoke of and Daniel’s stone. Never the less, they observed the humble, poor man before them, and thought, “This can not be that stone if Daniel.” Yet Christ plainly tells them, “You will stumble and fall over me (the stone). But the day will come when the stone will fall on you, and you will be ground to powder.” He did return just as he promised Caiaphas the high priest and the rest of the builders. And he returned in their lifetime. (Mt. 26:57ff.) Returning in the clouds of judgment, he did in deed grind him to powder.

Observe: Fallen men are gathering to gether and mak ing their plans (as they did in Christ’s day) to over throw him and his kingdom on earth. How er, they are doomed to fail ure, for God protects his elect and brings them through the fire for his praise, honour and glory. (1 Pet. 1:7.)

Matthew 21:45.

Christ, God with us, is most effective teacher who ever lived. He gave an il lus tration, ap plied Script u re to that illus tration and those to whom he spoke knew ex actly what he said. The truth seems to have been hidden to them up to this point, but now they know. The masters of words (Phari sees and law yers, the builders) are now caught in their words, as the wis dom of this world is brought to less than noth ing by the word of God.

Notice that it is not pos si ble for man to de ceive the word of God nor avoid it—the word strikes, leaving only three options: 1) act on it; 2) ignore it, or 3) fight (stand) against it. These men took the latter

Cowards

These great leaders are cowards. Matthew 21:46, tells us that fearing the people, they avoid the truth. V. 46, tells us that fearing the people, they with hold their evil desires against Christ. Though Christ laid bare their secret plans for his death (v. 38), they proceeded any way. The “elite” have always, as a whole, stood against Christ. (1 Cor. 1:26.) On the other hand, the com mon people gladly heard him. (Mt. 12:37.) No doubt, they enjoyed hearing some one who could not be intimi dated by these leaders, some one who spoke the truth to them, and “put them in their place.” They were likely tired of being bullied by these men, and rejoiced in some one these men could not bully. The common people prevented the proud “elite” from getting rid of Christ at this time. (However, we know that it was not yet time for his deliv er ance into the hands of the wicked.)

Spurgeon makes an interesting comment here:

It was arranged, in the order of provi dence, that ecclesiasti cal mal ices should be held in check by popu lar feel ing. This was an in stance of the way in which full of ten the earth has helped the woman (Rev. 12:16), and the will of the masses has screened the ser vants of God from priestly cruelty. He who rules all things sets in motion a high order of politics in the affairs of men in refer ence to his church... One way or another, Jehovah knows how to preserve his

11 See “Daniel’s Image & Stone,” App. B.
Son, and all those who are with him, until the hour come when by their deaths they can glorify his name, and enter into glory themselves.  

Spurgeon points out that the earth opening and swallowing the flood in the Revelation is a picture of the masses (in this case, v. 46) preventing the intentions of evil men from being fulfilled against his people—this would in due any and every means whereby evil intentions against his people and kingdom are stopped. God uses even the unsaved to accomplish his divine purpose. In other words, the earth did not literally opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. The words pictures God using the things of nature, including unsaved men, to defend his people and advance his cause.

There are many evil men with many evil desires against the people of God. We see a total warfare, an all out effort in every area of life and thought by evil men to openly change public opinion, so they can carry out their evil desires. We know from Scripture that there are many secret councils going on to plan the best way to over throw God. Regardless, we are assured by the word of God that nothing will happen apart from God’s permission. This pastor has also found it true—in times of need, I have found the unsaved at times even more willing to help stand against the ungodly intentions of wicked men than those who are called by his name.

The ones who stand the strongest against Christ and the message of his word are those who might perceive a threat to their power and control over people. We see here the stand against Christ here was by the religious leaders, those who claimed to love God. They are the ones who pressured the civil government of Rome into putting Christ away from them. We are, accordingly, presented with two things to consider: First, the in fighting and anger among “Christian leaders” is obviously over the fear of losing power and control over people, i.e., one sees a threat to his power over people from an other, so he strikes out and at tempts to destroy the other.

Second, one wonders who is behind the scenes, applying the pressure to do away with all evidence of Christ in society today? From what we gather, those behind the scenes with tremendous power and financial backing to bring that pressure are followers of the Jew’s religion. [Gal. 1:14. See Identifying Identity, by this pastor.]

Chapter VI

Matthew 22

The Invitation Rejected

Our Lord is preparing his disciples for his suffering and death at the hands of the builders and, ultimately, his resurrection, which he has been doing from Matthew 16:21. As he draws closer to the point of his death, his parables become more pointed. Not only is he teaching his disciples, he is also telling them of the soon coming judgment against those who will put him to death. Christ has used exceptionally strong words, and the builders know that he spoke of them. 21:45. Christ is speaking publicly, which does not help matters any with the builders. All of his words here lay the foundation for his words in Matthew 24.

We are following our Lord’s final days before his death. We started with day one: Christ’s “triumphal entry” on colt, weeping over city and healing in the temple. The second day: Christ curses the tree, cleanses the temple, teaches the great multitude and the Greeks ask to see Christ. Matthew 22 takes place on the third day.

The third day is the day that Christ returned to Jerusalem, the disciples saw the tree withered, and Christ went to the temple where he taught on faith, and confronted the builders with the truth.

12 Spurgeon, Matthew, 187.
Matthew 22 continues Christ’s very pointed confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders, the builders. The conclusion of his message, Matthew 24, takes place on this day. As we mentioned at the first, the time line for the final events leading to the Lord’s concluding words in Matthew 24 can be confusing, but the exact timing of the events is not the purpose of this study. [As previously mentioned, I am using A.T. Robertson’s, A Harmony of the Gospels. His timeline may not be right, but the purpose of this study is not to correct him, nor establish the proper timeline. The purpose is to establish the context of our Lord’s words in Mt. 24—that he is speaking of the then soon coming destruction of Judea and Jerusalem.]

Christ’s Authority

The temple at Jerusalem up to the time Christ was identified as the house of God. (See Jn. 4:21.) Entering into the temple on the third day, Christ continued teaching as he had been doing on the second day. The previous day, Christ had cleansed the temple. In doing so, Christ claimed authority from the God of the temple to judge—he passed judgment upon the activities in the temple, identifying the thieves and robbers. The people knew what was going on with these merchants, for they were being robbed. They loved what Christ did to the thieves and oppressors, and their support prevented the leaders from forcing Christ to quit his healing and teaching. Christ’s teaching apart from the Jews also claimed authority over the temple to teach the truth from the God of the temple; it said he was directly from God the Father, and was answerable to no man. Though the builders understood the implications of what he was doing and saying, i.e., he was directly from God, they could not accept it.

The Lord’s third day is a very busy day, and we have a detailed account of what he said and did.

As we look at chapter 22, notice what our Lord did. These who hated him desired to kill him, and he knew it. His reply to those who desired to silence him was to continue on with what the Father had given him to do, even in the face of sure death. He allowed nothing to turn him aside.

Thus we see that the only answer we have for those who would oppose us, and there will be opposition, as we try to do the Father’s will, is simply con tinue in his will. Observe: 1) Though our Lord warned us that even our own household would rise in opposition, we have a misguided idea that if we are doing the Father’s will, others will rejoice in our dedication to the task (Mt. 10:34-39); and 2) let us be careful in comparing our opposition with the opposition Christ received, although he did assure us that we would receive opposition (2 Tim. 3:12)—our Lord was perfect, not leaving one area “uncovered.” He met every opportunity successfully. He was perfectly balanced in every area of life at all times; he did not allow one area to suffer at the expense of another, as we do.

Accordingly, many times our “opposition” is justified, for we leave many areas undone. (Mt. 23:23, Lk. 11:42.) Thus we are justifiably criticized in the undone areas. Though we might have an area of life under control to the Father and above criticism, does not mean we are above criticism in other areas. No doubt Christ’s perfection helped motivate anger against him. Our Lord did not back down nor compromise in confronting these proud religious leaders. He answered the opposition (in all of its hatred against him) with another parable (this is not the same parable recorded in Lk. 14:16-24), Matthew 22:

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bid to the wedding: and they would not come.

Spurgeon’s comments thusly:

The gospel is a glorious festival in honor of that won drous marriage, by which God and man are made one. It was a grand event; and grandly did the king propose to celebrate it by a wedding feast of grace.13

Through the miracle of the virgin birth, God and man are rejoined together, married. His beloved Son is united with humanity that he might redeem his people from the just penalty of their sins. (See Isa. 53.)

13 Spurgeon, Matthew, 188.
The oriental custom was to send a first invitation, and then follow it with a second invitation to those who responded favorably to the first. Here we see that the king sent his servants to call those who were already invited, bidden, to the wedding.

It is quite obvious that our Lord is referring to the Jewish nation—over the many previous years, it had been bidden to this wedding, which was now ready in Christ. The many prophets and teachers had invited them over and over to the glorious event that was now upon them. What a marvelous privilege to be invited, bidden, to the wedding. The Son of the Great King is now here—the Redeemer, the Mediator, the Saviour, the Messiah, Emanuel, i.e., God is now with us. Isaiah 9:6 is now fulfilled, and the message goes out again: “Come, ye sons of Israel. Rejoice that the Son is here. The appointed event that all of the servants of the kings have bidden you unto has arrived. All things are ready: come unto the marriage.”

Vv. 5ff., gives the response: “They would not come.” As Spurgeon points out: “It is not said, ‘They could not come,’ but, ‘They would not come.’” Thought they had many excuses, the problem was basically that they rejected the king, his messengers, his son, his provision and everything about the king. Their rejection was an insult to the king, for it was a great honor to receive the invitation. It was a greater honor still to attend, yet they rejected the honor, and thus rejected the king.

Comparing the Lord’s parable here with his words of Matthew 23:6 (Mk. 12:39; Lk. 14:7), we see that the same men who reject the heavenly king fight over earthly kings—that is, if a human, physical king had bidden them, they would have fought each other for the privilege to attend.

Human nature can get extremely excited and enthused over the things of this world, e.g., sports events. However, when it comes to being excited and enthused over the things of the Great King, some one almost has to beg us. This pastor has found that if there is public recognition attached to “serving” the Great King, then folks might fight over his service, although that is not service for him—that is service for self. (See Mt. 6:1ff.)

The king’s invitation of Matthew 22:3 was rejected by the invited at the peril of their lives, as the Lord addresses the same ones who received the parable of the vineyard. They understood that the parable of the vineyard was against them, and they sought to lay hands on him. They could not do it at the time because of the crowd, so they did it at night when the multitude was absent. Matthew 22, the Son answers their desire to take him. People today refuse the invitation of the Great King altogether in salvation or in conversion at the risk of everything.

V. 4, restates 21:36. We are thus shown a side of the Great King that we just cannot comprehend—that is, his tremendous patience and longsuffering. (See Rom. 2.) We would have dealt with the sinners at their first sign of their rebellion; we would have cut off a chance to sin. If people do not do the way we think they should, we are ready to cut them off. But the Great King is patient; he is patient; he is patient still. Though his patience is beyond anything we can understand, he is just, as these wicked men are about to find out. “He has made every possible allowance so that they might be left without excuse if they persisted in their refusal.” [Ibid.]

We will see in chapter 23 that his patience with the builders had lasted since the murder of Abel. But the Lord warns here that it is all coming due, and the cup of his wrath will overflow upon them. Their murder of the son will be the final filling of the cup. (See Rev. chaps 6, 16, 19, etc.) The king was keeping score, as he is today. Though the wicked plotters seem to be getting away with their plots against the king and his anointed, he laughs from the heavens at their false attempts.

Observe:

First, the king bids them. Second, he sends messengers to remind them. And now he sends messengers to tell them, only this time, the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. With this statement, our Lord looks past the present of v. 3, and looks into the future, i.e., the sacrificeis
made. “All things are now ready;” absolutely everything is ready—the preparation of salvation for men is fully made. (Spurgeon.)

Notice who he sent to after the killing of the sacrifice: He went back to the original ones who had been bid den. First the proph ets bid them; then the son in vited them; then even after the son was cast out and killed, they were in vited again.

It was nec es sary that the word of God should have been spoken to the Jews first before it could go to the Gen tiles. (Ac. 13:46.) Even after the table is set with the sac ri fice for the mar ri age (and the ones who were bid den killed the Son, the sac ri fice, repre sented by the oxen and fat lings), he again in vites those who were first in vited. The gos pel was first preached at Je ru sa lem, and mul tit udes re sponded.

V. 5, those who were bid den, Abra ham’s physi cal seed, made light of it. (See Heb. 2:3.) They counted his in vi ta tion and feast less im por tant than the things of this world. They had time for their farms and for their mer chan dise, but they had no time for the Great King, which is typi cal of car nal men to day. They have both time and money to do what they want to do—pur sue their own pleas ures and de sires, they make light of the King and His Son.

Our Lord asked Pe ter, “Si mon, son of Jonas, lovest thou memore than these? (Jn. 21:15)” This ques tion rings through the ages: Do we love him more than the farms and mer chan dise of this world? There is noth ing wrong with the things of the world, and we should ex cel in them as Chris tians. But when they are allowed to in ter fere in an swer ing the King’s call, judg ment lies ahead. What do we love so much that it prevents our an swering His call?

Not only did they reject the kings in vi ta tion, but they made light of it. They counted it un im por tant to an swer the king’s in vi ta tion to his son’s wed ding, e.g., “Who cares that the king has all of these things ac com plished. My de sires are more im por tant.” The con text of Christ’s words, clearly, was the physi cal seed of Abra ham, the Jew ish na tion that ex cised un til the Lord de stroyed it, v. 7. The book of Acts records the of fer given again to the na tion, and how it re sponded to both the invita tion and the mes sen gers, i.e., the apos tles. Though many individ uals from the na tion glad ly ac cepted the in vi ta tion, the lead ers re jected the king’s in vi ta tion, killing the mes sen gers, e.g., Stephen, Acts 6:8ff.

The Remnant

V. 6, the remn ant... Though the ma jor ity of the old Hebrew (Jewish) na tion con tin ued on about their busi ness af ter the mur der of the son, there was a remn ant who worked to re tain the Old Tes tament method of wor shipping God. They were the build ers con fronted by Christ, and before whom Pe ter stood. (Mt. 21:42, Ac. 4:11.) No tice what the build ers (the remn ant) did— they took the serv ants who were still try ing to get them to come to the feast, and en tered them spite fully, and slew them. They not only ig nored the mes sage, but de tained the mes sen gers in prison, and killed them as they had the op por tu nity.

We see our Lord’s words in ac tion in Acts 4. Peter and John had healed a cer tain man lame from his mother’s womb. The peo ple who saw what hap pened were filled with won der and amaze ment, and ran to gether unto them in the porch that is called So lo mon’s. Pe ter, see ing the great mul ti tude gath ered to gether, started preaching the gos pel of Christ to them. Acts 3:13, 14, 17, tell us that the Is rael ite men present at this ser mon were per son ally in volved in the killing of the Prince of life. Pe ter is sues a call to these men to re pent, and be con verted. The re li gious lead ers of the tem ple were grieved that they taught the peo ple, and preached through Jesus their res ur rection from the dead. So the build ers laid hands on Pe ter and John, but not until after about five thou sand men of Israel re pented of their sins and were con verted.

After a night locked up, Is rael’s ru lers, elders, scribes and the high priest called Peter and John be fore them. The ru lers, the build ers, ques tioned them con cern ing the “in vi ta tion” they was ed to the peo ple to come to the king’s feast. Pe ter, with Holy Ghost bold ness, told them what they had
done. The rulers did not like the message at all. But because they could find nothing worthy of punishment in Peter and John, they threatened them, and let them go. However, the next time the builders took the king's messengers, they not only threatened them, but they beat them before they let them go. (Ac. 5:40.)

Our Lord's words move quickly to fulfillment with Stephen. Stephen was a servant of the king who confronted the builders (the religious, ruling remnant of Abraham's seed) with a detailed message of the king and his invitation. (Ac. 7, Mt. 22:6.) Because of his message of invitation to Israel to come to the king's son's marriage, this servant was caught before the supreme council of the Old Testament nation. Then before the assembly of the nation's religious leaders, he very powerfully presented the message again, only more detailed, rightly laying the blame for the son's death at the feet of the builders. (Ac. 7. See Mt. 10:16-42, Mk. 13:9-37—of course, these passages apply for our day.) The message of the king, delivered by his servant Stephen to the remnant determined to protect their position in national Israel, created such hatred that they killed the servant. The killing of this servant of the king expanded into attempts to kill all the king's servants. (Ac. 9:1-2.)

**Christ or Caesar**

Israel's answer to the invitation of the king to the feast he had prepared was to kill the servants who delivered the invitation. The cry of the leaders is recorded in Luke 19:14, We will not have this man to reign over us. However, at the same time, they were willing to have Rome (Caesar) reign over them. (Jn. 19:15.) How like men to day—they absolutely refuse to have King Jesus reign over them, but they will gladly have Caesar reign over them. Notice that God will not permit anarchy, so either the Lord Christ will reign from the inside out, or an oppressive civil government will reign from the outside in. Either man will enjoy the freedom to do right under King Jesus, or he will have terrible oppression under evil men. (1 Sam. 8.)

We must keep in mind that Christ is talking to and about the remnant of Old Testament national Israel. However, the application is timeless, as the Lord calls for judgment and destruction against the those who are against his reign through his law-word. All men who are against Christ and his author ity over them face his judgment. We can rejoice that Christ is in total control as we see them succeeding in our day.

Matthew 22:7, follows the parable of the vineyard point for point: “In these terrible words, the siege of Jerusalem, the massacre of the people and the destruction of their capital are all described. (Spurgeon)"

**The King's Armies**

Josephus records the terrible destruction promised by Christ against the builders. What took place when the king sent forth his armies to destroy the murderers is beyond description and comprehension. Though Rome thought it was sending its armies against Jerusalem because of its rebellion against Rome, Jesus clearly tells us that Rome was only a tool in the hand of an almighty God. After sending many messengers and many warnings to this stiff-necked people, the cup of his wrath is full—God's patience is over. (Rom. 2:1-6, the day of wrath is here).

The king sent forth his armies. Rome was only a tool in the hands of an almighty God, avenging the blood of all his servants from Abel to Zacharias. Christ warned them. Peter warned them, and they beat him, and finally slew him. Stephen warned them, and he was stoned. Notice that the king's servants were not mistreated by Rome, but by the religious leaders of the Jewish nation. The real persecution comes from religious leaders at tempting to retain their power over people.

God's use of the heathen Roman army against his people is not new. He sent Assyria against his rebellious people. (Isa. 10:5.) He sent his servant Nebuchadnezzar against his rebellious people. (Jer. 25:9.) Neither Assyria's, Babylon's nor Rome's armies were godly men—they were the wicked
of the wicked. They executed the wrath of a Righteous, Holy God against a wicked, rebellious people who bore the name as the people of God.

In Matthew chapters 21 through 24, Christ tells the people exactly what is going to happen as the result of the national rejection of God’s servants, and the ultimate rejection of the Son of the Most High God. He is preparing his followers for what is about to take place.

We might note that in Matthew 21:39, the husbandmen were destroyed for killing the householder’s son. However, in Matthew 22:7, the murderers were destroyed for killing the servants who delivered the message that all things are ready: come unto the marriage. Hence, we see that many who took part in killing the son repented of their sins and were converted—they were, accordingly, spared the wrath of the king. We are not here considering Romans 11:25 and the blindness sent by God so the Gentiles could be grafted in by faith. However, we will mention that the ones who were broken off (v. 17) can be grafted back in through faith in the one they rejected. A great many were grafted into the root, Christ, for the early church was largely Jewish.

Matthew 22:1-7, tells us that those who refuse to allow Christ to rule and reign over them will face the sure wrath of the Father. All of their plans and preparation will not prevent the judgment of God from coming upon them. The fearful thing is that in the three detailed records we have of God judging his people, he used ungodly nations to do it. These wicked armies committed the worse imagin able atrocities against his people. What took place with Assyria and Babylon can be read in his word; what took place with Rome can be read in secular histories such as Josephus. History proves that no nation can turn from God and his Son, rebel against God and his total word, without facing the consequences—terrible judgments. No man (saved or unsaved) can say, “We will not have king Jesus as our authority to rule over us” and avoid the wrath of all mighty God upon them.

Yet we see from our Lord’s words in this passage through chapter 24, those who believed his word were spared. Though they lost all material goods, they were delivered out of the judgment to rebuild a nation which would bring glory to God, which is the hope we have today. As we see the wicked, ungodly armies of the antichrist crowd gathering together, we have the assurance that God will preserve and protect his faithful remnant for his glory.

As we think of that terrible judgment against the Jews, we also know that nothing like that will ever happen again. (Mt. 24:22.) This does not say that the judgment against those who reject the Son’s authority will not be severe, for it do doubt will be. (Heb. 10:29.) The nations who reject the Son will be destroyed, and there will be a price to pay by all who live within those nations. (Ps. 9:17.)

Chapter VII

The Invitation Accepted

Tell them which are bid den, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. The wedding is ready, but they which were bid den were not worthy (Mt. 22:4, 8).

The king prepared everything for the marriage of his son. He sent out invitations to the people of his kingdom. The invitations were rejected by the first ones to whom it went, and thus the king and his son were rejected. The messengers were beaten and killed, so the king destroyed the murderers. That did not change the fact that the wedding is now ready. So the king sends his servants into the highways, and bids to the marriage, as many as they can find.

The king now turns his back on those who were bid den (the Jews) as unworthy. Now he sends his servants every where people are found with the instruction to invite everyone. Acts 13:46-52 gives us a fulfillment of our Lord’s words. The invitation continued to be presented to those who...
were bid den and to those in the highways. Those who were bidden yet believed not were moved with great envy about the invitation going to the Gentiles, and they worked hard to stop it. (Ac. 14.)

Peter told the builders that they judged themselves worthy of everlasting life. (Ac. 13:46.) They were more concerned with their material things than in their eternal well-being. Hence, the king did not judge them unworthy, they did themselves.

Matthew 22:10, all manner of men were invited. All who would answer the call were welcome, including those who had been previously bid. After the sacrifice was slain, every one was invited. (Compare Mt. 10:5 with Matt. 28:19, 20.) The servants went everywhere, encouraging people from all over the world to come to the marriage. Where ever people are, preachers should be there. Note, If ye continue in the faithful grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister (Col. 1:23, Ac. 2:5). Thus according to the Apostle Paul, the gospel was preached to every creature under heaven.

The servants do as they are told, gathering together both good and bad into the visible church. They gathered tares as well as wheat, dross as well as gold, goats as well as sheep, fish of all kinds. Acts gives us an account of this in gathering. The wedding was furnished with guests, guests of all kind, rejoicing in the king and his son. The king was happy, the son glorified and the people enjoying themselves.

V. 11, the visible church is filled with all manner of guests, rejoicing in their invitation to the wedding and enjoying the good things before them. All manner of people are tolerated within the assembly, based upon their profession of faith.

The Wheat and Tares

Then the king comes, and he notices immediately that there are some missing their wedding garments. Observe:

First, the servants of the king were responsible to seek people out from every corner of the earth. The people were not responsible to seek out the servants.

Second, the servants were only responsible to offer the invitation to everyone they encountered as they obeyed the king; they were not responsible to determine who had the garment and who did not.

Third, the servants were responsible to make the guests welcome at the marriage.

Fourth, there will be those who will “come into the church for gain, for honor, for fashion, or for the purpose of under mining the loyal faith of others. (Spurgeon)”

Fifth, the final determination of the guests’ qualifications was the king’s.

Sixth, the servants’ job is to cultivate the wheat, not root up the tares. The land owner will do that when the time comes. Our job is to invite all, and the king will separate those who are his from those who are not his.

Clearly, the Lord’s words of Matthew 22:8-14 are based upon the parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13:24-30. There the wheat and tares grow together until the harvest.

V. 12, the visible church is made up of all kinds of folks, both saved and unsaved, who are gathered to gether for the marriage feast. The king spots one who does not have on a wedding garment. Notice that the king speaks kindly to him and say, “Friend, why did you come in here without a wedding garment?” The wedding garment, of course, speaks of salvation—the righteousness of Christ applied by faith in his atoning work. No man can stand before the Great King without this garment. (Isa. 61:10; Rev. 3:18; 7:14; 16:15; 19:8.)

Observe a few things here:
First, And he was speechless. It would seem that the individual being confronted was caught by surprise. He should have known better, though, because everyone else had on a garment while he was naked. (2 Cor. 5:3.)

Second, remember the context. Christ is confronting the Jews over their rejection of the king’s son. These Jews fully expected to be in the great feast, yet they were rejecting the garment which they were required to have.

Third, the visible church is made up of both saved and unsaved. Having everything (outward actions) expected of them, so they fit right in, the unsaved fail to have the garment provided for the quest. How ever the king, and only the king, sees the truth, and calls them into account. He caught them by surprise.

Fourth, there are those who know they do not have a garment, yet they feel they can fool everyone by blending in well with the other guests. They might say, “I am just as good as they are.” They may be right, but that is not the point. The point is, “Who has the garment.” The guest did not expect to get caught. Those with out the garment looked just like the ones with the garment. No one knew (and maybe not even the individual) that they did not have the garment except the king. He knew immediately and cast the person out.

Matthew 7:22-23 gives us an answer for why there will be those who are surprised in the day when they must come face to face with the King. The guest here has no answer — there is no defense for those who try to stand before the King with out the righteousness of Christ. Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 22:13), would be the most horrible words imaginable. In his freedom, he chose to “crash” the wedding feast with out the proper garment. Now he is bound hand and foot, speaking of being cast into hell. Those who feel they are free to do their own thing, are actually bound by sin.

Fifth, the servants of v. 13 are not the servants of v. 8.

Sixth, there is no answer once the king appears. If the garment is not already on when the king is met, then it is too late, for only casting out awaits. Luke 16 shows us there is plenty of reasons to repent in hell, but then it is too late.

V. 14,

Many are called: the limit lies not there. We preach no restricted gospel. All who hear that gospel are called, but it does not come with power to every heart; but few are chosen. The result goes to show that, one way and another, the mass miss the wedding feast, and a few choose spirituals to find it by the choice of God’s grace. These words, of course relate to the wholeparable. 14

Remember the context: The bid den (Jews) refused to come, so the servants must go out and urge everyone who will listen to come, and many do. Among those that come into the visible church are unsaved, and they are cast out into eternal torment. Yet among the many who come, there are few who have been chosen, enough to furnish the wedding in a manner pleasing to the king for his son, which is where we must leave it. (See Jn. 15:16.) Our prayer is that each one of us would be chosen. If God is dealing or has dealt with the heart, drawing to the redemptive work of Christ, then those are chosen. The servant’s job is to go urge everyone one.

However, the clear context, 21:46 and 22:15 tells us that this parable, 22:1-14, was given to Israel’s religious leaders — Christ responds to their efforts to kill him, 21:46. It tells us that the call was issued to the leaders of national Israel, who, generally, rejected the call. Though some responded, not all who responded were chosen, vv. 11-14. (Cf. Jn. 6:26.) Israel, however, generally rejected the call, killing the Son. Though after the resurrection many natural Hebrews, Israelites or Jews, came to Christ, the nation still stood against the Son. The result was the destruction of the nation, 70 AD. Note that the Pharisees well understood what Christ was saying — he spoke against them. (Mat. 22:15.) Thus the context requires that we understand that many of national Israel

14 Spurgeon
were called, but few of that nation were chosen to eternal life. For then nation had to reject Christ, so the gospel go to the whole world.

Chapter VIII

Render unto Ceasar

Our Lord has spoken very strongly against the builders who exalted themselves. Christ exposed their in most beings; he exposed them as false teachers who were bringing judgment and wrath from God upon themselves and upon their nation. In the next three passages, vv. 15-22 (the Pharisees and Herodians), 23-33 (the Sadduces), and 34-40 (the Pharisees, a scribe/lawyer), the men he had spoken against seek to discredit him before the same multitude before whom he has discredited them. Their very best efforts fail.

The first group is Matthew 22:15-22, the vain efforts of the Pharisees, who unite with the Herodians. (Note the clear fulfillment in v. 15 of Ps. 2: they took counsel against the Lord and his anointed.)

Matthew 22:15-22. This text contains some of the more misused words of our Lord. It is a much discussed and abused passage by two groups: those who teach almost unlimited submission to civil authority and those who teach almost total anarchy.

Like all passages, the context must be kept in mind when trying to understand what is being taught. Our Lord is still involved in the confrontation with the builders, which started in 21:23. (21:42, Ac. 4:11.) The builders understood what he was saying about them in the presence of the multitudes. During the confrontation, he had upset the builders so badly that they sought to lay hands on him, 21:46. In their grand design for themselves and for national Israel, the builders absolutely rejected the true Stone. When told that Christ was the Stone, they tried to crush the Stone. The more they were confronted with the truth, the more hostile they became. In chapter 22, our Lord continues his parables about them, causing even more hostility. In their anger, the builders had sought to lay hands on him, but fearing the multitude, they were unable to do so. Unable to physically take Christ because of the people, they counsel together to overthrow the Lord with words. (22:15, Ps. 2.) They now attempt to turn public opinion against him in order to re-establish their position over the people.

Observe: Rather than the word of God bringing repentance (as he told them they were to be destroyed for their hardness and rebellion against the king), they take further steps to entangle him with his words. Sinful men will not give up in their vain efforts to overthrow God unless God intervenes in their hearts. (Rom. 3:10ff.)

United Effort

The chief priests, scribes and the Pharisees—the builders—with the Herodians. They pool all of their wisdom for a common goal—discredit the Son of God. They would have had a better chance emptying the ocean with a gallon bucket than to trap the wisdom of the Ages with the wisdom of men:

"sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians" What an alliance! The Pharisees (partisans of strict Judaism and the law) and the Herodians (the political time-servers of the day, whom the former hated cordially), join in flattering Jesus to snare him by the question of Jewish title against the Gentile. Would He, the Messiah, gain say the hopes and exalted privileges of Israel as a nation? If not, how escape the charge of treason against Caesar. Diabolical craft was there, but divine wisdom brings in the just balance of truth as to God and human authority and the difficulty vanishes. It was the rebellion of the Jews against Jehovah which gave occasion to His subjugating them to
their heathen lords. Weren't they humbled because of it, and seeking the resources of God's grace? Nay, but proud and boastful; 15

V. 16, Master, we know... Slick words used by the best minds they had to offer, attempting to cause the Lord to stumble. Oh, how foolish men are to think they can get around the wisdom of God. But men will make many plans just to avoid the fact of their rebellion against the word of God. V. 16 was probably said in a mocking way. Regardless, v. 16 was said to cover the true thought and in tent of the heart.

V. 17, remember the context:

First, Christ is involved in a very heated discussion with the religious leaders, the builders of the old nation of Israel, which was to represent God's kingdom on earth. Though not independent, this nation prided itself in its independence. Actually, it had spent more time in bondage than it had in independence.

Second, this is the final confrontation with the builders before his arrest. It is leading to the Lord's words in Matthew 24, warning of the total destruction of the Jewish world as was known by all in involved in this exchange—the multitude, the disciples and the builders. This confrontation will leave all concerned with absolutely no excuse for their own terrible destruction within that present generation.

Third, Christ cleansed the temple, and taught and healed the people. In doing so, he claimed the Father's authority over the temple, which represented God's kingdom on earth—he claimed to be the God of the temple and of the kingdom of God. When he taught the word of God in the temple, he claimed to be the only proper interpreter of God's word as it is taught on this earth. The healing of the multitude proved his claim of total authority from the heavenly Father over every activity of man. (Jn. 14:11.) Christ claimed the authority that the builders had claimed for the many years since Moses. What he had been doing during his public ministry was clearly a challenge to their authority. His actions in the temple during his final week here on earth were the most blatant challenge yet to the builders' perceived authority over the Father's works on earth.

Fourth, after cleansing the temple, he left for the night. Coming back the next day, the builders did not forget what he had done; they confront him with, "Who, gave you the authority to do these things? We didn't." This started this very heated confrontation and very pointed parables. The whole issue was over who gave him authority to do what he did in the temple, which represented God's kingdom on earth. His actions and teaching in the temple did not make friends with those in charge of the Jewish nation, the builders.

Fifth, Christ gives them three parables:

a) the two sons—sinners, publicans and harlots, will go into the kingdom of God before them because of their hardness.

b) the vineyard—the husbandmen (they perceived that he spoke of them) usurped the vineyard, killed the servants, and then they killed the son. Attempting to keep the usurped vineyard for themselves, they did all these things in their rebellion and hardness against the owner. The justly deserved results was terrible judgment against them; they considered themselves the elite builders, yet they were in open rebellion against the authority of the owner.

c) the wedding—the king bids them many times to the marriage of his son, yet they refuse the king's pleading of them to come to the marriage. This parable has the same ending as the previous parable—the destruction of the builders and their nation. Their refusal to come to the marriage was actually rebellion against their right ful king; they rejected his authority over them. Moreover, there were those who accepted the invitation, yet they were not properly attired in the garment provided by the king.
Sixth, the attempted entanglement. The builders are exceedingly hostile. They know he is talking about them; the multitude knows he is talking about them. The Word of God has exposed their rebellious, evil hearts, hearts hardened against the householder, against the king and against the son. They have absolutely refused to give the fruit to the householder, and the proper respect to the king. At this point, they will stop at nothing to stop Christ from stripping them of their power, except public perception. Then they are covering their wicked devices with smooth, deceitful words, v. 16.

V. 17, the question: What think est thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

V. 18, our Lord again strips away every false cover, exposing the very thought and intent of their hearts before the onlooking world—he has exposed their hardness and rebellion against the heavenly Father, the God of the temple. Their goal is thus to entangle him in his talk. Their desire is to discredit him enough before the people that they can kill him. They will do anything to get him out of their midst, for he is destroying their power and authority over the people.

Christ and the Roman Coin

Vv. 20-22, our Lord answers all of their craftiness with, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. With this, he not only answered them, but caused them to marvel, leave him alone for now, and go their way (not his way).

What Happened?

Christ had been confronting the builders with their rebellion against the king (Jehovah God), and warning them of the terrible destruction soon to come upon them. The builders sought to avoid their rebellion with this trick question. Actually, they sought to get him to join with them in their rebellion against authority. They were protesting the yearly tax levied against the Jewish nation by the Roman conquerors. Needless to say, it was a very unpopular tax, for it reminded the people that they were not free; rather, they were clearly servants to the Romans. They knew if they could get Christ to say, “Pay the tax,” he would also become unpopular with the multitudes; they also knew if they could get him to say, “Don’t pay the tax,” Rome would be down on him for insurrection. (Cf. Ac. 5:37.)

Christ called for a piece of money, a days wages for a laboring man. As he had already done (21:40), he got these wicked men to answer their own question. They had to admit that the money belonged to Rome: “The Jewish Rabbis taught that ‘If a king’s coin is current in a country, then the men of the country do thereby evidence that they acknowledge him for their Lord.’ (Spurgeon)” Whether they liked it or not, the coin was proof that they were Roman subjects, and Caesar was their lord. The logical conclusion, accordingly, was that they had to pay to Caesar what he demanded.

The Lord is confronting the builders with their hardness of heart and rebellion against the king (Jehovah God). They are doing their best to escape the public pressure he is placing on them over their rebellion. In fact, he is telling them of the destruction soon to come upon them and their nation for that rebellion, so they are trying to publicly discredit him.

So why does he confront them with a piece of Roman money with Caesar’s image and superscription on it?

That Roman coin was unavoidable evidence possessed by everyone as proof of the nation’s rebellion against its rightful king, Jehovah God.

These men were experts in the Old Testament law. When Christ called attention to the Roman coin, he immediately reminded them of the law and the prophets: Deuteronomy 28, 1 Samuel 8, etc. The God of the temple, from whom Christ claimed authority, had been very precise: He had told Israel, the builders, that if they rejected him as their king, they would have a very oppressive human king over them. Christ’s answer destroyed absolutely every objection they had against the oppress-
sive civil authority of Rome, for Rome simply fulfilled God’s promise to them. God had promised what the oppressive king would do. He would take their sons and daughters for himself; their land as well as their harvest; their money in oppressive taxation, and, worse of all, God promised that they would be no better than servants to the oppressive civil authority. God even pointed out to them that the oppressed people would cry out to him from under their oppressors, and he would not hear them. Though the builders knew all of this, they still rejected Jehovah God as their king. In doing so, they chose servitude to oppressive men over freedom in servitude to Jehovah God. There is no neutral ground: Men either activity serve the King of kings, or they serve evil men.

With the Lord’s simple act with the coin and his question, he preached a very powerful sermon from the law and the prophets. He pointedly told these men that they had rejected Jehovah God as their king, and now they were complaining about oppressive servitude. And God will not hear their complaint until the rebellion is dealt with.

Verse 21 tells the builders that because of their rebellion against their rightful king, they had Roman oppression. He tells them that they had no right to complain about Rome’s oppression because they had been clearly warned in the law and the prophets. V. 21 clearly refers back to Matthew 21:34, 41. With this short statement, the Lord told them: “Give to God his fruits, and God will free you from the oppression. In the meantime, He will not hear your cry from under that oppression.”

Christ’s answer caught them completely off guard, amazing them and causing them to marvel. But rather than yield to the king and deal with their rebellion, they went their way. Though knowing the answer for the civil oppression and high taxation, they continued in their own way. No doubt, they continued in their complaints against the oppressive civil authority—it is so much easier to get a group together against oppression than it is to get a group together to return the fruit to the landowner.

We must be very careful about trying to make Matthew 22:15-22 stand alone, apart from its context. Christ is dealing with rebellion against the King of kings.

The application is quite obvious for our day. The fact cannot be avoided that God’s people today are choosing servitude to an oppressive tyrant over servitude to the King of kings. When the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ over every area of life is ignored, then God will raise up oppressive men. The law-word of God can not be belied, ignored nor avoided without oppressive men being exalted. It is impossible to press back the darkness of evil and oppressive men without relighting the candle of submission to the authority of the King of kings.

All offers freedom from oppression apart from return to the total law-word of God and his authority over every thing (church, law, civil government, the arts, science, education, social programs, etc.) is doomed to result in only more servitude, as demanded by God’s laws of cause and effect, sowing and reaping.

As people turn to God in obedience to his command-words in his law and submit to his total authority over everything, then he will give back the freedom he removed as men departed from him. Christ gave the answer to oppression. (Mt. 22:21.) All Christ did was remind them of what they already knew. Yet these men, even knowing the cause of the oppression, went their own way. They chose the oppression of servitude to an oppressive civil authority, rather than admit that returning to the king and his son was the answer. Fallen men would rather die in their sins than admit they cannot handle life on their own.

Accordingly, any message against oppression must be balanced with responsibility to God’s law. We cannot have one (freedom from oppression) with the other (submission to his authority and responsibility toward his law). Actually, as men fulfill this responsibility and submit to his authority, God will provide the freedom to serve him.
The issue in v. 21 is submission to the rightful king. The issue is over authority. Sinful men had rejected the total crown rights of King Jesus, resulting in their servitude to Rome. Therefore, the only answer is servitude and freedom is submitting to the king and doing Matthew 21:34 and 41. The reason for servitude must be dealt with, or there can be no freedom—a message fallen man hates.

Those who make Matthew 22:15-22 say more than what it is, a call to repentance over the rebellion against God’s law-word, can lead to very serious false conclusions as well as some false hopes. The over-all message of God’s word is that true freedom is freedom to serve God and to obey his every law-word. This freedom is the only freedom that is supported and provided by the Christian God. When this freedom is misused in order to serve the world, flesh and/or the devil, this freedom will be replaced with oppressive men and laws.

Chapter VIIX


Following our Lord’s final days before his death, we started with day one: Christ’s “triumphal entry” on colt, weeping over city and healing in the temple. The second day: Christ curses the fig tree, cleanses the temple, teaches the great multitude and the Greeks ask to see Christ. Matthew 22 takes place on the third day, the day Christ returned to Jerusalem. On their way to the temple, the disciples see the withered fig tree. Christ enters into the temple, where he continues to teach and heal the people. This third day of the Lord’s activities is given to us in great detail, covering from its morning to the time of its close. On the evening of the third day (actually, the beginning of the Jewish Wednesday), he returned to Bethany. He apparently lodged in the house of Simon the leper, where his head was anointed with the exceeding precious ointment. Judas then went to betray Christ. (Mt. 21:19-26.)

The Jewish religious leaders, the builders, had challenged Christ’s authority to do what he was doing in the temple. Then Christ spoke some very pointed parables against the chief priests and the Pharisees (the builders), exposing the secrets of their hearts before all the people. In fact, the strongest message delivered against sin any where in the word of God is delivered personally, face to face, to the religious leaders in the presents of the multitude by our Lord in Matthew 23. Matthew 24 records Christ’s words as he went out from the temple after his extremely pointed messages against the builders. His several messages caused the builders to seek to lay hold on him. Their fear of the multitude prevented them from moving against him at this time. They see that their only hope of gaining the multitude to their cause is to discredit Christ with words. They make three attempts, vv. 15-22 (the Pharisees and Herodians), 23-33 (the Sadducees), and 34-40 (the Pharisees, a scribe/lawyer).

The failed at tempt by the Pharisees and the Herodians did not discourage the enemies of Christ. The sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, now try to trap the Lord with their best wisdom. They fare no better than the Pharisees and the Herodians. We will see that when he answers this group, there will be an other group rise up—we can be assured that there will always be men raised up to oppose Christ. Though his people might see victory in one area, there will soon be opposition from another.

The Sadducees

Though our Lord only points out one of the ways, the Sadducees were contrary with God’s word in several areas.16 They did not believe in the resurrection. Evidently, they attempted to use

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16 Sadducees: The origin of this Jewish sect cannot definitely be traced. It was probably the outcome of the influence of Grecian customs and philosophy during the period of Greek domination. The first time they are met with is in connection with John the Baptist’s ministry. They
an argument with our Lord that they had used successfully on others—they seem to have it down pat. Though their question had perplexed other men, they are now confronting the Wisdom of God. Note: questions that may throw men into silence for lack of answers are no more than a vapor to him—they might as well have asked him whether it was day or night.

Man's Error

V. 29, gives the answer for man's every perplexing question: Ye do err. We do err: 1) in not knowing the Scriptures (no man can know it perfectly, but he can know it enough to please God), and 2) in not knowing the power of God. The problem is not that the answer is not there; rather, the problem is that we do not know the Scriptures—we fail to study and search the Scriptures, and we fail to pray and let the Holy Spirit (the power of God) reveal to us his word. (See J. 1:5.)

The question asked by the Sadducees reveals a very basic malady of man: Evidently they had studied Scripture, but they studied to support the traditions they had been taught, and that they desired to retain, v. 24. This kind of study over looks obvious truths that counter what they wanted to believe.

V. 32, Christ quotes Moses whom they quoted to support their version of the truth. Their supposed perplexing argument was based upon error; their error was based upon a misuse of Scripture.

Of course, our application is quite apparent. Probably the number one error of our day is in how Scripture is studied. It is not with an open mind, prayerful for the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to us. Rather, it is, more of ten than not, study to confirm what we want to believe, and/or to support something we have been taught. As discussed in The Death of Victory, Darby studied Scripture to support what he wanted to teach. He built a doctrine, then he searched Scripture to confirm what he believed. His study method was not new with him, nor did it die with him. It was prevalent with the Sadducees, and it is still very prevalent in our day.

Personal

I mentioned in the Introduction that this present study was a key in my seeing the truth concerning Scofieldism. But before the truth could make a dent in my previous teaching, I had to willfully work at laying aside all preconceived notions about the things I had been taught. I realize the following is out of context, but it is a passage I had to claim, so the Lord could "re-teach" me from his word.

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you (Phil. 3:15).

As is evident by this current essay, not only must one be willing to work at laying aside all teaching that does not correspond with the total of God's word, but he must also work hard at studying the entire word of God if he expects the Spirit to re-teach him. It is so easy to let others study for us. However, each person will be responsible before God for what his word says, not for what they are taught by men, even by men they might respect.

Over the years, this pastor has found that the power of false teaching over their followers is basically that the followers do not know the word of God, nor are they motivated to seriously search it out. (See Pr. chaps. 1, 2, Ps. 119.) A very great amount of false teaching—if not all—is built upon searching Scripture to support what one wants to believe. False teachers have some very well-studied passages to support their strange doctrines; they have their passages down; they know the few supportive passages inside and out. With their few very well-known passages, they can usually tie came out to him when on the banks of the Jordan, and he said to them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" #Mt 3:7 The next time they are spoken of they are represented as coming to our Lord tempting him. He calls them "hypocrites" and "a wicked and adulterous generation" #Mt 16:1-4 #Mt 22:23 The only reference to them in the Gospels of Mark #Mr 12:18-27 and Luke #Lu 20:27-38 is their attempting to ridicule the doctrine of the resurrection, which they denied, as they also denied the existence of angels. They are never mentioned in John's Gospel. There were many Sadducees among the "elders" of the Sanhedrin. They seem, indeed, to have been as numerous as the Pharisees. #Ac 23:6 They showed their hatred of Jesus in taking part in his condemnation #Mt 26:3-5, 57; Mr 14:63; Lu 22:3-5, 54, 57; #Mt 26:27, 30, 57; Mr 14:22-25, 27, 51-52 The Lord's chief adversaries, they endeavoured to prohibit the apostles from preaching the resurrection of Christ. They also opposed the doctrine of angels. #Ac 2:24, 31, 33, 32:4; 4:1-2, 5, 17, 24, 28, 32; Mr 2:28, 29, 4:17, 34 They were the deists or sceptics of that age. They did not appear as a separate sect after the destruction of Jerusalem. Online Bible. "Sadducees consisted largely of the upper class of the priesthood, see: #Ac 2:24, 31, 33, 32:4; 4:1-2, 5, 17, 24, 28, 32; Mr 2:28, 29, 4:17, 34. Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,)" #Ibid.
their opposition in knots (the confidence of the Saducees implies that they had been doing that very thing). The reason false teachers can do this is because their opposition does not know the Scriptures. If they did, the false teachers would not be able to confuse them, because their victims would be familiar enough with WHOLE counsel of God (including the context of passages used), and would be able to readily recognize their errors being promoted.

Example

A friend of this pastor found some clearly unbiblical teaching appealing, and was accepting it in the name of Biblical doctrine. When asked about the Scriptural soundness of the teaching, the friend said, “I have checked the passages they refer to, and I have found them all to be right.”

I then asked, “How many times have you read through the entire word of God.”

The answer was, “None.”

As I have tried to teach the entire word of God in the church the Lord sent me to, I have seen families leave because they did not agree with what was being taught. In discussing the matters over which they could not agree, I saw two patterns:

First, they had not read the Bible though even one time, yet they were passing judgment on what was being taught. They had been taught one way, their mind was made up, and they were not going to search it out nor change.

Second, though they knew Scripture, they were unwilling to face the truth of the Scripture; Scripture just did not support what appeared to them, and the way they thought things should be. So they sought out churches to conform more to their liking. [I am not even implying that I have all the answers. I am, however, saying that not a person who left said to me that they had searched out the Scriptures, and that what I was presenting was not according to the total of God’s word.]

A reason the false teachers study so intently their false doctrine is usually because it appeals to the flesh. The flesh might enjoy the emotion that comes with the false doctrine, or its promised prosperity, glory, or might even its false promise of deliverance from trials or from very difficult situations. On the other hand, a study of the total context of passages will probably require death to what the flesh wants, and a submission to God’s will, something the flesh militates against.

The obvious conclusion is that those who do not study the entire word of God are willing candidates for false teachers and their false doctrines. Those who are not familiar with the entire word of God are blown about with whatever false doctrine is blowing the hardest. We must admit, however, that many who are involved in false doctrine are there because they want to be—the false teachers are presenting doctrines appealing to the natural man, and the people have searched them out. (See Eph. 4:14, 2 Tim. 2:16-17, 4:3.)

The Lord Knew

Our Lord had no such human “handicap” as preconceived notions, believing what he wanted to believe nor not knowing the entire Scripture, for he was/is the Word of God. His answer to the Saducees immediately drove them to the total context of their one point, and their argument vanished as darkness vanished in the sunlight.

Matthew 22:29, Christ identifies their problem—those who prided themselves of their knowledge of Scripture were in error not knowing the Scriptures.

Observe: Those who have obtained honor in men’s eyes in the Scriptures are as hard to convince of their error as were these Saducees. They considered themselves “the people” in their attainment of Scriptural knowledge, and they were not about to admit error. When confronted with the clear truth of Scripture, they ignored it, and went their way as did the Pharisees of vv. 22, 46.
As a rule, the more men advance in the eyes of themselves and in the eyes of others, the more committed they become to their beliefs, though their beliefs are clearly unsupported by Scripture. They are not about to allow someone who is not one of them point out the truth from God’s word to them. Even if one of their group should happen to see the truth of a matter, the group will accuse them of joining with the opposition. Men, such as these Sadduces, will use every excuse the enemy offers them to keep from having to admit that truth is truth.

In these confrontations with Christ, the builders simply shut up, and walked away, having no answers for the Word of God. But more often than not, the response found in John 9:34 is far more typical: “Who are you to teach us? We have arrived. When you arrive to the plateau where we are, or above, then we might consider what you have to say. Until then, how dare you to even think of instructing us.”

The Word of God confronted them with truth, a truth they had overlooked. And they were not about to admit they had overlooked that truth, for to do so would have severe repercussions, e.g.,

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (Jn. 12:42, 43).

First, they were fearful of losing their position in the eyes of their followers.

Second, would have to change their doctrine and their current false doctrine had been quite profitable for them.

Third, no doubt, they did not want to be disloyal to those who had taught them their false doctrine. After all, their teachers had been good, sincere men.

The attitude has surfaced many times when trying to present the facts from God’s word to folks: “I’m committed in what I have been taught and what I have taught others; I am not going to change now.”

When trying to confront others over the pressing issues of our day, we many times encounter a very haughty spirit—the hearer may marvel over the truth, but, in the end, they go their own way. (See Jn. 9:34, Mt. 22:22.)

Christ confronted the builders with the truth that they did not know the Scriptures. Then when he confronted them with the truth of the Scriptures, they ignored the truth. As they hardened their hearts in their error, they became more committed to that error. (Ja. 1:22.)

Matthew 22:30, notice that our Lord did not attempt to prove the truth of the resurrection nor of angels to those who did not believe in either. Both of the facts of the resurrection and angels were established facts from God’s word, so arguments were not the answer for unbelief. The power of God was and is the only answer for unbelief. (1 Cor. 1:17-19.)

V. 15, the Pharisees were put to silence; v. 23, the Sadduces are dealt with. V. 34, when the Pharisees heard that he had an swered every question well, an other of their group questions him, a lawyer. No doubt, they rejoiced that he had defeated their enemies, the Sadduces, yet were sad that Christ triumphed again.

Vv. 35-40. Despite their setback, they did not quit. The wicked will persevere in their wickedness; the wicked will continue in their evil efforts in the face of failure repeated. On the other hand, just a few failures and the righteous are ready to give up. The righteous should be as tenacious as are the wicked.

Hearing Christ’s response, the wicked do not abandon their efforts to overthrow the Lord’s Anointed, as explained by Psalms 2. Notice these foolish men are attempting to overthrow the Word of God with words—how foolish! But the weapon of words against the Word of God did not stop when Christ defeated them; the wicked continue in their foolish efforts. They use ridicule, doubts, questions, etc.—their use of words against the Word of God is limited only by their vain
imaginations in their efforts to undermine the word of God. They pass laws against his word; they use anger and hate when all else fails. When words fail to overturn him, as they did here, then they use as much physical action as public opinion will allow. (Of course, they only can use what the Father permits, Ps. 76:10.)

Matthew identifies the new questioner as a lawyer. Mark identifies him as a scribe. (Mk.12:28.) This scribe, even though he is questioning our Lord in an unfriendly manner, seems to have respect for him. Mark points out that this scribe recognized that Christ had answered his enemies well—Christ an swered them not from his t ori cal nor sci entific proof, but from the word of God. No doubt, Christ could have silenced his antagonists from historical or scientific proof, but he did not.

Being a scribe, a lawyer, this man was an expert in the law of Moses, for his occupation was copying the law. He asks a question: “Master, which is the great commandment”. No doubt, the Pharisees had their opinion of what should be the answer, and Sadducees had theirs’. And both had their traditions thrown in. (Our Lord confronts their traditions elsewhere.) Since Christ’s answer to the previous question had silenced the Sadducees concerning two major points of disagreement between the Sadducees and Pharisees (angels, resurrection), this scribe (Pharisee) probably hoped for another victory on the side of what the Pharisees held important in the law.

However, our Lord’s answer likely was not what they wanted to hear, as he quotes an Old Testament law. (Deut. 6:4.) This scripture should have been known by the Pharisees, especially since this passage was quoted twice daily by devout Jews. How could a wise person like this scribe think our Lord did not know this law? We could ask the same question today—how can people who are so wise in their rebellion against God and wise in the ways of this world think that the Lord of heaven does not know what is going on?

Mark (12:32-34) gives an addition to this exchange, as the scribe compliments our Lord on his answer. Our Lord even answers this scribe back—“Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” This response by our Lord ended this exchange between our Lord and these wicked men. Three of their best efforts all turned on them in full view of the multitudes. The more they try to discredit Christ, the more they fail, and the multitude enjoys every minute of it.

These wicked men had been taking great advantage of the multitudes (23:1-39), and now someone is among them over whom they can not get the upper hand. The crowd loves it, and the wicked men hate it.

Observe another point from this section: The situation of “church and state” had been brought up and answered; the situation of the resurrection had been brought up and answered, and the third question dealt with whose interpretation of the scripture is better or more important. In the third situation, we see that Christ gave the sum total of all the law and prophets as the guide of every rule and action. He refused to place his stamp of approval on any one group; rather, his approval went with the total law—word of God. The group one might belong to is not what pleases the Lord; our dedication to his total law—his word is what pleases him.

God’s approval does not go to any one group. His approval goes to those who honor our, respect and obey his law—word. It has been said that loyalty can not be to organizations; rather, it must be to principles—the principles of his total word. Allegiance belongs to the law—word of God, not to men, groups of men nor to organizations. When organizations depart from the principles of his word, we must try to influence those organizations to return to the foundations of his word. If our influence fails, then we must remove ourselves from those organizations. We must be honest with ourselves that our efforts can not hold back apostasy, and depart from the apostates.
Chapter X

Christ on the Offense

Matthew 22:11-46. The builders had released their best against the Anointed One. They not only failed to “expose” him before the multitude, but helped build him up and turn the crowd against them selves. They wisely stop their efforts as things deteriorate for them.

As the enemy is silenced in their confusion, our Lord goes on the offensive: “The king now carried the war into the enemy’s county. (CHS)” What a volley! He leave them “shell-shocked,” stunned and unable to answer.

They had sought, and failed, to defeat Christ with words, and now he uses words to utterly defeat them, leaving them speechless. V. 42, “What think ye of Christ (The Messiah)? Whose son is he?” These men knew that the promised Deliverer would come from the line of David. What they either did not know or would not admit was that he would be divine as well as human. Then our Lord confronts them with this in another question: “How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?”

Christ quotes a Messianic Psalm written by David unter divine inspiration. (See Mk. 12:36.) Under the Divine leading, the psalmist makes this statement: “Jehovah God said to Adonai (his Son and our Redeemer, Saviour): After your work (on earth) is finished, sit here on my right hand in the place of honor our, power, and majesty, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

Jesus asks these “wise” men, “How do you explain this? If the Messiah was David’s Son, how was it that David, by the Holy Ghost, called him his Lord? Christ must be something more than a mere man and a good teacher or David would be speaking blasphemy. The Son of David is higher than the angels, for unto which of the angels did Jehovah God say, sit here until I make thine enemies thy footstool?” (See Heb. 1:13, Ps. 110:1.)

“If the Pharisees could have denied that the Psalm had reference to the Messiah, it would have been easy for them to reply to Christ’s question; but no man was able to answer him a word. (CHS)” They had to admit it was a messianic Psalm, yet they had to avoid it because it would condemn their attitude toward Christ.

How like false teachers of our day—they easily glide with the greatest of ease over passages that they do not like, never even admitting the passages are there.

Every attempt by the builders to trap Christ failed. Then he turned the tables on them, asking a question that they were either unwilling or unable to answer. If they had answered it, they would have only got ten in deeper. They could not silence him with words, so their only hope is now to silence him with death.

He knows exactly what they are going to do, for he has already told them. Now they are in a corner where they must either silence him or be completely undermined and discredited in the eyes of the multitude, a third choice, submit to him. Of course, they chose to silence him no matter what they to do to accomplish this.

18 It is interesting that Darby changed the meaning of a vast majority of the Psalms by placing them into another “Dispensation.” See The Death of Victory.
Chapter XI

Matthew 23

In this chapter, the king moves boldly and completely into the enemy’s territory. He slays the enemy on every hand with some of the strongest words that we have recorded from our Lord. He effectively uses the sword in the presence of the multitude that had witnessed the confrontation since 21:23. With the multitude’s rapt attention, our Lord starts this sermon, speaking directly to his antagonists. Wasting no words, he looks them straight in the eye, and delivers a message to the builders (the wicked husbandmen from ch 21) straight from Jehovah God. What a message it is! (His followers had to face these same men after Christ returned to heaven, as recounted by the book of Acts. Is it any wonder these men were so hostile over the message of his resurrection, his enthronement, and their quickly approaching judgment?)

False Teachers

In this last message of our Lord to the multitudes, he warns them (and his disciples) of false teachers—men who outwardly appear righteous to men, yet in side they are corrupt. Their corruption comes out in their false teachings. Their message exalted them selves rather than the Lord, whom they professed to represent.

Matthew 23:1-3

The job of the builders was to teach the law of Moses, which they did. What they taught that reflected the principles of Moses’ law was to be followed. However, a major problem of these teachers was the vast amount of tradition they added to the law, tradition that voided the law. From the very start of his sermon, the Lord identifies the problem—they teach one thing and do another. So our Lord says, “Do as they say (as long as it conforms with the law of Moses), but don’t do as they do.” Thus we are given two things by our Lord that identify false teachers: First, they corrupt Moses’ law, and second, they preach one thing and consistently do something else.

Examples: Working for a bus dealer in the early 70s, I took some buses to a very well-known Baptist church for use in its ministry. Being single at the time, I stayed over the weekend for the church services. Early on that Sunday morning, I went to break fast at a restaurant with the pastor and some of his staff members. At break fast, he made some very off-color jokes and lewd remarks to the waitress. In fact, they bordered on being outright dirty. It absolutely amazed me that such a well-known pastor could get up and preach so hard against these very things he was doing.

I know of another pastor, no doubt the most well-known of our generation among Baptists since C.H. Spurgeon. Though he preaches hard against immorality and for proper discipline against the immoral, when his own children were caught in extremely immoral situations, he covered for them, so they would not have to face the results of their evil.

I know of another pastor, also the pastor of a large Baptist church. Some years ago, he was traveling in a car through an area not close to his church. Though he had an other pastor with him, a friend of this pastor, he stopped at a store and picked up a Playboy.

According to our Lord, the above pastors were false teachers. Though publicly they might preach according to Moses (and the hearers should do it), privately they are wicked. Not only are our pulpits full of these kind of men, but so are our airwaves. The Lord warns us to get away from those who do not live what they preach according to the law of Moses.

Vv. 4-10.
False teachers establish standards for others (rightly so), yet they make little or no effort to personally do what they tell others to do. Nor do they make any effort to help others do what they tell them to do. I will have to admit that after going to breakfast with that preacher whom I had greatly respected, it made it difficult for me to avoid following in his steps with unclean remarks.

The false teachers bind heavy burdens on others, yet Christ's burden is light—he was perfect at all times. Christ not only gives us a perfect example, but he also gives us the power to follow his example. (Phil. 2:13.)

Our Lord looks behind the facade, and tells the world that these men do their works to be seen of others and to accomplish their own goals: for to be seen of men. False teachers are identified in 2 Peter 2:3—they persuade men with very good words for their own personal gain. For if they were really concerned about their relationship with a Holy God, they would live true to their words.

Our Lord continues to identify the false teachers, exposing their desires to be first and foremost.

Example: I know of great preachers of our day who will only get involved in issues if they can lead the charge. They know a cause is just, so they get another group together with exactly the same goal as the group headed up by another, but now they are the leader of the second group. These same men will get up and preach hard against pride, yet I know of nothing they are involved in where they are not the leader.

Human nature loves to be first; it is a common sin, and one into which we easily fall. The number of times our Lord warned against and taught his disciples concerning pride is quite significant. (See Mk. 12:38, Mt. 20:26, Lk. 14:10, 18:14, etc.) The sin of pride and the desire to be exalted in the eyes of men is, no doubt, one of the most dangerous sins of the human race. Only the grace of God can keep it under control.

Our Lord tells us where pride leads. It leads to titles: "Holy Father", "Right Reverend Father in God." But the exaltation of titles is not restricted to the Church of Rome, although it gives us good examples. How many people climb up the "educational ladder" in order to have a MS after their names, or to have DR. before their names? The social climb is as prevalent among "Bible-believing" Christians as it is among any group. The only permissible motive for education is to better equip one to be a servant of God. God delivers as from such an unholy desire as well as from men with such unholy desires: "In the Church of Christ, all titles and honors which exalt men and give occasion for pride are here forbidden. (CHS)"

Vv. 11, 12

Our Lord gives the proper order in his kingdom, and it surely is not what appeals to the world or flesh. The way up is down. Humility is being a servant to others of the kingdom of God. "But others will take advantage of me." No doubt they will as long as sin is present. But it is the Lord who they are taking advantage of, and he remembers and rewards every man according to his every deed done in the flesh. Each person will be rewarded for taking advantage of Christ; the humble person will be rewarded for submitting to Christ in spite of every effort to hinder him. "The way to rise is to sink self; the lower we fall in our own esteem, the higher shall we rise in our Master's estimation. (CHS. I cannot imagine what Spurgeon would say concerning the modern self-esteem gospel, ed.)"
Chapter XII

Woes to the False Teachers

Matthew 23:13-39

At the beginning of the ministry of the Messiah-King, he preached a message containing 9 blessings, explaining the laws of his kingdom. (Mt. 5:3-12.) Now he will pronounce the 8 woes, or results of violating the 9 laws:

“woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” Turning once again to the scribes and Pharisees, the Lord of the Temple denounces them in words perhaps the most terrible in the whole Bible. It is a very thunderstorm of indignation, with flash after flash of scorn, peal after peal of woe. It is “the burden of the Lord,” “the wrath of the Lamb.” [#Re 6.16].

Is this at all inconsistent with the meekness and lowliness of His heart, the love and tenderness of His character? Certainly not. Love is no love at all, unless it be capable of indignation against wrong. Besides, it is not personal wrongs which stir the heart of Jesus, “Who when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered, He threatened not”; but the wrongs these hypocrites are doing to the poor sheep they are leading all astray. The occasion absolutely demanded a tempest of indignation. There is this further to be considered, that the Lord Jesus, as Revealer of God, must display His justice as well as His mercy His wrath as well as His love.19

After the Lord identified the false teachers, he pronounces woes upon them in the harshest words of his earthly ministry. This is not a pleasant section for those who have misused their position, or calling, to exalt them selves in the eyes of men. They worked to receive for themselves the glory that was due to the Lord, the householder, alone. (Note that the Lord’s wrath was against the corrupt religious leaders, not against the corrupt civil leaders, though there were plenty of them.)

There are eight woes here, each covering a different topic. It is the king’s final message against those who hate him. As his message continues on, it is powerful and pointed to say the least. In this message, the Lord continues to remove from the builders all their good looking cloaks. He exposes their inner hearts of the false teachers. These are the final woes leading up to the total destruction of the builders and their false building. He ends his final message to them with the pronouncement of the desolation of the capital of their rebellious nation.

He speaks directly to the builders, the leaders of the Israelite nation, the Jewish religious leaders—the chief priests, the elders (Sanhedrin), the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Herodians. They were all gathered around him here in the temple in Jerusalem. He reads their hearts, and lays out the secrets found therein for every one to see. The purpose of this study is not to develop these woes; rather, our purpose is to establish the context of Matthew 24. We will, therefore, only give a brief overview of the 9 woes:

The First Woe

The false teachers know the truth concerning the king dom of heaven. Yet rather than tell the truth to others, they use every means possible to prevent others from going in, inuding perverting the word of God. Our Lord had just told why they wanted to keep people out of the kingdom—they loved the “respect” that they gained in men’s eyes, and God’s kingdom required humility. Therefore, rather than false teachers being stepping stones into heaven, they are stumbling blocks to keep others out. They keep the truth of God’s word from people to preserve their own power.

From what I understand the Church of Rome knows the truth about the cross of Christ, but it will not preach it because of the hold they have over the people. However, Rome is not the only

19 Gibson 333, Online Bible. The two messages, the 9 Beatitudes and the 8 Woes have been contrasted, but that is not the purpose of this present study. However, note that there is one more blessing than there is woe.
guilty party. There are many today who refuse to tell the truth because they fear they may lose some of their power or authority—a sure sign of false teachers.

**The Second Woe.**

The false teachers are involved in wicked deeds, yet for a pretense, they make long prayers. They cover up their ungodliness with nice sounding words. How like folks who we know today: their actions are anything but holy, yet their words sound beautiful. We hear of folks and churches who will loudly profess at every opportunity their love of God, yet they send their money to support Christ rejecting teachers. They say that they are depending on the Lord alone for all their needs, yet they fight for government handouts. [S]hall receive the greater damnation implies that there are degrees of hell.

**The Third Woe**

The false teachers have an unholy zeal to gather followers for themselves.

Example: Over the years, we have seen people start showing an interest in “religion,” and it seems there are buzzards on a fence waiting to swoop down to carry off the young convert. Some years ago, we “won” a young couple to the Lord. As soon as a lady who lived close to them saw them start coming to church, she swooped down. She finally persuaded them to go to her “church.” After they attended with her for awhile, she lost interest in them. They now attend nowhere. Here we see that false teachers try to build on someone else’s work. This scenario is all too common.

**The Fourth Woe**

This time our Lord calls the false teachers, blind guides. They prided themselves in being the guides of the nation (God’s people), but he calls them blind. The reason they are blind is because they misused the teaching concerning vows to hold the people in bondage. He called the “wise men” fools for misusing God’s word. When folks lay aside the clear instructions of God’s word for what they want to teach, they become even harder in their heresies.

**The Fifth Woe**

False teachers strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. They pay great attention to the small things, as well we should; however, weightier matters of the law are ignored. If people would pay equal attention to the small things and the large, situations would not get out of hand.

False teachers are proud of their outward observances in the little things, yet their hearts are far from right in the sight of God. In their drink, they will strain out the gnat, yet they will swallow a camel. Many times, folks will make much over some little thing in order to get a clear conscience, so they can overlook the camel. This mark of the false teacher is his attention to details, yet his blindness toward the important matters.

**The Sixth Woe**

False teachers given give much attention to outward cleanliness while ignoring the inner man. They are full of all manner of wickedness. V. 26, our Lord singles out one particular Pharisee. His message could not be any stronger against groups specializing in formal observances while the deny the validity of the total of God’s word.

**The Seventh Woe**

False teachers keep the tombs white washed—the outside looks clean, but their inside is corrupt. Our Lord told these scribes and Pharisees that they are just like the white washed tombs: Their good works are to impress others about how “spiritual” they are, yet God knows the truth. Implied here is that false teachers are not saved, full of men’s bones. (Eph. 2:1.)
The Eighth Woe

False teachers express great regard for the godly men of the past: “If we had been alive, we would not have killed them.” Our Lord tells them that they are the children of the ones who killed the godly men of the past, and they would have done the same thing as did their fathers.

The Lord certainly knew the hearts of men, and they have not changed. We today hear how great men of our past were, e.g., C.H. Spurgeon, yet if they were alive and preached as they once did, they would be run out of town. Is it not amazing how wise the great men of the past were when they line up with our doctrine, yet when we depart from their doctrine, they are the ones which were in error. There is a very well known Fundamental publication that regularly reprints Spurgeon’s sermons, yet they edit those sermons to conform to the publication’s strong dispensational, Arminian stand.

Matthew 23:32, Jesus tells them that the measure of their iniquity is almost full, and when it is full, it would bring upon them God’s terrible wrath. The final drop of iniquity would be the slaying of the Son of God. (See Rom. chap. 2.)

A Powerful Conclusion

Matthew 23:33-39

Many times today, Christ is presented as being a “love everyone, even the devil” type of teacher. However, in this message he has personally confronted the builders, the unjust husbandmen, and he con cludes his words to them with some extremely unpleasant words: Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? How many preachers do we know today that would say this to the face sinners?

Christ knows they are going to cast him out of the city and kill him, yet he still gives them a chance before their final destruction comes, v. 34. He will again send his servants who will urge them to come to the wedding supper. Rather than receive the king’s servants, they will kill them, as they did in the past. The husbandmen will pur sue them from city to city—which they did. Thus the guilty city—Jerusalem—will be without excuse. The first church was at Jerusalem, and the builders not only rejected the messengers, but did everything they could to stop the message. Saul (Paul) was an example of the builders’ efforts to stop the servants who were making known the invitation to the marriage.

That upon you may come...

The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world has ever witnessed, either before or since. Even Titus seemed to see in his cruel work the hand of an avenging God. Verily I say unto you, It was before that generation had passed away that Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed. (CHS)

There was an interval between Christ’s resurrection and the promised destruction. That interval permitted the gospel to be preached in this wicked city, as well as over the known world, and for God to call out his own from the destruction. (See Ac. 2:5 and Col. 1:23.)

• Matthew 23:34-39

The Perfect Preacher

Christ was the perfect preacher. Though he had preached an extremely hard sermon, he concludes it with a tearful plea. He has sought so many times to call this rebellious city to himself, yet it would not repent and give to the householder what was his. The whole house of the Jews with all of its “spiritual” and physical outward beauty and grandeur was going to be left desolate.

Christ’s powerful sermon is over; he had exposed the very innermost reaches of the hearts of these men; he had told them what they were doing and why; he even singled one out, and exposed
his heart. They could not help but admit that he spoke the truth. He told them of the coming results of their hard ness, yet despite all they had just seen and heard, they refused to listen and believe.

Evidently, he spoke the words of vv. 34-39 in the presence of the scribes and the Pharisees, the builders against whom he had been speaking. These are the concluding words of the very pointed sermon he started in 23:1. The sermon of Matthew 23 is the conclusion of the events that started, actually, with on day one—Christ’s triumphal entry on colt, weeping over city, healing in the temple, fol lowed by the cursing of the fig tree on day two. When chapter 24 is considered in its context of 23:34-39, only those who refuse to see can miss the fact that the primary teaching of chapter 24 is our Lord’s description of Jerusalem’s destruction.

Spurgeon aptly titles this section, “The King’s Farewell To His Capital.” From his “pulpit” in the temple at Jerusalem, Christ clearly spoke these words in the hearing of the builders, which included everyone who thought they were any one in the nation of Israel. Everything Christ said in this section against his rebellious city and nation was literally fulfilled:

The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world has ever witnessed, either before or since. Even Titus seemed to see in his cruel work the hand of an avenging God. Truly, the blood of the martyrs slain in Jerusalem was amply avenged when the whole city became a veritable Acedama, or field of blood... It was before that generation had passed away that Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed. There was a sufficient interval for the full proclamation of the gospel by the apostles and evangelists of the early Christian Church, and for the gathering out of those who recognized the crucified Christ as their true Messiah. Then came the awful end, which the Saviour foresaw and foretold, and the prospect of which wrung from his lips and heart the sorrowful lament that followed his prophecy of the doom awaiting his guilty capital... Nothing remained for the King but to pronounce the solemn sentence of death upon those who would not come unto him that they might have life: “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” The whole “house” of the Jews was left desolate when Jesus departed from them; and the temple, the holy and beautiful “house,” became a spiritual desolation when Christ finally left it. Jerusalem was too far gone to be rescued from its self-sought doom.

Christ’s words are so clear in this section that he left the nation, through its leaders who were present when they were spoken, with out excuse when the terrible judgment came. Yet hardened in their pride and rebellion against their right ful King, they refused to hear this final warning. In the context of what was said in Matthew 23, only those who refuse to see the truth can miss what Christ said in chapter 24, and place it 2000 years into the future.

“There are none so blind as those who refuse to see.”

The builders, the Pharisees and Sadducees, withdrew, no doubt in terror at the explosion of his wrath against their hardness. It is useless for them to plea d with his enemies. Before he leaves the temple, he has one more simple point to make for his disciples. And that is the subject of giving.

Money

He sat down over against the treasury, and there observed how people placed their gifts therein. He called his disciples’ attention to the fact that though the widow only gave two mites, she gave from her need, not from her abundance, as did the others. (Mk. 12:41-44, Lk. 21:1-4.)

It is interesting that the last words spoken by Christ in the temple concerned money—that is, giving.

Conclusion

This was the last occurrence in Christ’s public ministry, except his coming trial and crucifixion. This is his last appearance in the temple at Jerusalem. His public teaching is over, except for what he will teach at his trial and crucifixion. All that now remains is to prepare his disciples for his

20 Spurgeon, Matthew, 210, 211.
death and resurrection, the facts and meanings of which they have, to this point, completely missed.

Chapter XIII

Matthew 24

Opening comment:

Christian writers have always with great reason represented Josephus's History of the Jewish war as the best commentary on this chapter; and many have justly remarked it as a wonderful instance of the care of Providence for the Christian church, the he, and eye-witness, and in these things of so great credit, should (especially in such an extraordinary manner) be preserved, to transmit to us a collection of important facts, which so exactly illustrate this noble prophecy in all most every circumstance.\(^{21}\)

One cannot properly understand Matthew 24 apart from its historical context, and Josephus gives an excellent history. Though we will quote Josephus in the more important areas following, we will simply give the locations in Josephus of many of the lesser points from Matthew 24.\(^{22}\)

Because people, intentionally or unintentionally, ignore the historical context of this chapter, Matthew 24 is of the most abused and misused passages of our day. (Many Christians have been taught to ignore the historical context of "prophetic" passages. See below.) It will be even more abused as the year 2000 draws closer. There is a tremendous amount of prophetic speculations based on Christ's words spoken herein, and the speculations will in crease and become even more absurd as this millennium draws to a close. However, the prognosticators do not tell us that our calendar is at least 3 years off. Accordingly, Christ was actually born in 4 or 3 BC. Thus the second millennium actually ended in 1996 or 1997. There is little doubt that when the prognosticators do not come to pass at the turn of the millennium, the prognosticators will then add the length of Christ's life, and date the "big event," 2033 ½. (The "big event" has continuously been pushed off into the future as the prophesied events do not come to pass as planned by the religious "know-it-alls.")

This chapter contains the basic teachings of Dispensationalism, but to make the passages work in the manner supportive of Dispensationalism, the users must completely ignore its context. (The primary purpose of this present work was to develop the context of Mt. 24.) Let me open this section with Robert son's foot note for his "Part XII," Matthew 24 (Mk. 13:1-37, Lk. 21:5-36):

As we look at this chapter, let us be reminded again of some things:

First, prophecy is dated from the time of the speaker, not from the time of the reader. In other words, this prophetic passage that Christ gives is prophetic from the time he spoke it, around 30 AD. Accordingly, the events he prophesied could take place any time after 30 AD. A vast majority of

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\(^{21}\) Doddridge, An Exposition of the Gospels, I:267, note.

\(^{22}\) Every decently equipped Christian library has Josephus. Many publishing houses have made him available, even in inexpensive, one volume paper back. This writer uses Whiston's translation. Josephus is also readily available on CDROM. He is also found on the web, e.g., http://ccel.wheaton.edu/j/josephus/JOSEPHUS.HTM

\(^{23}\) Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, 173.
his words have all ready been ful filed—"prophetic" passages must be understood from the time they were written, not from the time they are read.

One of the most influential "theologians" of the nineteenth century was John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). His influence has continued through his writings and through his protege, C.I. Scofield. Though the KJV Bible was in print during his day, he felt it needful to translate an English Bible—his translation is gaining popularity today, as it is found on many CD's along with the KJV. Darby taught that "History is not necessary in order to understand prophecy," and "History never explains prophecy." By teaching that one must ignore history in order to properly understand prophecy, he cut off Christians from God's truth. He thus cut the prophecies of Scripture, e.g., Daniel, Matthew, Revelation, from their historical fulfillment, placing them all into the future from the time they are read rather than from the time they were written.

Comment: This writer finds it very inconsistent that those who reject the historical context of passages such as Matthew 24 and even the book of the Revelation, i.e., the destruction of Jerusalem, will look around at history taking place and say, "Prophecy is being fulfilled in our day before our very eyes," and/or, "Watch the Jews and Jerusalem, and you will see prophecy being fulfilled."

By removing passages such as Matthew 24 from their historical context, many strange, unique and unscriptural things can be and are being "documented."

Second, the words of Christ recorded here must be read and understood in their Scriptural context. We rightly condemn others for using Scripture passages apart from their contexts, yet we many times do the same thing in order to support what we want to believe. One can support anything he wants to believe by ignoring the context of the passages he uses. We will find that a tremendous amount of "prophetic" passages will only "work" by removing them from their context.

Herod's Temple

The beauty of the temple motivated our Lord's words in this chapter. Josephus describes the temple:

Now the temple was built of stones that were white and strong, and each of their length was twenty-five cubits, their height was eight, and their breadth about twelve; and the whole structure, as also the structure of the royal cloister, was on each side much lower, but the mid side was much higher, till they were visible to those that dwelt in the country for a great many fur longs, but chiefly to such as lived over against them, and those that approached to them. The temple had doors also at the entrance, and lintels over them, of the same height with the temple itself. They were adorned with embroidered veils, with their flowers of purples, and pillars interwoven; and over these, but under the crown-work, was spread out a golden vine, with its branches hanging down from a great height, the large ness and fine workmanship of which was a surprising sight to the spectators, to see what vast materials there were, and with what great skill the workman ship was done. He also encompassed the entire temple with very large cloisters, contriving them to be in a due proportion thereto; and he laid out larger sums of money upon them than had been done before him, till it seemed that no one else had so greatly adorned the temple as he [Herod, ed.] had done...

Edersheim describes the pilgrim's impression of the temple as he went to the temple:

As the pilgrim ascended the Mount, crested by that symmetrically proportioned building, which could hold within its gigantic girdle din fewer than 210,000 persons, his wonder might well in crease at every step. The Mount itself seemed like an island, abruptly rising from out deep valleys, sur rounded by a sea of walls, palaces, streets, and houses, and crowned by a mass of snowy marble and glittering gold, rising ter raced on the race. Altogether it measured a square of about 1,000 feet. ...
**Dates**

Herod the Great’s (BC 73-AD 4) reign was from BC 40-AD 4. He undertook the rebuilding of the temple in the eighteenth year of his reign, BC 22. The temple was in building, forty and six years. (Jn. 2:22.) Accordingly, the temple was not completed until 24 AD.²⁸

We cannot imagine the outward beauty of Herod’s Temple. We can assume, accordingly, that this splendid and beautiful spectacle was only a very few years old when Christ came into it to present himself as the Lord God of the nation and its temple. We should not miss the point that the heavenly Father, using a pagan ruler, prepared for his only begotten Son a magnificent, new building from which to preach his sermons to the multitudes. When the purpose of the building was done and its Lord rejected, it was destroyed.

**Christ Departs the Temple**

Our Lord has finished his ministry to the Jewish nation—the builders rejected their rightful king. He has preached, warned and pleaded, all to no avail. Now Christ departs the temple, never to return in his earthly ministry. As Christ and the disciples depart, the disciples call his attention to the beauty of the Herod the Great’s temple buildings.

The Answer

Rather than answering their comment on the beauty of the temple (which was only a few years old and the workmen were probably still putting the finishing touches on it), our Lord had a strange response to the disciples wonder at the beauty of these buildings. He said that every stone of these beautiful magnificent temple buildings would be totally thrown down—not a stone would remain upon the other.

Titus at first tried to save the temple after it was set afire. His attempts failed, and at last he ordered that the temple and the whole city be pulled down. The fire melted what gold was left in the temple and the men pulled the stones apart to retrieve every last speck of gold. The city (Jerusalem) was totally leveled, except for a small portion left for the Roman garrison. The destruction was so total that a passer-by would not believe that it had ever been inhabited. A small portion also was left to show the might of a once great city that Rome conquered and pulled down.²⁹

Vv. 3-31, our Lord continues out of town with his disciples. He took them to the mount of Olives where they could see the temple. (Mk. 13:3.) While seated here, the disciples ask him some questions. There are at least two and maybe three questions:

1.) When shall these things be?
2.) What shall be the sign of thy coming?
3.) What shall be the sign of the end of the age?

And these questions are still asked today, and will be asked until the end of all things. As he answered the questions, our Lord intermingled his answers. His answers to the questions will not be sorted out until we see him—reminding us that the purpose of God’s word is not to answer curious questions about the future, but to show us how to live and serve the Lord now.

The disciples’ questions arouse great interest in the human heart even today. There are very profitable “ministries” built on trying to answer these questions, and people are easily influenced in these things—prophetic conferences will draw both a large crowd and good “offerings.” Prophetic charts and diagrams sell like crazy, as men teach God’s hidden things as though the Lord himself confronted them before the beginning of time.

²⁸ See Josephus, Antiquities, Book XV, Chap. XI, § 1 and Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Book 1. 375, note. All times are approximate.
²⁹ Wars, Book VI, Chapter 4, § 5, Book VII, Chapter 1, § 1, etc.
As we keep in mind the events leading to the disciples’ questions, some of the answers are quite obvious, though others are not. Seemingly, the obvious questions and answers are the ones greatly misused today.

Notice v. 4 and our Lord’s warning—Take heed that no man deceive you. Remember, that very afternoon, just a short time ago, he had given eight woes against false teachers. Throughout the day in his exchange with the builders, he had promised the total destruction of both them and their city (Jerusalem). As usual, he has already laid the groundwork for this question and answer period on the mount of Olives. If we overlook the eight marks of the false teacher (there are other marks which we did not cover, but I think all of the marks will fall within the eight woes Christ gave) and accept his teaching, then we deserve what we get. Our Lord’s warning here is especially important considering the vast number of people today who are attempting to schedule God concerning questions of prophecy and signs of the end.

As we look at the Lord’s answers to the disciples’ questions, we cannot be dogmatic. However, we will look at them in the light of what is demanded by the context, not by what is demanded by the prevalent theories of our day. There are also some quite obvious fulfillments of what is said here. Of course, we also have many applications even though they may be fulfilled.

“The most important thing for his disciples was not that they might know when ‘these things’ would be, but that they might be preserved from the peculiar evils of the time. (CHS)” It seems as though since Darby, we have been overwhelmed with people looking for “these things.” We should be emphasizing how we might preserve not only ourselves, but those around us in the faith once delivered to the saints in these evil times.

Note the major concern that brought about the questions—the Lord had just spoken of the quickly approaching destruction of the temple. (Mt. 24:2.) So the disciples ask, “When will this be, Lord?” Therefore, vv. 4-6 are Christ giving some things that must take place before the time when there shall not be left here one stone upon another. He said that before that time, there will be many come professing to be the Christ, and many will be deceived by them. Of course, his toidy is full of men who have made this profession since Jerusalem fell.

**False Prophets**

Verses 4, 5 (v. 11, Lk. 21:8; see also Mt. 24:26), false prophets. There are many accounts of many false prophets, prophets who assured the Jews who were facing the Roman army that God was on their side despite their rebellion against their rightful king. They promised that he would save them from Rome:

...Nor did any one of them escape with his life. A false prophet (19) was the occasion of these people’s destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get upon the temple, and that they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose on the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God; and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes. Now a man that is in adversity does easily comply with such promises; for when such a seducer makes him believe that he shall be delivered from those miseries which oppress him, then it is that the patient is full of hopes of such his deliverance.

3. Thus were the miserable people per suaded by these deceivers, and such as believed God himself; while they did not at tend nor give credit to the signs that were so evident, and did so plainly foretell their future desolation, but, like men in fatuated, with out either eyes to see or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them...30

The false prophets per suaded multitudes of people of last minute deliverance by God:

4. Now if any one consider these things, he will find that God takes care of man kind, and by all ways possible before shows to our race what is for their preservation; but that men perish by themselves which they madly and voluntarily bring upon themselves; for the Jews, by demolishing the tower of Antonia, had made their temple four-square, while at the same time they had it written in their sacred oracle, “That then should their city be taken, as well as their holy house, when once their temple should be made four-square.” But now, what did the most...30

30 Wars, Book 6, Chapter 5, § 2, 3. Note (19): “Reland here takes notice, that these Jews, who had despised the true Prophet, were deservedly abused and deluded by these false ones.”
elevate them in under taking this war [against Rome, which lead to their total destruction, ed.], was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, "about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth." The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now this oracle certainly noted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea. However, it is not possible for men to avoid fate, although they see it beforehand. But these men interpreted some of these signals according to their own pleasure, and some of them they utterly despised, until their madness was demonstrated, both by the taking of their city and their own destruction. 31

One should observe that the false prophets promised these people God's deliverance from the results of their rebellion against the law-word of God. They also promised the one day the Jews would rule the whole earth.

Wars and rumors of wars have been almost without ceasing since Christ spoke these words, both before and since Jerusalem's overthrow. Wars will continue until every nation is brought under subjection to the Prince of Peace. (Mt. 22:44.)

However, when Christ spoke these words, Jerusalem was at peace. But in the few years following Christ's death, four Roman emperors met with a violent death (within a period of 18 months—this would be like four of our presidents being killed within 18 months). This speedy turn over resulted in the formation of very violent and bloody parties attempting to gain the Roman seat of power. Josephus gives accounts of the many wars and rumors of wars. All of these things pointed to the end of the Jewish economy that Christ spoke of from on the mount. 32

The Jewish economy had been in place since Joseph took his family, the children of Israel, into Egypt. Moses placed the Jewish economy in writing, yet the nation and its leaders were already established before Moses. (Ex. 4:29.) Therefore, the system that was going to be judged for rejecting the King's right to rule over them was over 1500 years old. Accordingly, it not only required some very strong words from our Lord, but some very strong prophetic statements and natural (supernatural) events to confirm his words of warning, so his elect would flee from the city. Jerusalem—Zion—had been proclaimed as the city of the Great King. How could the King allow it to fall? This false assurance leads to its stubbornness and subsequent fall.

Sitting here on the mount, our Lord spoke of overturning the oldest institution in the world at that time, the 1500 year old Jewish nation. We must not take that fact lightly; we must realize the gravity of the prophesied overthrow.

The overwhelming Scriptural evidence and historical evidence requires that a very large portion of Matthew 24 be understood as prophesying the soon coming destruction of the Jewish economy, centered Jerusalem and the temple. Required, therefore, is that Revelation 18 describes the destruction. (We will examine the date and purpose of the Revelation elsewhere.)

Chapter XIV

Revelation 18

Revelation 18 describes the destruction of the whore. In Matthew 21-23, the Lord clearly condemned Jerusalem for refusing to recognize her rightful king and husband—she absolutely refused to come to the wedding. Though many Old Testament prophets had been sent to her, the Lord also told the builders that throughout Israel's history, she had refused her rightful husband; rather, her heart was toward her unlawful lovers. (See Ezk. 16 and 23 a graphic illustration.)

31 Wars, Book 6, Chapter 5, § 4.
32 E.g., Antiq. 18, Chapter 5, § 3. We urge the reader to follow Barnes' account in Matthew 24. Matthew, 251, 252. All of Barnes' Notes are being placed on Online Bible, CDROM. Also, see Christ/Caesar, where is the line drawn? Romans 13:1-7, by Pastor Need.)
In our Lord’s message from Matthew 21:23 to 23:39, he told his disciples, and all who heard him, that not only did the nation commit whoredoms, but she killed her rightful husband and king in favor of her lovers—she was in love with her gold, silver, and fine goods as she sold out to her lovers.

The Whore

We should keep in mind that the primary use of the word whored in Scripture refers to idolatry—whoredoms against the true God, i.e., the refusal to submit to the King of kings and Lord of lords. (Compare Rev. 18:20 with Mt. 23:34-39.) Clearly, the destruction prophesied in Revelation 18 is God’s vengeance for his holy apostles and prophets. (John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets; the Apostle John was the last of the holy apostles.) Therefore, every context points to Revelation 18 being the destruction of Jerusalem, which is confirmed by Revelation 19:2. Accordingly, everything up to Revelation 18 has been fulfilled, and our present age is chapter 19. (This writer does not claim wisdom rests with him, but having thoroughly studied the context of Mt. 24, this view of Rev. 18, 19, fits that context far better than trying to place chap. 18 into the future, yet to be fulfilled.)

One World Government

“But,” what about the attempts to unite a one world government apart from God—in fact, to overthrow God? “We must answer that question with this question: ‘What’s new about that?’ The dream of a one world government apart from God did not die with Nimrod and Babylon; the dream and goal of fallen men since Nimrod has been and continues to be a one world government where man sets himself up as god. God thwarted Nimrod’s plan, and he has thwarted every one since. The dream will not die until God stops it with either a change of heart or the end of time.

Note that Christ’s victory over death cast down the accuser of the brethren—Revelation 12:10-12 is distinctly past tense. The victory obtained over the wicked one by faith is presented as a definite fact in the past:

A loud voice in heaven celebrates the victory which has just occurred before the eye of the seer, over the adversary of Christ and his kingdom (vv. 10-12a), as one in which believers also are to participate, ver. 10... salvation in the specific Christian sense, not “victory,”... The brethren of those by whom, in a loud voice, the song of praise is raised, are undoubting believers in the earthly life, for only they could be deposed to the accusation on the part of Satan... Ver. 11... the idea... here is the same as everywhere in the Apoc., which regards every kind of temptation which Satan has prepared for believers in the earthly life, for only they could be deposed to the accusation on the part of Satan... The victory of believers on earth is based upon the victory won over Satan in heaven; the peculiar truth, however, in what is reported from ver. 7 on, and the occurrence held, must be properly understood as the actual cause of the victory for believers on earth,—is Christ’s victory over Satan. This victory the Lamb has won over the dragon by shedding his blood. The blood of the Lamb is therefore the cause of the victory of believers...

Thus the idea that Revelation is basically fulfilled up through Revelation 19:2 fits far better within its context than saying it must yet be fulfilled.

Spurgeon seems to go along the same line of thought, but he expands it more than Barnes’. Spurgeon uses Matthew 24 to establish some precepts that will remain in effect until the Father makes all of Christ’s enemies his footstool.

The context overwhelmingly demand that a very large portion of Matthew 24 be viewed as the warning concerning the quickly approaching destruction of Jerusalem. Accordingly, both the Old Testament prophets and our Lord’s prophecies require that Revelation 18 be viewed as the destruction of the old Jewish economy. The nation, represented by Jerusalem, had been called for 1,500 years to its rightful King and Husband, yet it rejected the call in favor of its lovers. No doubt we fail to realize the hold and power that this 1,500 year old system had upon all thinking of

34 See Spurgeon’s 45th Psalm, Treasury of David.
Christ’s day—we can not imagine what a traumatic event the destruction of a 1,500 year old economy was going to be.

Seethat ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass. (Mt. 24:6.) What a message for God’s people of all ages—we do not have to look far to see and hear of wars. Our Lord says here we should not be troubled, for these things must take place before righteousness can reign. But the end is not yet:

The destruction of Jerusalem was the beginning of the end, the great type and anticipation of all that will take place when Christ shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. It was an end; but not the end. (CHS)

In the destruction of Jerusalem, described basically in the Revelation of Jesus Christ’s moving against man’s rebellion, we have a record of man’s rebellion against his lawful King, and the assurance of God’s continuing judgment against sin. “But” you say,” they crucified the Lord of Glory—they deserved to be judged, and their city destroyed.” However, we see from Hebrews 6:6 and 10:26-31 that Jerusalem’s destruction was only God’s opening volley against those who attempt to overthrow the Lord and His Christ.

1.) The Jews (Israelites) may have been morally good people, yet they refused to allow the King to reign over them.
2.) The Jews (Israelites) were known as “God’s people, by they would not accept the word of God.
3.) The Jews (Israelites) had many messengers sent to them by God, in his long-suffering and patience. (See Rom. 2:1-6.)

When the time was right, judgment came, and what a judgment it was. The judgment against Jerusalem—and prophesied in the Revelation—is the assurance that God will judge every effort of rebellion against him. Not one thought escapes his notice; not one ounce of effort will avoid his gaze. (Heb. 4:13.) The context of Matthew 24 clearly tells us that the reason Israel of old was utterly destroyed was because it refused to submit to the King of kings; it refused to allow the Lord of Glory to rule over them. (Mt. 21:33-46, 1 Cor. 2:8.) When the time is right, the Lord will move against all ungodliness. (Rom. 1:18.)

Those who are trying to obey Matthew 21:41 (and render the householder his fruit) also have the assurance that rebellion is played around them has God’s judgment against it; those who were secure in their sin in Jerusalem found out that they could not escape the results of their sin.

The Beginning of Sorrows

Matthew 24:5-8

Christ defines the things that are only the beginning of sorrows. Reading the passage in its historical context, the things Christ spoke of were future from the time he spoke, not future from the time his words are read. The terrible events listed by our Lord are easily traced in secular history, showing that events were the events leading up to the sorrow—the destruction of Jerusalem. It was from Jerusalem, the seat of the Jews, that the real threat to the new church came—the danger, that Paul deals with in every one of his books, was the usurpation from within, i.e., the Judaizers, not from without, e.g., Roman persecution.35

V. 7, nation against nations, famines, earthquakes and fearful sights and great signs from heaven. (Lk. 21:11.)

The word of God basically records only what is needed for man to know God truly, e.g., his redemptive plan through out the ages, his holiness, his mercy, his grace, his workings in and through man in history, etc. There is very little record of historical events that do not deal directly with his people and his plan for the ages. He does, however, give us occasional glimpses, e.g., Acts 11:28.

35 Wars, Book VI, Chapter 9. See Appendix D for an examination of Christ’s words in vv. 7-14.
Therefore, if we would know the history around the Scriptures, we must examine secular history to see what took place around God's written record of activity on this earth, and this is where secular historians as like Josephus come in. He, and other historians, recorded the discord among the nations, the famines, earthquakes, etc., that took place between the time of Christ's words and the destruction foretold by Christ in Matthew 24, e.g., famines, Antiq. 20, Chapter 2; earthquakes (such as Pompeii); great and fearful signs from heaven:

The fearful sights and great signs from heaven are no doubt among the most remarkable of all the events leading to the final act in God's history of old Israel. These signs from heaven were God's final warning to the 1,500-year-old nation of Israel:

Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as believed God himself; while they did not at tend, nor give credit; to the signs that were so evident and did so plainly foretell their future desolation; but, like men infatuated, with out either eyes to see, or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. Thus there was a star (20) resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. Thus also, before the Jews' rebel lion, and before those combinations which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthisus (21) [Nisan], and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day for half an hour. This light seemed to be a good sign to the un skillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to prevent the events that followed immediately upon it. At the same festival also, a heifer, as she was led by the high-priest to be sacrifice, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple. Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner (22) [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. Now, those that kept watch in the temple came here upon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it: who then came up thither, and not with out great difficulty, was able to shut the gate again. This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. So these publicly declared, that this signal foretold the desolation that was coming upon them. Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the one-and-twentieth day of the month Artemisius [Jyar], a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a failure, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding cities. Moreover at that feast which we call Pente cost, as the priests were going by night into the inner (22) [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence." But, what is still more terrible is: there was one Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebeian and a husband man, who, four years before the war began, and at a time when the city was in very great peace and prosperity, came to that feast whereon it is our custom for every one to make tabernacles to God in the temple, (23) began on a sudden to cry aloud, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!" This was his cry, as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city. However, certain of the most eminent among the populace had great indignation of this dire cry of his, and took up the man, and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did not he either say anything for himself or anything peculiar to those who chastised him, but still he went on with the same words which he cried before. Hereupon our rulers supposing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of divine fury in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator; where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare; yet did he not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable possible, at every stroke of the whipped his answ er was, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" And when Albinus (for it was then our procurator) asked him, Who he was? and whence he came? and why he uttered such words? he made no manner of reply to what he said, but still did not leave off his melancoly ditty, till Albinus took him to be a mad man and dismissed him. Now, during all the time that passed before the war began, this man did not go near any of the citizens, nor was seen by them while he said so; but he every day utter ed these lamentations, as if it were his peregrinated vow, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" Nor did he give ill words to any of those that beat him every day, nor good words to those that gave him food; but this was his reply to all men, and in deed no other than a melancholy presage of what was to come. This cry of his was the loudest at the festivals; and he continued this ditty for seven years and five months, with out growing hoarse, or being tired thereby, until the very time that he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege.

36 "The Romans regarded Vesuvius as an extinct volcano, and the destruction by earthquake of part of Pompeii and nearby Herculanenum in AD 62 was not interpreted as a sign of its renewed activity. Reconstruction was still in progress when, 17 years later, on the morning of Aug. 24, 79, the great eruption took place that destroyed Pompeii, Herculanenum, Stabiae, and a number of smaller settlements. When the eruption ceased on the second day, more than 2,000 inhabitants of Pompeii had perished, and the city lay covered under a layer of ash and volcanic debris about 6 m (20 ft) deep. An eyewitness account of the calamity is given in two letters written to the historian Tacitus by the Roman author Pliny the Younger, whose uncle lost his life at Pompeii." Multimedia Encyclopedia, ver. 1.
when it ceased; for as he was going round upon the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, “Woe, woe to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!” And just as he added at the last, —“Woe, woe to my soul also!” there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him instantly; and as he was uttering the very same sentences, he gave up the ghost. 37

One should note that before the Jewish-Roman war, the city slated for destruction was in an asured state of peace and safety: For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as a vail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. (1 Thes. 5:3.)

Verse 9, note Mark’s account of the Lord’s words:

But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. (13:9.)

Here the Lord spoke of the period before Jerusalem’s destruction. During the time from the Lord’s death to the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews had great power through the Roman empire pur sue and per secute Christians, e.g., Saul before becoming Paul. The Lord warns his disciples that they would be brought before rulers and kings for his sake — Herod killed James, and Paul went before Felix, Festus, Gal il eo, Agrippa and Nero. (Ac. chps. 12, 18, 24, 25, 26.) The Jewish power of per secution was broken in 70 A.D. After the Jewish-Roman war and Jerusalem’s destruction, Christians no longer were hauled before the Jewish councilors, nor were they beaten in the Jewish synagogues. Also, the terrible Roman per secution under Nero took place before the destruction of Jerusalem — in fact, most of the apostles died of per secution before Jerusalem was destroyed. 38

And the gospel must first be published among all nations. 11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, taken thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye pre meditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. 12 Now the brother shall be tray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. 10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations. 11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, taken thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye pre meditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. 12 Now the brother shall be tray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

Mark parallels Matthew 24:14:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

This passage speaks of the time before the final destruction of the Jewish nation. 39

Matthew 24:14 was literally fulfilled:

14. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world. The evidence that this was done is to be chiefly derived from the New Testament, and there it is clear. Thus Paul declares that it was preached to every creature under heaven (Col. 1, 6, 23); that the faith of the Romans was spoken of throughout the whole world (Ro. 1, 18); that he preached in Arabia (Ga. 1, 17), and at Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum (Ro. xv. 19). We know also that he travelled through Asia Minor, Greece, and Crete; that he was in Italy, and probably in Spain and Gaul, Ro. xv. 24, 28. At the same time, the other apostles were not idle; and there is full proof that within thirty years after this prophecy was spoken, churches were established in all these regions. ¶ For a witness unto all nations. This preaching the gospel in discriminatingly to the Gentiles shall be a proof to them, or a witness, that the division between the Jews and Gentiles was about to be broken down. Hitherto the blessings of revelation had been confined to the Jews. They were the peculiar people of God. His messages had been sent to them only. Either, therefore, God sent the gospel to all other people, it was proof, or a witness unto them, that the peculiar Jewish economy was at an end. ¶ Then shall the end come. The end of the Jewish economy; the destruction of the temple and the city. 40

The substantial fulfillment of this prediction is found in the missionary labors of the apostles, above all in those of Paul. 41

37 Wars, Book 6, Chapter 5, § 3. (20) Whether Josephus means that this star was different from that comet which lasted a whole year, I cannot certainly determine. His words most favor that being different one from another. (21) Since Josephus still uses the Syro-Macedonian month Xanthicus for the Jewish month Nisan, this eighth, or, as Nicanor read it, this ninth of Xanthicus or Nisan, was almost a week before the Passover, on the fourteenth; about which time we learn from St. John, that many used to go out of the country to Jerusalem to purify themselves; John 11, 55, with 12, 1; in agreement with Josephus also, B. V. ch. 3. sect. 1. And it might well be, that in the sight of these this extraordinary light might appear. (22) This here seems to be the court of the priests. (23) Both Roland and Havercamp in this place alter the natural punctuation and sense of Josephus, and this contrary to the opinion of Valesilus and Dr. Hudson, lest Josephus should say that the Jews built booths or tents within the temple at the feast of tabernacles; which the later Rabbins did not allow to have been the ancient practice: but then, since it is expressly told us in Nehemiah, ch. 8, 16, that in still earlier times “the Jews made booths in the courts of the house of God” at that festival, Josephus may well be permitted to say the same. And indeed the modern Rabbins are of very small authority in all such matters of remote antiquity.” Ibid.

38 See Acts Caesar, Where is the Image Drawn, Romans 13, 1-7, by Pastor Need.

39 All nations—“There was a necessity of the promulgation of it by the will of God, the command and commission of Christ; and for the gathering in of the Jews, that were the elect of God, among all nations” of the world, especially in the Roman empire; and that “first,” or before the destruction of Jerusalem. (Gill)” See Ac. 2, 13, 45, 7, 16, 24, 18, 12, 24, 24, 25, 23, Col. 1, 23 and etc.

40 Barns. “Not the end of the world, as the Ethiopic version reads it, and others understand it; but the end of the Jewish state, the end of the city and temple: so that the universal preaching of the Gospel all over the world, was the last criterion and sign, of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the account of that itself next follows, with the dismal circumstances which attended it. (Gill)” See Ac. 2, 13, 45, 7, 16, 24, 18, 12, 24, 24, 25, 23, Col. 1, 23 and etc.

41 Meyer. “Comp. Acts 19; Rom. I, 14, x. 18, xv. 19; Matt. xxvii. 19; Col. I, 23; Clem. 1 Cor. v.”
Paul himself said that Matthew 24:14 was fulfilled by the evangelistic efforts of the first Christians. Robertson says of Colossians 1:23:

{Preached} (kéruchthentos). First aorist passive participle of kérussô, to herald, to proclaim. {In all creation} (en pasêi kîsê). |Ktisis| is the act of founding (Ro 1:20) from ktizô (verse Col 1:16), then a created thing (Ro 1:25), then the sum of created things as here and Re 3:14. It is hyperbole, to be sure, but Paul does not say that all men are converted, but only that the message has been heralded abroad over the Roman Empire in a wider fashion than most people imagine. {A minister} (diakonos). General term for service (dia, konis, raising a dust by speed) and used often as here of preachers like our “minister” today, one whose serves. Jesus used the verb diakônêsai of himself (Mr 10:45). Our “deacon” is this word transliterated and given a technical meaning as in Php 1:1.

Our Lord told them of the terrible persecution by the Jews that the preachers of the gospel of the kingdom would receive. He assured them of God’s protection (Lk. 21:18, Mt. 24:13, Mk. 13:13), and assured them that before the Jewish economy was destroyed, the gospel will go world-wide. The church would be established world-wide before Jerusalem would be destroyed.

Verse 10, the persecution, the Lord said, would cause many professed followers to be offended, and to betray one another. Those who would not apostatize completely would compromise from the pressure of money and/or worldly influence. The evil one has many tools to dissuade the zealous Christian.

Verse 11, the false poise of the Lord’s aid was to inspire confidence in God, so the people would not desert the doomed city. (See vv. 4, 5.)

Verse 12, because iniquity shall abound... Because of the influence of the false teachers as well as the persecution, even to death, many Christians gave up their profession—their zeal for Christ was dampened if not outright extinguished.

We fail to realize the tremendous hatred the Jews had for Christians. The Jews pursued the Christians from city to city, both to subvert the gospel message of faith alone in Christ and to kill the new converts. False teachers crept in to the new church and lead many astray. (Ac. 9, Gal. 1, 2 Pet. 2.)

Though our Lord’s words are a direct prophecy concerning the time until the final destruction of Jerusalem, easily followed through out the New Testament, their application is for ever. As long as there are sinful men, they will hate Christ. The heathen will spare no effort nor expense in their efforts against the Lord, and against his anointed. The false teachers abound to seduce God’s people away from God’s word, as sur ing them that they have God’s protection though they live in rebellion against his law-word. Verses 9-12 is a good summation of how sinful men will act toward Christianity.

Verse 13, shall endure... saved. (Lk. 21:18.) The context of this promise by the Lord clearly requires that it refer to the end of the Jewish economy, 70 A.D.:

the same shall be saved; with a temporal salvation, when Jerusalem, and the unbelieving inhabitants of it shall be destroyed: for those that believed in Christ, many of them, through persecution, were obliged to remove from thence; and others, by a voice from heaven, (see v. 7, ed.) were bid to go out of it, as they did; and removed to Pella, a village a little beyond Jordan, and so were preserved from the general calamity; and also with an everlasting salvation, which is the case of all that persevere to the end, as all true believers in Christ will.43

Those who believed Christ’s words concerning this horrible event fled and were spared, saved.

Of course, we cannot overlook the many passages promising security to the believer—his people will endure to the end because he is doing the keeping. (Phil. 1:6, Jn. 6:37, etc.)

42 Robertson’s Word Pictures.
43 Gill. “(u) Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 3. c. 5.”
Chapter XV

The Great Tribulation

No one denies that the Lord Jesus foretold of a great tribulation to come. The disagreement is over when that tribulation will come, and upon whom it is to come. The term "The Great Tribulation" is from Matthew 24:21.

15 When therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 16 Then let them which be in the mountains come to them that are in the house top, and let them which are in the house top come not down to the house, 17 And let them which are in the field not return back to take any thing out of their houses: 18 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: 19 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 20 But for the elect's sake those days shall be short ended, and the elect shall be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be short ended. (Mt. 24:15-22.)

What was Christ speaking of when he promised great tribulation in those days? He said that the coming events, future from when he spoke, would be like nothing since the beginning of the world nor like anything that will ever take place after the great tribulation. The context of his words clearly requires that Christ is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, for that has been his primary topic from Matthew 21.

The context of our Lord's words foretelling the great tribulation demands that they refer to the destruction of those who killed the Son of God. Only by violently torturing the Lord's words can one make his foretold great tribulation refer to anything other than the horrible events of 70 AD.

No doubt the events foretold by our Lord in Matthew 24 also present a general outline of fallen man's militancy against the Lord through out time.

Revolt

The Jews' revolt was not against Rome but against God, a fact Christ reminded them of. (Mt. 22:21.) Their revolt against Rome was only the result of that inner revolt. Slavery is the natural result of not submitting to God in all things. A revolt against that slavery will only result in destruction, as it did these Jews. When men fulfill their responsibility to God, then God moves the chains of slavery. He alone can give free dom, and there is no free dom apart from this fact. What took place in the great tribulation was totally in accord with the law of Moses. (Dt. 28:68.)

The Abomination of Desolation

{The abomination of desolation} (to bdel ugmata er emoseos). An allusion to Da 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. Antiochus Epiphanes erected an altar to Zeus on the altar of Jehovah (1Macc. 1:54,59; 6:7; 2Macc. 6:1-5). The desolation in the mind of Jesus is apparently the Roman army (Lu 21:20) in the temple, an application of the words of Daniel to this dread event. The verb bdelusomai is to feel nauseous because of stench, to abhor, to detest. Idolatry was a stench to God (Lu 16:15; Re 17:4). Josephus tells us that the Romans burned the temple and of fered sacrifices to their ensigns placed by the eastern gate when they proclaimed Titus as Emperor.

{Let him that readeth understand} (hoan agi noskôn noêtô). This paren thesis occurs also in Mr 13:14. It is not to be supposed that Jesus used these words. They were inserted by Mark as he wrote his book and he was followed by Matthew.

There are several points for consideration from this section. Others have dealt with the various passages, so we need not "re invent" the wheel. Rather, we will quote what others have said.

44 2 Pet. 3:16. "wrest the word of God, distort it from its true sense and meaning, and make it speak that which it never designed; dealing with it as innocent persons are sometimes used, put upon a rack, and tortured, and so forced to speak what is contrary to their knowledge and consciences; and so were the words of the Apostle Paul wrested by ill designing men, as about the doctrines of grace and works, so concerning the coming of Christ; see Ro 3:8 2Th 2:1,2; as [they do] also the other Scriptures; the writings of Moses, and the prophets of the Old Testament, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the other epistles of the apostles of the New Testament: and which is eventually." Gill.

45 Robertson.
The Lord told his disciples that the event that would single that the Great Tribulation was upon them would be the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet.

There are three cross reference passages in Daniel—Da 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the over spreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, (c) and that determined shall be poured upon desolation (Dan. 9:27. “(c) Meaning that Jerusalem and the sanctuary would utterly destroyed because of their rebellion against God, and their idolatry: or as some read, that the plague will be so great, that they will all be astonished at them. [Geneva]”) We will not examine the seventy weeks; rather, we will simply look at the consummation of those weeks. The Great Tribulation concluded those weeks, and according to our Lord’s definition, that Great Tribulation had to be the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, that destruction fulfilled Daniel 9:27.46

Daniel 11:31, no doubt spoke of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 BC)—he polluted the sanctuary and the holy people, set up altars, groves and chapels of idols, and sacrifices swine’s flesh, and unclean beasts. The books of the Maccabees describe what took place during that time. His actions were referred to by Christ as typifying what was shortly going to take place against Jerusalem. Therefore, that destruction fulfilled Daniel 9:27.46

Daniel 12:11, uses highly figurative language to tell the hostile undertakings of Antiochus against Judaism, which forms a type of the continuing war of the spirit of Antichrist (1 Jn. 4:3) against the Gospel Church. Matthew Henry offers a good comment in Dan 12:5-13:

We must view “prophesy” after the image in Daniel chapter two in light of that image. The stone that was cut out of the mountain with outstretched hands broke the image and ground it into dust to be carried away by the wind. That stone was Christ, the Stone the builders rejected. There is no Biblical prospect of the image being regathered after the stone struck it. The feet were Rome, and Christ struck the feet.

The only way a future one-world government under a literal Antichrist will work as taught in modern Dispensationalism is to say that the stone has not yet struck the image—the image actually still stands, and will be recognized again as a one-world government under the Antichrist. Then the Lord will destroy it at its coming to set up his literal kingdom after the Great Tribulation. This teaching of a Great Tribulation was introduced by the Roman Jesuit, Lacunza in his 1791 Ben-Ezra document. He also introduced the idea of a personal Antichrist, and a great many other things that are now taught by those who places Matthew 24 in the future from the time it is read rather than from the time it was spoken.48

The initial abomination that maketh desolate was accomplished by Antiochus Epiphanes. His actions looked for ward to what was going to take place under the Romans. It also foretold the hostility of the spirit of the Antichrist against the Gospel Church, and the final victory of the Gospel Church over that spirit through the Spirit of God.

Thus when Christ, speaking of what was soon to come, said, When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, the disciples knew very well what he spoke of, for Antiochus Epiphanes’ abominable actions were well known.

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46 For a good study on Daniel’s seventy weeks, see Hengstenberg, Christology, 2:803-912.
47 Matthew Henry. See also Barnes’ Notes & Kel-Delitzsch on Dan. 12:11. “Ch. xi. 6 sees a preliminary historical embodiment of this view in Antiochus Epiphanes; and thus the Maccabean persecution, which contributed to the purification of the people, becomes a type of the last tribulation of the church, xii. 1, which shall be such as never was since there was a nation, but which shall conduce to the purification and preservation of the church, ver. 10.” Oehler, 503.
48 Ben-Ezra, i.xxvii, xxiii.
The Roman ensign standing where it ought not stand (Mk. 13:14), told those left alive in the city there was no time for anything except to rapid flight to the mountains:

1. AND now the Romans, upon the flight of these sedition into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple (24) and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they of fer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator (25) with the great est acclamations of joy. And now all the soldiers had such vast quantities of the spoils which they had got ten by plunder, that in Syria a pound weight of gold was sold for half its former value. But as for those priests that kept them selves still upon the wall of the holy house... On the fifth day after ward, the priests that were pined with the famine came down, and when they were brought to Titus by the guards, they begged for their lives; but he replied, that the time of par don was over as to them, and that this very holy house, on whose account only they could justly hope to be preserved, was destroyed; and that it was agreeable to their office that priests should perish with the house itself to which they belonged. So he or dered them to be put to death.

Titus tried to convince the Jewish "tyrants" (i.e., the religious leaders who led the rebellion), and forced the people to remain in side the temple compound to give up, and their lives would be spared:

... When I came near your temple, I again de parted from the laws of war, and ex horted you to spare your own sanctuary, and to preserve your holy house to your selves. I al lowed you a quiet exit out of it, and secur i ty for your pres er vation; nay, if you had a mind, I gave you leave to fight in an other place. Yet have you still despised every one of my propos als, and have set fire to your holy house with your own hands. And now, vile wretches, do you desire to treat with me by word of mouth? To what purpose is it that you would save such a holy house as this was, which is now destroyed? What preservation can you now desire after the destruction of your temple? Yet do you stand still at this very time in your armor; nor can you bring your selves so much as to pretend to surrender the city even in this your most extremity. O miserable creatures! What is it you depend on? Are you not your people dead? Is not your holy house gone? Is not your city in my power? and are not your very lives in my hands? And do you still deem it a part of valor to die? How ever, I will not imitate your madness. If you throw down your arms, and deliver up your bodies to me, I grant you your lives; and I will act like a mild master of a family; what can not be healed shall be punished, and the rest I will preserve for my own use.

3. To that offer of Titus they made this reply: That they could not accept of it, because they had sworn never to do so; but they desired they might have leave to go through the wall that had been made about them, with their wives and chil dren; for that they would go into the desert, and leave the city to him. At this Titus had great indignation, that when they were in the case of men already taken captives, they should pretend to make their own terms with him, as if they had been conquerors. So he or dered this proclamation to be madeto them, That they should no more come out to him as deserts, nor hope for any further security; for that he would henceforth spare nobody, but fight them with his whole army; and that they must save them selves as well as they could; for that he would from henceforth treat them according to the laws of war. So he gave or der to those soldiers both to burn and to plunder the city; who did nothing in that day; but on the next day they set fire to the repository of the archives, to Acra, to the council house, and to the place called Oph las; at which time the fire proceeded as far as the palace of Queen Helena, which was in the middle of Acra; the lanes also were burnt down, as also those houses that were full of the dead bodies of such as were destroyed by famine.

Thus "On the fifth day" after the Roman ensigns were set up over the temple, the priests came out, and asked to be allowed to take their families "into the desert, and leave the city to" Titus. Titus was moved with great indignation that these men who had been defeated in war should think they could dictate the terms of peace. Titus then or dered the city to be burned and plundered, and the captives to fare the best they could in the wrath of Rome's army. The city was burned the next day, 7 days after the Roman ensigns were worshiped in the temple. An extremely important point is that they in ten tion ally burned "the repository of their archives." And, hence, all gene al ogy records of the physical seed of Abra ham were destroyed—those who were so proud of their phys i cal lineage to Abra ham are now cut off from that lineage.

Observe what our Lord said:

15. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 16 Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: 17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back. 49 Wars, Book VI, Chapter 6, § 1. (24) "Take Havercamp's note here: 'This (says he) is a remarkable place; and Tertullian truly says in his Apologetic, ch. 16, p. 102, that the entire religion of the Roman camp almost consisted in worshipping the ensigns, in swearing by the ensigns, and in preferring the ensigns before all the other gods.' See what Havercamp says upon that place of Tertullian. "(25) "This declaring Titus imperator by the soldiers, upon such signal success, and the slaughter of such a vast number of enemies, was according to the usual practice of the Romans in like cases, as Reland assures us on this place." See Spurgeon, p 215.

50 Ibid, § 2.
51 Ibid, § 3.
19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: 21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the begin ning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Mt. 24:15-21.)

Luke records the Lord thusly:

20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21 Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the coasts enter thereinto. 22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be taken captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Lk. 21:20-24.)

This destruction fulfilled Dan. 9:27 and 12:11. As soon as the believers saw the hated abomination (the Roman ensigns) of desolation (the Roman army was going to make Jerusalem desolate with her armies of desolation, Lk. 21:20), stand in the holy place, they knew the time to flee for their lives had arrived. The believers heeded our Lord's warnings here, and fled to the mountain city of Pella in Perea, and were preserved from the general destruction which over threw the Jews (C.H.S.). There is no evidence that a single Christian perished in Jerusalem. (Barnes')

Let us note that all of Jerusalem was considered holy. (Mt. 4:5.) Therefore, as soon as they saw the ensign of the Roman armies move in side the city, it was time to flee. (See Mk. 13:14.) The uncontrolled fury of the Roman soldiers really started at the burning of the temple. At that point, it would have been too late to flee. Actually, our Lord told believers to flee as soon as they saw their beloved city surrounded by armies. (Lk. 21:20.)

Vv. 16-18

Matthew 24:16-18, tell of the necessity of speedy flight—they could not take time for anything except flight. In the Lord's warning, we also see the importance of not becoming attached to the things of this world. (Cf. Mk. 9:47.)

Warnings

We also see here that God always gives a warning to those who are in the path of destruction. He cannot force them to flee, but if they have any perception at all, they will listen and act. (Cf. Amos 3:1-8.) How many folks do we know who are warned by word of God as clearly as our Lord warns here, yet they press ahead anyway.

Proverbs 27:12, tells us that the prudent foresee evil, and prepare accordingly. Here we see that those who love God and desire to obey him can have his protection in the evil day of his judgment against sin. Even our day of evil men, we can rest assured that judgment will come from God against this evil generation (world-wide). Here is a principle that says we can expect God's protection in the judgment. Maybe we will lose everything as did these Christians who fled, yet they were preserved to rebuild in the vacuum which was left when Judaism was destroyed.

Verses 20, But pray ye... There was no way to avoid the judgment of God against sin but here is an exhortation to pray concerning that judgment. Pray that the judgment will come in a time which will be conducive to flight. Really, those who believed him would flee any time, cold or warm. Those who did not, would not flee, so the circumstances would make no difference.

Here we see encouragement to pray for good (as good as can be expected) circumstances for those who want to obey God in the fierce day of his wrath.

Verses 21-22. The context demands that these two verses be left here in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. The crowd had cried out to Pilate, His blood be on us, and on our children. (Mt. 27:25.) It was. The Father pours out the veils of his stored up wrath upon this wicked nation that killed his only begotten Son. All of the parables from Matthew 21 have lead up to this point. (Rev. 18:20-24.)
Luke (21:24) tells us specifically what will happen: 1) They shall fall by the edge of the sword. 2) They shall be led away captive into all nations. 3) Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled. These three things are easily traced in history.

**The Time of the Gentiles:**

That is, until the time allotted for the Gentiles to do it shall be fulfilled, or as long as God is pleased to suffer them to do it.

In other words, the times of the Gentiles was the length of time allotted by the Father for Rome's army to destroy the Jewish nation. When his vengeance against the murderers was full, the time was up, and he said, "That's enough." (V. 22.)

The destruction of the Jewish nation took place during the Jewish Passover when all Jewish males were required to be in Jerusalem. It is estimated that more than three million were usually assembled at this time. Josephus records the number of Jews slain, and records the significant date of the final destruction of Jerusalem:

The whole multitude of the Jews that were destroyed during the seven years before this time, in all the countries and bordering on Judea, is summed up by Archbishop Usher, from Lipsius, out of Josephus, at the year of Christ 70, and amounts to 1,337,490. (Eleven hundred thousand just during the fall of Jerusalem, ed.) Nor could there have been that number of Jews in Jerusalem to be destroyed in this siege, as will be presently set down by Josephus, but that both Jews and proselytes of righteousness were just then come up out of the other countries of Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Persia, and other remoter regions, to the Passover, in vast numbers, and therein cooped up, as in a prison, by the Roman army, as Josephus himself well observes in this and the next section, and as is exactly related elsewhere, B. V. ch. 3. sect. 1 and ch. 13. sect. 7.

Observe: The first preachers covered the then known world with the gospel of the finished work of Christ, before 70 AD. (See Mt. 24:14 above.) The gospel meant that all the old Jewish rights and rituals, or ordinances, were done away with in Christ. (Eph. 2, Col. 2.) When the preachers went into a new area, they went first to the Jewish synagogues where they found ready-made congregations who wanted to know about the God of the Old Testament. Sometimes the message of Christ's finished work was received, but of ten it was not. The world had been warned, and the gospel offered. Therefore, those from around the world who knew about and rejected the Christian Passover (1 Cor. 5:7, Heb. 11:28) for the old Passover were in Jerusalem when Rome shut it up. Their national rejection was judged by God, but not until after giving them a chance to repent. (See Mt. 24:16-18 above.)

The translator ends Book VI with his astonishment of how clearly Jerusalem's destruction fulfilled Mat 24; he is so impressed that he wrote Literal Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies, which he commended to all serious inquirers:

This is the proper place for such as have closely attended to these latter books of the War to peruse, and that with equal attention, those distinct and plain predictions of Jesus of Nazareth, in the Gospels thereto relating, as compared with their exact completions in Josephus's history; upon which completions, as Dr. Whitby well observes, Annot. on Matthew 24:2, no small part of the evidence for the truth of the Christian religion does depend; and as I have step by step compared them together in my Literal Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies. The reader is to observe first, that the true reason why I have so seldom taken notice of those completions in the course of these notes, not with standing their being so very remarkable, and frequently so very obvious, is this, that I had entirely prevented my self in that treatise before hand; to which therefore I must here, once for all, seriously refer every inquisitive reader. Besides these five here enumerated, who had taken Jerusalem of old, Josephus, upon further recollection, reckoned six, Annot. on Matthew 24:2, no small part of the evidence for the truth of the Christian religion does depend; and as I have step by step compared them together in my Literal Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies. The reader is to observe first, that the true reason why I have so seldom taken notice of those completions in the course of these notes, not with standing their being so very remarkable, and frequently so very obvious, is this, that I had entirely prevented my self in that treatise before hand; to which therefore I must here, once for all, seriously refer every inquisitive reader. 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A foot note in Wars, Book VII, Chapter 1, says:

This Tereu tus Rufus, as Reland in part observes here, is the same per son whom the Talmudists call Turnus Rufus; of whom they relate, that "he ploughed up Sion as a field, and made Jerusalem be come as heaps, and the
mountain of the house as the high Idaces of a forest;" which was long before foretold by the prophet Micah, ch. 3:12, and quoted from him in the prophecies of Jeremiah, ch. 26:18.

The Lord spent the last several days pleading with Israel, the builders, to believe him. He prophesied precisely what would happen to the nation of Israel if it did not repent—Great Tribulation, a tribulation unequaled in human history. The builders rejected the Lord's offer, ignored his warnings and killed the son. They said, "Let his blood be upon us and upon our children," and it was in the most horrible manner imaginable.

Jews Crucified

Josephus points out that the men of the city were crucified by being nailed to crosses. The vengeance of God is completed as the leaders of Israel nailed His only Son to a cross. I think it is quite amazing. Old Testament Israel's builders used Rome to nail the Son to the tree, so God uses Rome to nail them to the trees.56

Hunger

Though the leaders of the revolt, John and Simon, had enough food stored for many years, it was burned one night in a drunken fight among them selves—a civil war.57

The hunger during the siege was beyond anything known as women eat their own children, as foretold by Moses, Deuteronomy 28:49-68. (See Rev. 6:6.) Moses warned of the swiftly flying eagle, v. 49. The builders who lead the revolt knew Scripture. However, though the Roman eagle surrounded their city, their hardness in rebellion prevented their con notion of what they were doing with what was now taking place around them. Note that fallen man very seldom, if ever, connects the judgments against his sins with his difficult circumstances. Only the grace of God opens eyes, so the connection can be made.58

Though the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that built it. The horse can be prepared unto battle, but safety is of the Lord.

Fire and Blood

The fire was so great that it looked like the hill itself was on fire, and the blood ran so deep that many fires were extinguished. The regular means used by Rome to kill the Jews was slitting their throats, causing the people to bleed to death. Modern warfare is "bloodless," so it is difficult for us to imagine the amount of blood that would flow from over a mile lion slit throats. The depth of the blood in the city was in deed an amazing fulfillment of Revelation 6:10, 8:7, 8, 14:20, 16:1-6, 18:11-24, 19:2. God himself required the shed blood of all the righteous people of all time, from Abel to Zacharias, and he used Rome to extract that blood (Mt. 23:34-39):

As for the sedition, they were in too great distress already to afford their asistance [towards quenching the fire]; they were everywhere slain, and everywhere beaten; and as for a great part of the people, they were weak and with out arms, and had their throats cut wher ever they were caught. Now round about the al tar lay dead bodies heaped one upon another, as at the steps (16) going up to it ran a great quantity of their blood, whither also the dead bodies that were slain above [on the altar] fell down.59

Yet was the misery itself more terrible than this disorder; for one would have thought that the hill itself, on which the temple stood, was seething hot, as full of fire on every part of it, that the blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain more in number than those that slew them; for the ground did nowhere appear visib le, for the dead bodies that lay on it; but the soldiers went over heaps of those bodies, as they ran upon such as fled from them.60

56 Wars, Book V, Chapter 11, § 1. App. E.
57 Wars, Book V, Chapter 1, § 4.
58 Wars, Book VI, Chapter III, § 3.4. App. E. "See the several predictions that the Jews, if they became obstinate in their idolatry and wickedness, should be sent again.
59 Wars, Book VI, Chapter 4, § 6. See also, Book VI, Chapter 5, § 1; Chapter 4, § 6, Chapter 8, § 5. App. E.
60 Wars, Book VI, Chapter 5, § 1.
But although they had this commiseration for such as were destroyed in that manner, yet had they not the same for those that were still alive, but they ran every one through whom they met, and obstructed the very lanes with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree in deed that the fire of many of the houses was quenched with these men's blood. And truly so it happened, that though the slayers left off at the evening, yet did the fire greatly prevail in the night; and as all was burning, came that eighth day of the month Gorpius [Elul] upon Jerusalem, a city that had been liable to so many miseries during this siege, that, had it all ways enjoyed as much happiness from its first foundation, it would certainly have been the envy of the world. Nor did it on any other account so much deserve these sorrows for tunes, as by producing such a generation of men as were the occasions of this its overthrow.

Reading the account of Rome moving into the city and then into the temple and the slaying of hundreds of thousands of people, one can not help but be amazed at the hardness of the leaders of the rebellion. Time and again, they were confronted with defeat, but each defeat only hardened them in their rebellion. Both Titus and Caesar, who personally oversaw the war and directed some of the engagements, offered several times to let the Jews go free if they would only lay down their arms. Every offer was met more resistance, despite the sure defeat. In fact, at the first, Rome offered safety to any deserters, so the zealots laid wait and killed all deserters they could catch.

**Hiding Under Rocks**

Josephus tells us several times that many Jews, especially their leaders, unsuccess fully sought to hide from the Romans in subterranean caverns (see Rev. 6:16, 16:9, ch. 17, 18):

4. Now this vast multitude is indeed collected out of remote places, but the entire nation was now shut up by fate as in prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city when it was crowded with inhabitants. Accordingly, the multitude of those that therein perished exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world; for, to speak only of what was public likey known, the Romans slew some of them, some they carried captives, and others they made a search for underground, and when they found where they were, they broke up the ground and slew all they met with.

It is hard to imagine, but Titus and the Roman soldiers grew weary of killing people.

Yet could not that garrison resist those that were deserting; for although a great number of them were slain, yet were the deserters many more in number. These were all received by the Romans, because Titus himself grew negligent as to his former or orders for killing them, and because the very soldiers grew weary of killing them, and because they hoped to get some money by sparing them; for they left only the populace, and sold the rest of the multitude, with their wives and children, and every one of them at a very low price, and that because such as were sold were very many, and the buyers very few; and although Titus had made proclamation beforehand, that no deserter should come alone by himself, that so they might bring out their families with them, yet did he receive such as these also. However, he set over them such as were to distinguish some from others, in order to see if any of them deserved to be punished; and in deed the number of those that were sold was immense; but of the populace above forty thousand were saved, whom Caesar let go whither every one of them please.

**Prophecies Fulfilled**

Deuteronomy 28:68.

This innumerable multitude of Jews that were "sold" by the Romans was an eminent completion of God's ancient threatening by Moses, that if they apostatized from the obedience to his laws, they should be "sold unto their enemies for bondmen and bondwomen," Deuteronomy 28:68. See more especially the note on ch. 9, sect. 2. But one thing is here peculiarly remarkable, that Moses adds, "though they should be "sold" for slaves, yet "no man should buy them;" i.e. either they should have none to redeem them from this sale into slavery; or rather, that the slaves to be sold should be more than were the pursuers for them, and so they should be sold for little or nothing; which is what Josephus here affirms to have been the case at this time.

Not only was the slave market glutted, but the gold spoil taken from the temple glutted the market, cutting the price in half.
Matthew 24:2

This is the proper place for such as have closely attended to these latter books of the War to peruse, and that with equal attention, those distinct and plain predictions of Jesus of Nazareth, in the Gospels relating, as compared with their exact completions in Josephus's history; upon which completions, as Dr. Whitby well observes, Annot. on Matthew 24:2, no small part of the evidence for the truth of the Christian religion does depend; and as I have step by step compared them together in my Literal Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies. The reader is to observe further, that the true reason why I have so seldom taken notice of those completions in the course of these notes, not with standing their being so very remarkable, and frequently so very obvious, is this, that I had entirely prevented my self in that treatise beforehand; to which therefore I must here, once for all, seriously refer every inquisitive reader. Besides these five here enumerated, who had taken Jerusalem of old, Josephus, upon further recollection, reckons a sixth, Antiq. B. XII. ch. 1. sect. 1, who should have been here inserted in the second place; I mean Ptolemy, the son of Lagus.

Jerramiah 26:18, Micah 3:12

This Terentius Rufus, as Reland in part observes here, is the same person whom the Talmudists call Turnus Rufus; of whom they relate, that "he ploughed up Sion as a field, and made Jerusalem become as heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high Idaeces of a forest;" which was long before foretold by the prophet Micah, ch. 3:12, and quoted from him in the prophecies of Jeremiah, ch. 26:18.

God Empowered Rome

Titus himself said that God was the one who over threw the Jews, and ejected them from their strong holds. Rome was not strong enough to get through the walls, nor take the towers: "We have certainly had God for our associate in this war, and it was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these forti fications; for what could the hands of men or any machines do towards overthrowing these towers?" Titus was a pagan, so he could well have been referring to his pagan gods. Regardless, he knew it was a super natural power that allowed him to take the city and the temple. Josephus said,

And now, "O must wretched city, what misery so great as this didst thou suffer from the Romans, when they came to purify thee from thy in testine hatred! 'For thou couldst be no longer a place fit for God, nor couldst thou continue in being, after thou hadst been a sepulcher for the bodies of thy own people, and hadst made the holy house itself a burying-place in this civil war of thine. Yet mayst thou again grow better, if per chance thou wilt hereafter appease the anger of that God who is the author of thy destruction." But I must restrain myself from these passions by the rules of history, since this is not a proper time for domestic lamentations, but for historical narrations; I therefore return to the operations that follow in this sedition.

Many who tried to flee the doomed city swallowed pieces of gold to try to get it past the Roman army. By chance, this was discovered, and from then on, any deserter caught had his stomach cut open and the gold removed. So much gold was found this way that the price of gold dropped over 50% in the Roman camp. The city was exceedingly rich, yet because of its rebellion, all that wealth was worthless. Considering this activity utterly repulsive, Titus sought to stop his army from cutting open the deserters. This is what Josephus said of the situation—"but in reality it was God who condemned the whole nation, and turned every course that was taken for their preservation to their destruction."

God Punishes Wicked Men

So the city that made all the earthy rich with her wondrous fell because she refused to glorify God as God. All that is left of this old nation is the Jewish religion, but that religion is no longer the threat to the church that it was before 70 A.D. We learn from the Jewish/Roman war that God will judge sin. Though the judgment may be slow in coming, it will come; the longer it waits, the worse it is. In Josephus' words, "...God punishes wicked men."
Point after point from history argues that The Revelation prepared the Apostolic Jewish Church for the destruction of the 1500 year old Jewish economy that had been established by God himself. Accordingly, The Revelation was basically fulfilled up to Chapter 20. However, as long as there are sinful men, attempts will be made and devices implemented against the Lord and against his anointed, just as the wicked Jews did. The Law of the Lord established in Revelation chapters 1-19 is quite clear and will stand for ever—that is, "...God punishes wicked men." God judges sin, so let us kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and we perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.

God’s army, led by Titus, cast down every stone of the city that crucified our Lord, and plowed it as a field. Divine Providence fulfilled Micah 3:12 (Jer. 26:18):

Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall be heaps, and the mountain tain of the house as the high places of the for est.

Though it is difficult for us to imagine the totality of the destruction of Jerusalem, that great and exceedingly rich city became a heap of stones in the midst of a field plowed up by Turnus Rufus, as promised by our Lord. (Mt. 22:7.) There is not one word of Divine Scripture which will not be fulfilled. (Modern) Jerusalem reverenced so much by Christians is built on top of the heap of stones left by the Roman legions. The "streets where Christ walked" are many feet below the present streets in modern Jerusalem.)

Chapter XVI

Conclusion

The Apostolic Church was predominantly Jewish. The many thousands converted to Christ in the first century, e.g., the Book of Acts, were primarily converted from Judaism. Judaism had been established by God through Moses and practiced in the temple. Accordingly, the Jewish religion was a serious threat to the new church—the new Christian converts were easily influenced to either return to the Jewish rituals that had pointed to Christ, or mix them with faith in Christ. Paul dealt with the Judaizers in all of his letters. (See Eph. 2 and Col. 2.)

Shortened Days

Matthew 24:22. Reading Josephus’ account of the Jewish/Roman war, we can easily see the hatred Rome had toward the Jews. The war had repercussions: The “Jewish nation [was, ed.] widely dispersed over all the habitable earth,” and the peoples of those nations reacted to Rome’s victory by seeking to persecute and even kill Jews everywhere, e.g.,

2. It happened also about this time, that the Jews who remained at Antioch were under accusations, and in danger of perishing, from the distasteful bances that were raised against them by the Antiochians; and this both on account of the slanders spread abroad at this time against them, and on account of what pranks they had played not long before; which I am obliged to describe with out fail, though briefly, that I may the better connect my narration of future actions with those that went before... 4. So the Jews were under great disorders and terror, in the uncertain expectations of what would be the upshot of these accusations against them.

Shortly after Titus’ victory, he made a triumphal entry into Antioch. The people of Antioch requested Titus to banish all Jews from them, a request he refused: “Whereupon the people of Antioch, when they had failed of success in this their first request, made him a second; for they desired that he would order those tables of brass to be removed on which the Jews’ privileges were engraven. However, Titus would not grant that neither, but per mitted the Jews of Antioch to continue to enjoy the very same privileges in that city which they had before...”

73 Wars, Book 7, Chapter 3, § 2, 3, 4.
74 Wars, Book 7, Chapter 5, § 2.
The new church was Jewish, so if the Lord had permitted the Jews to be destroyed, the foundation of the church would have been destroyed. So for the elect sake those days were shortened. God protects his faithful people, even as he fulfills his promised judgment and wrath again sin.

V. 23. We have discussed this a little, and quoted Josephus' above, so let it suffice here to say this—the Jews totally expected the Christ (Messiah) to deliver them from Roman oppression, even to the very last of the siege of Jerusalem. The false teachers who wanted to stand against Rome used the promise of the soon coming Messiah (Christ) to deliver them from Rome to really their troops against Rome. They died looking for their false hope. The zealots who led in the insurrection never gave up the false hope even after Jerusalem was completely raised to the ground, many hundreds of thousands of people killed by the sword and famine, and they were in captivity as a sign of Rome's strength. Rebelion hardens people to what is taking place around them.

V. 24. Again we have a reference to false claims of deliverance from the Romans. The false prophets had great signs and wonders; they did marvels things to try to convince others to follow them in their rebellion. Their message sounded and looked so real that only the preserving grace of God could protect his people from it.

Their message was, "Stay and defend Jerusalem. The Messiah will soon be here. He will deliver us and make us the rulers over Rome." Those who were not the elect stayed. Those who were the elect knew that Christ (the Messiah) had already come; therefore, they fled.

Vv. 25-28. Christ tells his followers forty years before it actually happened, "Behold, I have told you before what is going to happen. There will be an abundance of false prophets claiming that the Christ is here or there. They will do this to try to get you to join in their rebellion against God. I have told you beforehand. Don't you believe them."

V. 27. The coming of the Son of man will be from an unexpected quarter. No more than you can tell from where the lightning will strike will you be able to tell from where he will come.

V. 28. After Christ, Judaism became only a dead and corrupt carcasse, fit only for the Roman eagle. Christ warned that those who clung to the carcasse would be "meat" for that eagle, and they were. With eleven hundred thousand people in the city to calibrate the "feast of unleavened bread," i.e., the Passover, the gates were suddenly shut up by an army. They would not have been caught there by Rome if they had abandoned the feast, which was now only a dead and corrupt carcasse.

All the people present in the city had heard the gospel, for it had already spread worldwide, being preached primarily in the synagogues. Those who were in the synagogues, heard and rejected the message of Christ, including many Greek proselytes, were, accordingly, the ones who were at Jerusalem to calibrate the old required Passover.

Christ said, "You will be able to tell when and where the Son of man has returned in judgment against this wicked people by where the eagles will be gathered together (the false prophets sure won't tell you)." Rome gathered against Jerusalem under the sign of the eagle. The Jews did not expect the Son to return in judgment against them in the form of the Roman army. Yet Christ clearly tells his disciples that would be the case.

75 Wars, Book VI, Chapter 4, § 4. Josephus continually tells of the hardness of the Jews. Despite continual setbacks that showed the city was going to fall, the zealots refused to quit. The leaders did not give up until Rome dug them out of their underground hiding places. Ibid, Chapter 6, § 3. Titus even offered peace, but the tyrants wanted it on their terms.

76 Wars, Book 6, Chapter 9, § 3. Note for § 3: "But what is here chiefly remarkable is this, that no foreign nation ever came thus to destroy the Jews at any of their solemn festivals, from the days of Moses till this time, but came now upon their apostasy from God, and from obedience to him. Nor is it possible, in the nature of things, that in any other nation such vast numbers should be gotten together, and perish in the siege of any one city whatsoever, as now happened in Jerusalem."

77 Wars, Book 7, Chapter 3, § 3.
The End of the World

The description of the judgment against Jerusalem and of the end of the world (from an unexpected place and in an unexpected time) are very close to the same. We know that the Jerusalem part was fulfilled, and some day the end of the world part will be fulfilled.

When one tries to use Matthew 24:24 to say that the elect of our day cannot be deceived, he must remove it from its context. The context is the elect being deceived concerning the Messiah and the then soon coming destruction of the city. The New Testament abounds with passages telling of the deception of the elect in all kinds of matters, e.g., 2 Peter 2:3, 2 Timothy 3:13, 2 John 7, etc..

In considering Matt. 24:1-18 we need to keep in mind, Christ is prophesying the near coming destruction of that wicked city. The capital of the nation that killed all of the rightous prophets from Abel and finally, killed the Son of God himself. The very last, the unknown coming of the Son in judgment can apply elsewhere. To try to use vv. 1-28 to build any other doctrine other than what he meant it for is in deed dan ger ous. We condemn others for using passages apart from their context, let us not do the same.

The rest of Matthew 24 clearly speaks of the second coming of Christ, except for vv. 32-35—here, “Our Lord evidently returns to the subject of the destruction of Jerusalem, and in these words gives his apostles warning concerning the signs of the times.” He clearly tells them that vv. 1-28 will be fulfilled within that present generation, just as sure as the tender (new) branches of the fig tree and his leaves meant that summer is night. We know that it was within the forty years generation that Titus took the capital city and raised it to the ground. Every thing our Lord told these men was literally fulfilled. To say that these passages which he used to prophesy a destruction yet to be fulfilled is to use them to tally apart from what they were in tended by our Lord.

Our Lord mixed the answers, leaving this second one very am biguous—all he said for sure is that the end shall come and come unexceptly.

V. 36 plainly condemns such things as “though we do not know the day and the hour of Christ’s coming, we may know the year, the month, and even the week. If this is not blasphemous it is certainly foolish.”

There are a great many practical lessons contained in the conclusion of Christ’s answer to the disciples question of v. 3 (on the mount of Olives); the answer actually runs to the end of chapter 25.

Since we are dealing with some grossly misused passages of our day (Mt. 24:1-28), we will leave the remainder of his message from the mount of Olives for a latter time as he answers the other question put to him by his disciples, v. 3, and of the end of the world.

Let us close with this:

“...And thus was Jerusalem taken, in the second year of the reign of Vespasian, in the eighth day of the month Gorpious [Elul].—” And thus was Jerusalem taken, in the second year of the reign of Vespasian, on the eighth day of the month Gorpious [Elul]. It had been taken five times before, though this was the second time of its desolation; for Shishak, the king of Egypt, and after him Antiochus, and after him Pompey, and after them Sosius and Herod took the city, but still preserved it and made it desolate, one thousand four hundred and sixty-eight years and six months after it was built. But he who first built it was a potent man among the Canaanites, and is in our tongue called [Melchisedek], the Righteous King, for such he really was; on which account he was there, and called the city Jerusalem, which was merely called Salem. However, David the king of the Jews, ejected the Canaanites, and settled his own people therein. It was demolished entirely by the Babylonians, four hundred and seventy-seven years; yet hath no its great antiquity, nor its vast riches, nor the diffusion of its nation over all the habitable earth, nor the
greatness of the veneration paid to it on a religious account, been sufficient to preserve it from being destroyed. And thus ended the siege of Jerusalem. 81

Conclusion

It is quite obvious: Our Lord prophesied judgment upon those (the nation) which rejected the Son and killed him. This judgment was referred to as the great tribulation, and it was. Attempts to make this passage say something else is to put other words into our Lord’s mouth. As we have seen, it was in fulfillment of the warning given from chapter 21 on.

God help us to read and understand Scripture as he gave it and as he meant it to be.

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81 Wars, Book VI, Chapter 10, § 1.
Appendix A

On the time & purpose of the Book of the Revelation

I am not dogmatic on these things. I was raised up a Darbyite, but as I searched the Scriptures, I found that Darby’s doctrine just didn’t fit together with the total context of Scripture. I have one study on Matthew 24 alone which covers 76 typed, single spaced pages; an other 30 page study on the Second Advent, and an other lengthy study in Isaiah. Though the following comes from Matthew and Second Advent study, it primarily comes from the Isaiah study. I went verse by verse from 1:1, and the part from Isaiah is from P 24ff. in Isaiah 13. My primary source is Scripture.

The following is gleaned from many hundreds of pages of research, and is a brief overview from many hours of study over the past 12 years.

Introduction:

As an introductory statement, let me mention that prophecy is from the time it is written, NOT FROM THE TIME IT IS READ.

This makes the purpose of The Revelation the same as was Isaiah’s prophecy. It was to see the faithful people of God through the extremely difficult times ahead as their then known world was going to be shaken to its very foundation by the judgment of God against Babylon.

God clearly tells them that He had raised Babylon up for a reason. After Babylon has accomplished God’s purpose, He brought her down.

The understanding of this opens Revelation up tremendously. In Revelation, the Lord Jesus Christ, who had just been put to death maybe 30 years previously, is presented to the church which He founded and left, as the risen Lord and King over all of creation, chapter 1.

He is then presented as the all knowing Lord and King over the Seven basic churches, chapters 2, 3. He knows all about them, and they are close to His heart even in the coming judgment. He tells them to get the sin in the church taken care of because there is this tremendous judgment on its way. He then tells of the great destruction which is about to come upon the center of the known world for both the Hebrews and the new church, the Christians: the destruction of Jerusalem and the old established method of worship.

Remember, Jerusalem was the center of the world, both for the now apostate Jews and for the new church: both obviously expected God’s continued care for the physical center of worship, Jerusalem and the temple.

The Lord, through John, tells the new Christians - and Jews if they would listen - of the quickly approaching judgment against those who put Christ to death, the destruction of the wicked city, which was close at hand, even within a few years. He tells them this for the same reason that Isaiah (and other prophets) tells the faithful of the fall of Babylon, i.e. to show them that God is in total control, that nothing is happening that He is not in charge of, and the result will be the glorious exaltation of the Kingdom of God. (We should not for get that the Lord Jesus told the high priest that Christ personally would return to judge him for his evil deed.)

In all of the terrible ‘trembling’ that is coming, it is God that has put it in the heart of the wicked to accomplish His purpose, Revelation 17:7.

The last chapter of Revelation, 22, points out:

1. the time is very near for this judgment spoken of in Revelation to come.
2. the prophecy was not sealed (v.10). Therefore, it was for the immediate future, not 2000 years away. This is quite unlike the prophecy given to Daniel, which could not be understood until the time was near, 12:4.

3. even after the judgments described in this Book are complete, there are still unjust people in the world, Revelation 22:11, 15.

4. many times throughout this Book, as well as throughout the NT, the nearness of this coming judgment against Babylon is noted, v. 20. This is unlike the prophecies of Isaiah that spoke of the future.

We do not find Isaiah’s warning of the fulfillment of the coming judgment against Babylon being referred to as quickly coming, and the destruction he foretold was only 170 or so years away. How could the Holy Spirit change His definition of quickly from the Old Testament to the New Testament? In light of the TO, quickly cannot be identified as a period of an excess of 2000 years, as modern expositors seek to make it.

An other point about the not sealing of this book. The readers of the period understood that it would very soon come to pass, which it did within probably 10 years. Thus it was unsealed to them. They read and readily understood what the Lord was telling them of in this Book.

The readers of the present, who are 2000 years away, have a difficult time understanding that it was to very soon come to pass upon the ones to whom it was addressed: it is, therefore, sealed to them, which is why there is such a huge amount of speculation from this book, including 3:20 being used as a salvation verse.

The churches mentioned in Revelation chapters 2 & 3, had to be able to read this prophecy and understand it because the great tribulation which Christ spoke of in Matthew 24 was almost upon them. Notice Christ’s comparison in Matthew 24:29 with Isaiah 13:1-10. Christ clearly identifies the times spoken of by HIM SELF of the overthrow of Jerusalem with the overthrow of Babylon as described by both Isaiah and Jeremiah. Those who heard Him knew immediately what He was talking about. They would have known the context of Isaiah and the meaning of these terms. There was no need to say any more, for it spoke so clearly of the whole of the destruction of the Babylon of the Chaldees.

It is interesting that those who insist that this verse in Matthew 24 (and similar verses in the Revelation) must be literal, do not insist that the exact same verse in Isaiah 13:10 [For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.] must be literal. It is this kind of Bible interpretation that leads to the huge amount of false teaching which we have all around us today. If it is figurative in one place, it must be figurative in the other, unless we are clearly told differently by the context.

Notice that Revelation 18:20 clearly speaks of Jerusalem, as does Matthew 23:37. I must admit that most of the reformers considered the Babylon of Revelation the city and church of Rome, but that understanding does not fit into the context of Matthew 23:37. We should not forget the totality of Jerusalem’s destruction: Titus plowed the foundations of the walls with a yoke of oxen. What is seen over there today is several feet above the streets upon which Christ and the apostles walked.

These new Christians and the new church needed the strength to stand in the coming horror. Nothing had ever happened like this before, whereas to-day tribulation against the church has happened many times since the first move against her. In fact, our Lord said that there had been and will be nothing like it in the history of the world, v. 21. With this statement to His hearers, He identified the coming fall of Jerusalem as far worse than even the fall of Babylon of which Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke.

Which brings us back to Revelation 1:3 – the prophecy was unsealed. Any child of God could read it and understand the warnings, threats and promises contained therein. Thus the promised
blessing to all who read it. This promise was an encouragement for the people of God to read this book. They had to prepare for what was soon to take place so they would not be shaken in their faith.

I must say that when Revelation is strained to cover something it does not, it closes its teachings, it seals itself to the one straining over its understanding.

This encouragement was as much needed by the people of God before this terrible time spoken of by our Lord in Matthew 24, if not more so, as was the encouragement needed in Isaiah’s time. Without the explanation of what was soon to take place, the people of God would have been at wits end, thinking that the promises of God had failed.

That promise from the time of Abraham on is for the exaltation of the King and His Kingdom. The Messiah was the personification of this promise—everything, every fulfillment, all hinged upon the Messiah, and He was going to be killed. To the natural mind, Christ’s murder would make the spirit of rebellion more powerful than the King. Remember, even the Apostles lost hope until the risen Lord appeared to them on the seashore. Therefore, He is warning them, both in Matthew 24 and in Revelation, that the resulting judgment and overthrow of the Babylon which put the Son of God to death would be more violent than anything since the foundation of the earth. Therefore, they were not to lose hope in the promise of the exaltation and victory of the Kingdom of God over the spirit of the world which put Him to death.

Isaiah and Jeremiah prepared the people of God for the coming destruction of Babylon of the Chaldees and the glorious Kingdom of God after it.

The prophet John (Revelation) prepared the people of God for the coming destruction of Babylon of apostate Israel and the glorious Kingdom of God after it. (Note the over all parallel between the NT Babylon and the TO Babylon: It was not by mistake that the Lord calls the city which killed the Son Babylon. Any one who read John’s prophecy back then would immediately identify what John was talking about. Remember these 7 churches would have been largely Jewish and would be very familiar with both Isaiah and Jeremiah, and their warning against Babylon.

Though the primary purpose of Revelation was to prepare the new church for the then soon coming destruction of Jerusalem (which is seen from passages such as Revelation 18:20 when compared with Matthew 23:34), let me give 5 points:

1. keep in mind that even though much of the book spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, and was fulfilled when that took place, it is not all fulfilled. It continues to describe the conflict between the forces of the anti-Christian spirit and the King and the Kingdom of God.

It holds for us the same promise as it did for the first church, the promise of the ultimate victory of the King and His Kingdom, no matter how victorious the powers of darkness appear to be.

2. This conflict will continue until Revelation 20:10-15 is fulfilled. Obviously it has not been.

3. Note that the next chapter, ch. 21 starts with And. That does not necessarily mean that this is the next event. All John does here is tell what he saw next, not necessarily the order in which they were to take place. This also is obvious in other places of this Book.

In fact, the context requires this view because there is still sin present in chapter 21, 22. To make it even more difficult is 22:3, no more curse, yet in v. 11 sin is still present.

4. I have not done word studies in this book like I have in several others. Someone mentioned the passage in Revelation 18:10, 17, 19 and the word hour. What will we do with this word in its context. When I looked at it, I knew what I felt it referred to, but I was not sure. I checked several ideas, none of which worked out. Then as a last resort, which I should have done first, I searched the word out, which gives us an interesting fact.

This exact word - hour - is only used 5 other times in the New Testament – John 5:35, 2 Corinthians 7:8, Galatians 2:5, Philemon 15 and 1 Thessalonians 2:17. In every case, except in Revelation-
tion, it is translated as a season. It right fully means ‘a very short time,’ and is not refer ring to a fixed time, e.g., one hour as we would think of it – 60 min.

5. And one more point. Even though I am giving you some things to think and talk about, I do not have the answers. Nor does anyone. I have not done a study in Revelation itself, nor have I found any good books in this area since I had to give up Scofieldism. All I really have is bits and pieces which I have gathered from other passages. The more I study in other areas, the more of the pieces fall together in this Book of Revelation. I am covering some of these bits and pieces here with you.

The Apostles Creed (dated by the Church historian, Schaff, as early as 100 AD.) contains the earliest of Church statements about the Second Advent: it rules out any premillennial advent of Christ which holds for two resurrections;

1. the first consisting of only the righteous (supposed to be taught in Rev.20:4, 5);
2. the second consisting of both the righteous and the wicked at the end of the world, supposedly taught in Mattew25:31-46. This also teaches a space of a thousand years between the two, with Christ reigning bodily on a remodeled earth.

This doctrine was the revival of a Jewish doctrine of the Messianic kingdom, which was formed in the later period of Jewish history by corrupted study of the Old Testament. It flourished the most between A.D. 150 and 250, and its presence in the Church at that time has been exaggerated.

James Hastings, in his Dictionary of Religion (1924), says, “In presenting the NT doctrine of the Kingdom of God we should notice (1) the prevalent expectation of the Messiah at the time Jesus was born. There was no exact uniformity of belief or of expectation. Some enthusiasts looked for a war-like chieftain, gifted with an ability of leadership, to cast off the Roman yoke and restore the kingdom of Israel to some such splendor as it had in the days of Solomon.”

This is also called the Futurist view of the Revelation. This view insisted that all of Revelation from chapter 4 on was yet to be fulfilled. This view was made popular by “Sixteenth-century Roman Catholic commentators [who] countered Protestant attacks upon the papacy as the Antichrist by insisting that none of the events relating to Antichrist had yet occurred.” (Roots of Fundamentalism, pg. 37. Though these Protestants understood that Revelation was primarily speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, they also saw it as a record of the ongoing conflict between the Kingdom of God and the forces of the Antichrist, led by the Pope.)

We saw from the Apostles Creed that this thinking had no part in the early church, and was rejected, even though it was present at the time this creed was put together. I am having to do a study in the early church creeds and none mentioned a two-part coming through 500 A.D.

As we are looking at the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, we also find that they held to only one general resurrection of the dead, not two resurrections. (Ch. 31.)

Revelation 20:4-6 is the chief and nearly the sole support for this doctrine of two bodily resurrections. This is the reason we took the amount of time that we did to develop the time-frame of the Book. This is a key in a proper interpretation of it. The passage in Revelation must be understood in the light of Matthew 25 where the Lord Himself describes what is to take place at His second Advent.

In order for Revelation 20 and Matthew to work together, “resurrection” in Revelation needs to be understood in a spiritual sense, and not a literal sense. Notice John’s use of the phrase “I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. This is the first resurrection.”

Notice what John did not say. He did not say that he saw the bodies of them that were beheaded. If John had meant that these people were here as a result of a literal, bodily resurrection,
he would have said, “I saw the bodies of them that were beheaded.” Surely, if he had meant literal bodies reigning with Christ, he would have said bodies.

(As I have been studying the Book of Isaiah, I have been struck with the consistent misinterpretation of Scriptures by C.I. Scofield. The passages where the context demands a literal understanding, he gives a spiritual meaning. The passages where the context requires a spiritual understanding, he gives a literal. It is strange in deed. I would love to go into these passages some day. His prophetic speculation by this means has turned prophecy and Christianity upside down. To accept his notes on many of these passages, must go contrary to multitudes of commentators. On the one passage alone in Isaiah 14, every commentator and historian that I have went contrary to what he said [6 in all, not counting the early church fathers which I checked].)

John the Revealer, sees the martyrs and other witnesses for Christ as disembodied spirits dwelling in paradise, and describes them not as having been literally raised from the dead at this time. He saw no bodies, yet he saw them as “living and reigning” with Christ for a thousand years. John calls this “living and reigning” the “first resurrection.”

They lived with Christ by their faith in Him, and this spiritual life was a spiritual resurrection from “death in trespasses and sins,” Ephesians 2:1. Paul goes on to tell the believers at Ephesus that having been born again, they have been raised to sit with Christ, Ephesians 2:2-6.

Colossians 3:1-3 Having thusrisen with Christ, they sought those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and as the reward of their great dedication to Him and His word, even to martyrdom (as we saw in Rev. 20), they now reign in the heavenly paradise with Christ in His spiritual reign. They will then return with Him at the end of all things.

During this remarkable period of time from His ascension to His Father and onto His throne, Ephesians 1:20-21, the Scriptures speak of the triumph of the gospel upon earth after a period of apparent defeat. This period of triumph is referred to as the millenium.

Matthew 19:28 was spoken to the Apostles, and must be understood spiritually, because the Saviour speaks of the of the time period as being the regeneration. The cross-reference in my World Bible is 2 Corinthians 5:17.

We could not count the times that the New Testament authors use resurrection to speak of regeneration.

Our basic principle or teaching on the two resurrections for the redeemed, the first spiritual and the second literal, would be our Lord’s words recorded in John 5:25-29.

We cannot say that the spirit of Babylon is now in operation since Jerusalem’s destruction, for obviously it is still much in operation. Revelation 22 points out that the dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters, and the ones who love and make a lie, are still very much in action. But we must admit that the power that was behind the spirit of Babylon (Babylon defined as rebellion in all its shapes and forms, against the Lord and His Christ and the kingdom of God) was most certainly broken. It was broken on the cross of Christ, Colossians 1:13; 2:15. The spirit of Babylon can only operate as the people of God yield to him.

The spirit of Babylon still lives. Thus, the Revelation gives us a history of the continuing conflict between the forces of rebellion and the kingdom of God. This Book holds the same promise to the faithful children of God of the days since the fall of Jerusalem as it did to the ones before the destruction of Jerusalem who it was primarily addressed to. In the midst of this conflict, the Lord assures His faithful people of His sovereignty, His care and provision and the final victory of the kingdom of God over the kingdom of Babylon, no matter how desperate the situation or how strong Babylon appears to be.
As we mentioned, Revelation 22:15 points out that the dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters, and the ones who love and make a lie, are still very much in action.

This is to say that the power which was behind this spirit of Babylon (Babylon defined as rebellion in all its shapes and forms, against the Lord and His Christ and the Kingdom of God) was most certainly broken. It was broken on the cross of Christ, Colossians 1:13; 2:15. The spirit of Babylon can only operate as the people of God yield to him: It is any move that refuses to glorify God as God and especially a united move such as the UN, but not restricted to the UN. It could easily in clude churches and even patriotic movements. No matter how much this anit god and man as god might appear to prevail, and oppress the kingdom of God, it’s fait is sealed, the King will prevail.

A word about 2 Thessalonians 2 – the following is a quote, Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy, J.B. Payne, pg. 565.

"Dispensationalism generally affirms that the restraint must be the Holy Spirit of God, in the church, Scofield Reference Bible, p. 1272, and that its being “taken out of the way” refers to the rapture of the church, prior to the lawlessness of the great tribulation. The Thessalonian context, however, suggests nothing about the Holy Spirit, or why such veiled language should be used if He were the one meant. Though he may in deed so, the Spirit is never mentioned in Scripture with the function of restraining lawlessness; and v. such as John 16:8, Eph. 6:18, or I John 4:4 can not be cited as strictly germaine to such an activity, though c.f. the efforts of J.F. Strombeck. First the Rapture, p. 101. Scripture, moreo ver, gives no hint of the Holy Spirit’s ever being removed from the world—Strombeck’s citation of Gen. 6:3, ibid., p. 102, misinterprets its reference to the termination of life by the flood; cf. G. Vos, Biblical Theology, pp. 61-62. Modern dispensationalists con cede that the Holy Spirit continues in the world after the rapture, con vicing men of sin and judgment, and opening their hearts to the message of salvation. Thus the only thing really removed would be His presence as dwelling in the church; cf. J. D. Pentecost, Things to Come, pp. 262-263,

In other words, 2 Thessalonians is interpreted this way because it must be interpreted this way to make the pretribulation rapture theory work, even though they must make it say things that it does not say.

So, this leaves us with an unresolved passage in 2 Thessalonians 2. What will we do with it?

The best explanation of this chapter that I have come accost and the closest to the context of Scripture is put forth by a brilliant scholar named B.B. Warfield. The was professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology in the theological Seminary of Princeton from 1887-1921. In his book, Biblical and Theological Studies, he has a chapter on the prophecies of St. Paul. I would love to give you his whole line of thinking on this, but I will not. I will provide you with a copy of this chapter if you like.

In discussing the revelation of the Man of Sin of chapter 2, this is what he says:

In a word, this statement only declares of the Man of Sin what was just before declared of the lesser enemies of the Gospel, and what was in I Thess. v.3 seq. declared of all to whom wrath is appointed—that he shall meet with destruction at the Second Coming of the Lord. The revelation of the Man of Sin is not, then, necessarily to be sought at the end of time: we know of it, only that it will succeed the removal of the “restraint,” and precede, by how much we are not told, the coming of the Lord.

After a page of arguments and based on the passage in Daniel 11:36, he then identifies the Man of Sin with the Roman emperor. And not necessarily a single emperor, but the line of emperors which embodied the persecuting power. He reminds us that the emperor of Rome claimed deification as gods and demanded worship as such. I must, however and based upon Revelation 13:18, hold that the man of sin had to be a sin gle man, and he was known by those to whom Paul wrote.

As we study Church history from Christ on, we find that it was only the emperors of Rome who claimed to be divine, gods on earth. They demanded worship as such, and persecuted any and all who refused to give them this worship. The emperor Constantine in 313 A.D. is the one who put an end to this. We have not had this thinking since. What developed from Constantine is the Church of Rome which with its pope, claimed to be God’s representative on earth. The battle then became over who
was the representative of God, the Church of Rome or the state. Both claimed to be equal with God, not God as the Emperors did. (The King James Bible translators considered the office of the Roman Pope that Man of Sin. Are they wrong? See the dedication statement “TO THE MOST HIGH AND MIGHTY PRINCE, JAMES..” Maybe a reason for the many “translations” on the market today is to protect that Man of Sin.)

According to Warfield,

It was Nero, then, the first persecutor of the Church, -and Vespasian the miracle-worker, -and Titus, who introduced his divine self and his idolatrous insignia into the Holy of Holies, perhaps with a directly anti-Christian intent, -and Domitian, -and the whole line of human monsters whom the world was worshipping as gods, on which, as a nerve-cord of evil, these hideous ganglia gathered, -these and such as these it was that Paul had in mind when he penned this hideous description of the son of perdition, every item of which was fulfilled in the terrible blstomy of the emperor of Rome.

Thus, it was the Jewish state that was restraining power. As long as Judaism existed, it protected the developing new, young and weak Church from Rome. Judaism had fought for the right to exist, and as the new church developed, it was mistaken for Judaism by Rome, otherwise it would have been declared an illegal religion. And it was persecuted as an illegal religion as soon as Rome found out that Christianity was not Judaism. This protection was left in place by God until the new Church was strong enough to stand on its own.

Also, during this time, the door of salvation was kept open to the Jews untill the elect of the Jews were brought into the Body of Christ.

If the restrainer of v. 7 must be identified as a person, which Warfield doubts, he identifies him as James of Jerusalem, “God’s chosen instrument in keeping the door of Christianity open for the Jews and by so doing continuing and completing their probation.

2 Thesalonians 2:8, Judaism is removed by Rome, allowing the Wicked one to move against the church in all of his fury. And he does as the Christians refuse to honor the emperors of Rome as gods on earth. The fury lasted for 300 years.

Warfield goes on to identify the apostasy or falling away referred to in v. 3 as the great apostasy of the Jews, which gradually filled up over the years. The wrath of God is hanging over them like a storm cloud ready to burst forth in overwhelming fury. The presence of God departs from the temple, which is now an apostate temple, and turns the city over to the Roman legions in the war with Rome, around 70 A.D.

Thus, with this prophetic passage in Thessalonians, Paul was preparing the Church for the destruction of their protector, Judaism. He tells them why this is going to take place, the Jew’s apostasy is full. He warns them of the new Church’s soon coming expositor to the persecuting sword of the Caesars of Rome who considered them selves gods on earth, and killed all who refused to acknowledge edgethis. We have a record of many such slayings, one of the better known, the martyrdom of Polycarp.

This terrible persecution against any and all who refused to recognize Caesar as divine, lasted until the conversion of Constantine in 313 AD. Paul himself felt the sharp sword of the Divine Caesars. And in Warfield’s words, “all the prophesy had been fulfilled before two decades had passed away.”

Let me close this with Warfield’s conclusion.

“Let us gather up for the close, in brief recapitulation, the events which Paul predicts in these two Epistles. First of all, and most per sistently of all, he predicts the coming of the Lord from heaven unto judgment, with its glorious accompaniments of hosts of angels, the shout, the voice of the archangel and the blast of the trumpet of God that wake the dead. Thus, he predicts the resurrection of Christ’s dead to partake in the glory of His coming. Then, he foretells the results of the judgment—eternal destruction from the face of God for the wicked, and everlasting presence with the Lord for His own. Of the time of the Advent the Apostle professes ignorance; he only knows that it will
come unexpectedly. But he does know that before the apostasy of the Jews must be completed, and the percuting power of the Roman state be revealed. This apostasy and its punishment he sees immediately ready for completion (I Thess. ii. 16). Finally, he mentions having previously foretold the persecutions under which the Thessalonians were already suffering (I Thess. iii. 4)."

I believe there are a few more points that require Revelation’s date to be before 70 AD. Matthew 10:23, Christ promised He would return before all the cities of Israel were covered with the message of the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 16:28* Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. Mt 24:27* For as the lightening cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Mt 24:30* And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Mt 24:48* But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; Mt 25:13* Watch therefore, for ye know nei ther the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. Mt 26:64* Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Mr 13:26* And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. Lu 18:8* I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? Lu 21:27* And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Mat 16:28, Gill, [A Particular Baptist who preached in CHS’s pulpit 100 years before CHS, writing in the early 1700s] till the son of man be come; which is not to be understood of his second coming to judgment, but either of his resurrection from the dead, when he was declared to be the Son of God, and when his glorification began; or of the pouring forth of the spirit at the day of Pentecost, when his kingdom began more visibly to take place, and he was made, or mani fested to be the Lord and Christ; or of his coming to take vengeance on his enemies, that would not have him to rule over them, and the persecutors of his ministers, at the destruction of Jerusalem.

We should note that it was J. N. Darby who first gave this verse, and many others, its new meaning, which, according to Darby, is to be under stood of his second coming in judgment:

“Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel...” This testimony of the disciples in Israel extends even to the turn of the Lord. Interupted by the destruction of Jerusalem, and unfinished, it was to be accomplished. Another testimony has been raised up of God in the person of Paul. (JND CW 24.103.)

“Till the Son of man come.” The testimony may be resumed in Israel, when ever they are again in their land and the requisite spiritual power is sent forth by God. (JND Syn 3.73.)

By placing a dispensation of an unknown length of time [the church age, which, according to JND, was un known to the OT prophets] in verses like this, Darby was able to teach many new and for merly unheard of theories. This idea, and similar ones, was original with JND, and they came to him after he fell from a horse and struck his head, 1827. When he started presenting his new theories, riots broke out in Europe, and the police had to be called in. He pleaded for religious liberty to present his new theories, but he was very much against other’s freedom to con ter him.

He brought ideas such as this to America in 1863, and the American Christians rejected them at first. Darby did not quit, and over the years, his new theories became accepted.

The Baptist, especially, stood against him, but Darby won.

1 He complained of very severe headaches after the accident. Letters, v. 3, p. 297ff.
Appendix B

The Voice of the Fathers

8. Then, in the case of the publican, who excelled the Pharisee in prayer, [we find] that it was not because he worshipped another Father that he received testimony from the Lord that he was justified rather [than the other]; but because with great humility, apart from all boasting and pride, he made confession to the same God. The parable of the two sons also: those who are sent into the vineyard, of whom one in deed opposed his father, but afterwards repented, when repentance profited him nothing; the other, however, promised to go, at once assuming his father, but he did not go (for “every man is a liar;” [Fn. Ps. cxvi. 2.] “to will is present with him, but he finds not means to perform” [Fn. Rom. vii. 18.]), — [this parable, I say], points out one and the same Father. Then, again, this truth was clearly shown forth by the parable of the fig-tree, of which the Lord says, “Behold, now these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, but I find none” (pointing on wards, by the prophets, to His advent, by whom He came from time to time, seeking the fruit of righteousness from them, which He did not find), and also by the circumstance that, for the reason already mentioned, the fig-tree should be hewn down. And, without using a parable, the Lord said to Jerusalem, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest those that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house shall be left unto you desolate.” For that which had been said in the parable, “Behold, for three years I come seeking fruit,” and in clear terms, again, [where He says], “How often would I have gathered thy children together,” shall be [found] a falsehood, if we do not understand His advent, which is [announced] by the prophets — if, in fact, He came to them but once, and then for the first time. But since He who chose the patriarchs and those [who lived under the first covenant], is the same Word of God who did both visit them through the prophetic Spirit, and us also who have been called to gather from all quarters by His advent; in addition to what has been already said, He truly declared, “Many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall recline with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdome shall go into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” If, then, those who do believe in Him through the preaching of His apostles through out the east and west shall recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, par tak ing with them of the [heavenly] banquet, one and the same God is set forth as He who did in deed choose the patriarchs, visited also the people, and called the Gentiles.1