

# Matthew 24 and the Great Tribulation

## Chapter 5: That Day and Hour

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We now come to the section of the Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24:36-25:46) over which there is wide disagreement even by partial (i.e. orthodox preterists). Before analyzing this section of Scripture we will give a brief overview of the different preterist interpretations of this section of the discourse. This overview will be helpful because there are problems that each view must contend with that need to be analyzed before coming to a conclusion.

If we include full or heretical preterism there are essentially four different views of Matthew 24:36ff.

(1) The hyper-preterist believes that everything predicted in the New Testament has already come to pass by A.D. 70. The hyper-preterist, therefore, has absolutely no problem placing the resurrection of the body, the second coming of Christ and the final judgment within the time frame of the destruction of Israel and Matthew 24:36-25:46. Because such a view contradicts so many clear teachings of the Bible and thus violates the analogy of Scripture we must reject the hyper-preterist interpretation. It is heretical nonsense.

(2) The second view is from the orthodox preterist John Gill. Gill argues that in Matthew 24:36-51 Jesus is still discussing the subject of the destruction of Jerusalem and the need to be prepared for temporal judgments. “*But of that day and hour knoweth no man &c.]* Which is to be understood, not of the second coming of Christ, the end of the world, and the last judgment; but of the coming of the son of man, to take vengeance on the Jews, and of their destruction; for the words manifestly regard the date of the several things going before, which only can be applied to that catastrophe, and dreadful desolation.”<sup>1</sup> Gill then argues that it is likely that a change of subject occurs with the parables that begin in Matthew 25:1. He writes,

Ver. 1. *Then shall the kingdom of heaven, &c.]* The Gospel church-state; see the note on ch. xiii. 24. either as it would be a little before the coming of the son of man to take vengeance on the Jews; or as it will be a little before his second coming in judgment: the parable is manifestly connected with, and refers to the preceding chapter, which chiefly treats of Jerusalem’s destruction: but though the Jews were in great security before their utter ruin, yet it does not appear that the Christian church was then in such lukewarm, drowsy, and sleepy condition, as this parable represents; and since, in the latter part of the preceding chapter, there are some hints of Christ’s second and last coming; when the servant found doing his Lord’s will, will be greatly honored, and the wicked, cruel, and licentious servant will be severely punished; and since, at the close of this and the following parable, there is a very lively description given of the last judgment; as also, because it appears elsewhere, that such will be the formal, lukewarm, cold, indifferent, secure, and sleepy state of the church, before the second coming of Christ: it seems right and best to understand this parable, and the following, as having respect to that: and that the design of it is to shew, what will be the case of professors at that time; the difference between nominal and real Christians; how far persons may go in a profession of religion, and

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<sup>1</sup> John Gill, *Exposition of the New Testament*, 1:296.

yet, at last, be shut out of heaven: as also the suddenness of Christ's coming; the necessity of being ready for it; and how watchful the saints should be, that they be not surprised with it.<sup>2</sup>

(3) The third view also says that Matthew 24:36 ("But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only") is not a transitional verse to a completely new subject (the second bodily coming of Christ). These partial preterists argue that the whole Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24:4-25:46) must be connected to the judgment of Israel; but, the parables and the picture of judgment do not refer to a single event in time (the destruction of Jerusalem). They rather refer to a process of judgment that begins with the judgment of Israel and continues until the last day. Milton S. Terry writes,

The ideal of judgment presented in Matt. xxv, 31-46, is therefore no single event, like the destruction of Jerusalem. It is not to be explained literally as a formal assize not to open until the end of human history on earth. It is, rather, a most impressive parabolic picture of the age-long administration of Jesus Christ, from the hour of the single overthrow of Jerusalem until "he shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father" (1 Cor. xv, 24). The anointed King of glory is judge of the living as well as the dead, and it is a grave error to represent "the day of the Lord" or "the day of judgment" as something deferred to the end of time....The Old Testament doctrine is that "the kingdom is Jehovah's, and he is ruler among the nations." (Psalm xxii, 28). "Say ye among the nations, Jehovah reigneth; he shall judge the peoples with equity. He cometh, he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his truth" (Psalm xcvi, 10-13). The day of judgment for any wicked nation, city, or individual is the time when the penal visitation comes; and the judgment of God's saints is manifest in every single event which magnifies goodness and condemns iniquity.<sup>3</sup>

This view is also held by Gary De Mar. He writes, "There is no indication that Matthew 25:31-46 describes a single event. Rather, the passage describes a judgment over time, related to Jesus' dominion as an 'everlasting dominion' (Dan. 7:14). Jesus was 'exalted to the right hand of God' where He rules until all His enemies are made a 'footstool for [His] feet' (Acts 2:33, 35). Paul writes that Jesus 'must reign until He has put all of His enemies under His feet' (1 Cor. 15:25).<sup>4</sup> These authors do not say if these progressive judgments lead to or culminate in the final judgment at the end of history. One thing, however, is clear. They do not regard Matthew 25 as referring to a single judgment event at the end of history.

(4) The fourth view regards Matthew verses 34 to 35 as a concluding statement to the preceding prophecy with verse 36 setting a contrast between different (yet related) subjects. This view is held by the orthodox preterist scholars J. Marcellus Kik and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.. Gentry writes, "One coming is his *coming upon Jerusalem* in temporal judgment to end the old covenant era; the other is his coming at the Second Advent in final judgment to end history (24:36 ff.). These two 'comings' are theologically related while historically distinct."<sup>5</sup> In other words, everything prior to the time text of Matthew 24:34 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. Everything from Matthew 24:36 and following refers to the second bodily coming of Christ which is accompanied by the final judgment.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:301.

<sup>3</sup> Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Apocalyptic* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988 [1898]), 251.

<sup>4</sup> Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 200.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Perilous Times*, 90.

## Analysis of the Different Partial Preterist Views

As we study each of these views, we will note that legitimate exegetical objections can be made against each view. Determining the exact meaning of Matthew 24:36 ff. is not as easy as it first appears.

(1) Since John Gill is the only one that this author is aware of that adheres to his view we will be brief in our analysis of his interpretation. The criticism of Gill’s position that could be made is that his choice of Matthew 25:1 as a transition verse to a different subject has very little to support it. The point of the subject matter in Matthew 25:1 ff. is clearly related in some manner to Matthew 24:37 ff. and the purpose of Matthew 24:43 ff. is virtually identical. Gill’s position, however, does have certain advantages. It avoid the problem of having to deal with (i.e. harmonize) Luke 17:22-37. The passage from Luke needs to be explained by those who choose Matthew 24:36 as the transitional verse (see below). It also avoids the problems associated with turning Matthew 24:36 ff. into a discourse on temporal judgments in history.

(2) The position which says that Matthew 24:36 ff. is *not* a transitional verse to the subject of the second coming is based on a number of arguments. First, the change from the near demonstrative “this” in verse 34 to the far demonstrative “that” in verse 36 would almost certainly not be understood by the disciples as a change of discussion from their own generation to thousands of years in the future. Jesus changes from this to that because he switches from a discussion of something then in existence (“this generation”) to an event that is to occur in the future (“that day”). In other words if we allow the context of verse 36 to determine the meaning of “that day,” the “that day” is the final destruction of the city and temple 37 years in the future.

Second, in Luke 17:22-37 Jesus mixes together prophetic events and warning analogies found on both sides of what many consider to be the transition text, Matthew 24:36. Note the identical prophecies and warnings in the following table.

<b>Matthew 24</b>	<b>Luke 17</b>
“Let him who is on the house top not go down to take anything out of his house” (v. 17).	“In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away” (v. 31).
“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘there!’ do not believe it” (v. 23).	“And they will say to you, ‘Look here!’ or ‘Look there!’ Do not go after them or follow them” (v. 23).
“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (v. 27).	“For as the lightning the flashes out of one part under heaven to the other part under heaven, so also the son of Man will be in His day” (v. 24).
“For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together” (v. 28).	“Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together” (v. 37).
“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all	“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all” (vs. 26-27).

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“Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left” (vs. 40-41).	“Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left” (vs. 35-36).

The problem that Luke 17:22 poses for the orthodox preterist who uses Matthew 24:36 as a dividing line between the destruction of Jerusalem and the second bodily coming is that Luke places statements that are applied to the destruction of Jerusalem by Matthew (e.g., “the lightning that flashes...,” “...the eagles will be gathered together,” “let him not come down to take them away”) together with the identical warnings regarding what these interpreters say applies to the second bodily coming (e.g., “as it was in the days of Noah...,” “Two women will be grinding at the mill...”). In other words, what Matthew is said to divide, Luke organizes as a single eschatological event. Further, Luke even uses the expression “that day” in conjunction with the same terminology that Matthew applies to the destruction of Jerusalem. These observations leave those expositors who divide the discourse at Matthew 24:36 in an exegetically awkward position. They must ignore one of the following positions. First, Luke 17:23-37 applies to the second bodily coming of Christ even though Luke uses some of the same terminology that Matthew uses to describe the destruction of Jerusalem. Although there is prophetic terminology that can be applied to different judgment events (e.g., the day, the day of the Lord, the day of visitation, etc.), it is not likely that Luke (who probably had the Gospel of Matthew in hand when he wrote his gospel) would use such terminology in a different manner. Second, Luke 17:23-37 applies to the second bodily coming and therefore some of the material in Matthew 24:4-34 may indeed apply to the second bodily coming of Christ. The excellent scholar J. Marcellus Kik (an early exponent of the partial preterist position) does apply Matthew 24:27 (“as the lightning flashes”) to the second bodily coming of Christ. Once, however, one starts applying portions of the discourse prior to verse 34 to the distant future then one cannot consistently use the time-text as a guide to the meaning of other portions of the discourse prior to verse 34.

Third, the parallel account in Luke (like Matthew) changes subjects after the time text to the subject of watchfulness, then also uses terminology tied to the part of the Olivet Discourse that everyone acknowledges refers to the destruction of Israel. “Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Lk. 21:32-36). Note: they are to watch and pray to escape “all these things.” The phrase “all these things” harkens back to the “all these things” of Matthew 23:36; 24:2, 3, 33-34. The disciples would be thinking of their original question: “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled” (Mk. 13:4)? The phrase “all these things that will come to pass” in Luke 21:36 (given after the supposed dividing line between the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming) is virtually identical to the “all these things will be fulfilled” of Mark 13:4 (cf. 27:7; Mt. 24:3).

Fourth, Matthew 16:21 (which is virtually identical to Matthew 25:31) very clearly connects the coming of Christ to a judgment of men *that is to occur in the contemporary generation*. Note the similarities of the two passages:

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Mt.16:27-28).

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory (Mt. 25:31).

In both passages the Son of Man comes in His glory, with His angels followed by a judgment of men. Matthew 25:32 makes it clear that this is a judgment upon every nation.

With this interpretation the judgment of Matthew 25:31 ff. must be understood not as a single event that occurs at the end of history, but describes the progressive result of Christ's enthronement at the right hand of God. (This interpretation does not necessarily mean or imply that there is not a final, public judgment at the end of history.) The exaltation of Jesus to the throne of His glory results in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Ac. 2:2 ff.) by which our Lord conquers the nations by the gospel. This exaltation also places the Messiah in the position of ruling the nations with the rod of His power (Ps. 2; 110). The destruction of Israel is simply the beginning of this long process of judgment that will occur throughout the millennium until "He puts an end to all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:24-25).

(3) As we turn our attention to the view that Matthew 24:36 is a transitional verse to the subject of the second bodily coming of Christ we will consider some of the common objections to the view presented above. There are a number of reasons why competent partial preterist scholars regard verse 36 as a dividing line between the two related yet different subjects.

First, verses 34 to 35 have all the characteristics of a concluding statement to the preceding prophecy. Further, the grammatical construction of verse 36 definitely indicates a new subject. The "but of" or "but concerning" phrase is used when a speaker or writer wants to change the subject.<sup>6</sup> (Those who do not regard verse 36 as a transition to the second bodily coming could argue that while there is no question that a transition occurs in verse 36; it is not a transition to the second bodily coming, but to the necessity of being ready or prepared for the coming discussed in the previous section.)

Second, in verse 36 a change of subject matter is indicated by the use of the far demonstrative-that (as in "that day"). From 23:36 to 24:34 Jesus discusses events that will happen to "this generation" (near demonstrative). However, in verse 36 He changes to a distant event with the use of the far demonstrative—"that day." This argument is countered by the fact that the far demonstrative ("that") can be used of events only a few years away. Our Lord gave the Olivet Discourse 37 years before the destruction of Jerusalem, which is more than enough time to justify the use of "that day."

Third, the best argument for a change to the second bodily coming (in v. 36 ff.) is the change of subject matter from an event that is very predictable to an event that is totally unpredictable. Throughout the Olivet Discourse up to verse 34 Christ goes out of His way to

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Gentry references Ardent-Gingrich-Danker, *Lexicon* (p. 645) and R. T. France, *Matthew* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 1985), 347.

make sure the disciples know when Jerusalem will be destroyed. He gave preliminary signs (Mt. 24:5-8), the beginning of sorrows. Then He spoke of persecutions (v. 9), betrayal (v. 10), false prophets (v. 11), lawlessness (v. 12), and the spread of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire (v. 14). Then He gave a very specific sign, “the abomination of desolation” (v. 15). When the disciples see this specific sign they are to immediately flee to the mountains to avoid destruction. That the disciples can know the close proximity of the Lord’s coming in judgment is proved by Jesus’ final warning, “when you see all these things know that it is near-at the doors” (v. 33)! Obviously Christ knew the close proximity of His coming in judgment and He prophetically gives this crucial information to the disciples.

The emphasis of Matthew 24:36 ff. is on the fact that no one knows the time of our Lord’s coming. The angels and even the Son do not know the critical moment of the Lord’s arrival (Mt. 24:36; Mk. 13:22). Indeed, the central proposition in the section after verse 36 is, “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Mt. 24:42; 25:13). Christians are to watch, stay alert, and remain awake because of the uncertainty of the time of the coming. This central proposition is supported by five parables (the porter [Mk. 13:35-37], the master of the house, the faithful servant and the evil servants, the ten virgins, the talents) and a description of the judgment that contains parabolic elements (e.g., the use of sheep and goats). Throughout the parables there is an emphasis upon the fact that Jesus’ coming will be a total surprise. People are going to be caught off guard and many will not be prepared to meet the Lord. Men “did not know until the flood came and took them away” (v. 39). The master did not know “what hour the thief would come” (v. 43); “the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (v. 44). “The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of” (v. 58). The bridegroom comes at an unexpected time and the unprepared virgins are shut out of the wedding (25:10). The parable of the porter adds this warning, “Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming-in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning-lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping” (Mk. 13:35-36).

All of this raises a crucial question. Can one apply the fact that the day of Jesus’ coming is totally unexpected to the coming in judgment upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70? It appears to be very difficult if not impossible to apply these passages to the destruction of Jerusalem because Christ gave the disciples a number of signs (i.e. a head-up alert) so that they could discern the coming judgment and avoid the devastation by fleeing to the mountains. This point has been used by a number of commentators and scholars to argue for a change of subject in verse 36. Note the following comments. Matthew Henry writes, “‘*Verily, I say unto you. You may take my word for it, these things are at the door.*’ Christ often speaks of the nearness of that desolation, the more to affect people, and quicken them for it...But as to *that day and hour* which will put a period of time, *that knoweth* no man, v. 36. Therefore take heed of confounding the two, as they did.”<sup>7</sup> Spurgeon writes, “There is a manifest change in our Lord’s words here, which clearly indicates that they refer to his last coming to judgment.”<sup>8</sup> Lane writes, “In order to understand the relationship of this affirmation to the assurance given in verse 30 that the events preliminary to the destruction of the Temple will occur within the experience of that generation, it is necessary to give full force to the adversative particle in verse 32: ‘I say unto you solemnly, this generation shall not pass away...As for you that day and that hour, *on the contrary*, no one knows...’ While the parable of the fig tree illustrates the possibility of observing the proximity of the first event,

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 5:361.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 353.

another comparison is developed in connection with verse 32 that underscores the impossibility of knowing the moment of the Lord's return. Verses 30 and 32 concern two distinct events (the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the Day of the Lord, respectively)."<sup>9</sup>

Those who believe that the destruction of Jerusalem theme continues through chapter 25 have a number of arguments that they use to attempt to circumvent this objection. One argument is that the term "hour" is used figuratively to describe the "season" of His coming. In other words we should not view the term hour literally but should understand it as speaking to the general overall calamity that came upon the Jews. The judgment event as a whole would come as a total surprise, therefore Christians must watch and remain alert. Adam Clark writes, "[The Greek word] *Ora* is translated *season* by many eminent critics, and is used in this sense by both sacred and profane authors. As the day was not known in which Jerusalem should be invested by the Romans, therefore the Lord advised his disciples to pray that it might not be on a *Sabbath*; and as the *season* was not known, therefore they were to pray that it might not be in *winter*; verse 20."<sup>10</sup>

While this argument at first glance appears solid it does have serious problems. First, if one interprets *hora* as season instead of day and then argues for a general period of time as Clark has done, then the Olivet Discourse has two separate comings of Christ. There would be a general coming beginning with the abomination of desolation (Mt. 24:15-22) and the specific coming that Jesus says will occur, "Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days" (Mt. 24:29). The disciples will "know that it is near-at the doors" when they "see all these things" (Mt. 24:33). The phrase "all these things" obviously includes the abomination of desolation. Matthew 24:20 applies to the flight connected to the abomination of desolation, not to the day and hour of Jesus' coming. Second, while the Greek word *hora* can mean a season in certain contexts (e.g., Jn. 5:35; 2 Cor. 7:8) it almost certainly does not mean season in the parabolic contexts of Matthew 24:37 ff. The emphasis of the parables is on the specific time, not a general season. Indeed, the word *hora* can refer to a definite point of time (e.g., "the hour is at hand," Mt. 26:45; lit., "at the hour of incense," Lk. 1:10; "that hour Jesus rejoiced," Lk. 10:21; "at supper time" or literally "at the hour of supper," Lk. 14:17; etc). If one substitutes the word season for hour in the in the parables of Matthew 24:27 ff. one will see the absurdity of the "season" interpretation. Lastly, the "season" interpretation is conclusively disproved by the parallel account in Mark where evening, midnight, the crow of the rooster and morning are specified (13:35b). In this passage Mark refers to the four night watches, which was the Roman method of reckoning time. The modern equivalent to Mark's statement would be, "Watch, therefore, for you do not know when the master is coming-at 9:00pm, midnight (12:00am), 6:00am, or 9:00am" (13:35). It is rather obvious that the term hour (*hora*) is used in the parables to denote the exact time of the Lord's arrival.

The best method for dealing with the argument that the coming cannot be accompanied by many signs and still be a total surprise is the one which asserts that although it is true that our Lord gave very specific signs to the disciples for the destruction of Jerusalem, the exact day is still not specified. Therefore, even though the disciples have a general idea as to when Jesus will come, they need to be extra alert in order to be prepared for the exact time of His arrival.

Although one can understand how such an argument could apply to the traditional understanding of the second bodily coming of Christ, it does not work well with the destruction of Jerusalem. This scenario does not make any sense. According to this view the disciples have already observed the signs of Jesus' coming. They have witnessed the abomination of desolation

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<sup>9</sup> William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 481-482.

<sup>10</sup> Adam Clark, *Clark's Commentary: Matthew-Revelation* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, n.d. [1824]), 234.

and have fled to the mountainous area of Pella to avoid destruction. Yes, but they do not know the exact time when Jerusalem and the Temple will be destroyed. Therefore, they need to watch and be on the alert constantly for Jesus can come and demolish the city and sanctuary at any moment. This scenario raises the obvious question. If they have already fled to safety in the mountains (which according to Josephus is exactly what happened) and are no longer in any danger of being harmed by the Roman armies encompassing Jerusalem, then why do they need to watch? They are already safe. The important event that the disciples must watch for in Matthew 24:4-34 is not the day or hour the city and temple went up in flames but the abomination of desolation (Mt. 24:15).

Another argument deals with the lack of signs by saying that with Matthew 24:36 ff. “The topic changes from signs leading up to the temple’s destruction to watchfulness and expectation during the interim.”<sup>11</sup> If by “interim” one means the period of time between the Olivet Discourse and the appearance of signs, then one has adopted a position that contradicts the explicit teaching of the parables (Mt. 24:36 ff.) where believers are told not to look for signs but for Christ’s arrival. Further, if the disciples are just being told that they must be ready for the calamity that is to come upon the land of Israel, then the repeated emphasis on the day and hour (i.e. the exact time of Jesus’ coming) seems totally out of place. If by “interim” one means the period of time between the appearance of the signs and the exact day or time of Jesus’ coming, then one still must answer the question: Why is watchfulness for the exact time of our Lord’s arrival (i.e. the destruction of the city and temple) a critical issue when all the believers are already safe and secure in the mountains? While it is obvious why such watchfulness is needed for the second bodily coming of Christ (which is accompanied by the general resurrection and last judgment), there is no need for Christians in Pella to be concerned about the exact time the temple is to go up in flames. Further, only Christ’s enemies, the unbelieving Jews who were guilty of persecuting Christians were slaughtered by the Romans on the day the city and sanctuary were destroyed. For Christians, life went on while their Jewish persecutors were crushed and subdued.

Interpreters who argue for a change at verse 36 often point out that the analogy between life in the days of Noah and life in Israel prior to the day of Jesus’ coming does not work.<sup>12</sup> The comparison between the flood event and the coming of Christ in Matthew 24:31 ff. is twofold. (1) The people are completely taken by surprise by the flood. They “did not know until the flood came and took them all away” (Mt. 24:39). (2) The people in Noah’s day were living a normal

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<sup>11</sup> Gary De Mar, *Last Days Madness*, 194.

<sup>12</sup> Another common argument for a transition at verse 36 is that the parables indicate a long delay in Christ’s coming which is inconsistent with the teaching of the parable of the fig tree (Mt. 24:32-33) as well as the statement “this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place” (Mt. 24:34). “But if that evil servant says in his head, ‘My master is delaying his coming’” (24:48). “But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept” (Mt. 25:5). “After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them” (Mt. 25:19). Expositors who connect all of chapter 24 and 25 to the destruction of Jerusalem argue that the thirty-seven years between the time that Jesus uttered these words and the Jewish war are more than adequate to account for the terminology of a long delay. They also will appeal to 2 Peter 3:4 which they believe indicates that within one generation scoffers will be asking, “Where is the promise of His coming?” Those who believe in a long delay will counter by arguing that all of the parables presuppose the absence of signs. In other words, how could that first generation of Christians say that the Lord was delaying His coming when there were preliminary signs as well as a very specific sign of the coming in judgment. Also, the view that this long delay applies to the 37 years contradicts Jesus’ statement that the disciples would see the signs and know the event was at the door. Further, the parables do not speak of Jesus’ coming to judge Jerusalem (a city of apostate unbelievers), but a coming to judge and evaluate faithful believers and hypocritical professors of Christianity at an unknown time.

lifestyle. They were “eating and drinking” and “marrying and giving in marriage” (Mt. 24:38). These two points are intimately related. Because people are completely unaware that the flood event is almost upon them, they live life as though nothing unusual is going to happen. In other words, there were no signs preceding the flood and thus the people followed their ordinary pursuits until the day of the flood swept them away.

If we take the term “day” literally, does this analogy apply to the time period immediately prior to the destruction of Jerusalem? Were the inhabitants of Jerusalem taken by surprise by the destruction of their city by the Romans? No. Jerusalem was under siege for months. The Roman armies had destroyed Jewish cities before they had even reached Jerusalem. One could say that the beginning of the war was a surprise. But the outcome was not. Further, (as noted) the destruction of the city and sanctuary was preceded by many signs. Thus, it was a very predictable event. Also, were the people of Judea and Jerusalem living normal lives until the day the temple went up in flames? No. The Jewish war lasted 3½ years. Their lives had been turned upside down by warfare, famine, disease, death and economic chaos. Trade had been interrupted. Crops had been confiscated and destroyed. Cities had been laid waste. Many thousands of people had already been slaughtered or led away as captives to a life of slavery. While the circumstances between the second bodily coming and the day the flood swept the people away make sense, the comparison with the destruction of Jerusalem has its problems.

Although the objections (given above) to the idea that the parables after Matthew 24:36 deal with the destruction of Jerusalem are solid there is a way to undercut these arguments. One can appeal to Luke 17:23-37 where the comparison to the days of Noah is placed in a section that probably deals solely with the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk. 17:27). Further, one could argue that the term “day” does not always refer to a literal twenty-four hour period but can refer to a general period of time. In other words it does not always describe events that are to occur on a single day, but is used in a prophetic way to denote the judgment event as a whole. In the opinion of this author, this is the only reasonable explanation of how there could be many signs indicating the proximate time of the coming coupled with the idea that the day is a total surprise and an event that occurs in the midst of normal everyday life. That the term "day" may not always be used in the same manner is indicated by the apparent contradiction between Luke 17 and Matthew 24. Note that Luke applies statements that Matthew applies to the abomination of desolation to the very day Christ comes.

<p>Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away (Lk. 17:30-31).</p>	<p>Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation... Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house (Mt. 24:15-17).</p>
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In Matthew 24 the escape that occurs when the abomination of desolation is observed is clearly not coterminous with the coming of the Son of Man. This discrepancy can only be explained in three different ways:

a) The phrase “that day” is used loosely to describe a period of time or any important event associated with the judgment that came upon Israel. If one adopts this view (and this [from a logical standpoint] is the only viable option for the full preterist) then one must abandon the hyper-preterist understanding of Matthew 24 which views the destruction of Jerusalem as the time when the final judgment, the second bodily coming and general resurrection took place. The

reason this interpretation destroys hyper-preterism is that it can only be adopted if one considers the coming of the Son of Man in Matthew 24 to be figurative of a coming in judgment. If one views the coming of Christ in the Olivet Discourse to be literal then there are two separate comings of Christ in Luke 17 and Matthew 24. According to the hyper-preterist this would also mean two separate judgments and resurrections.

b) Another possible option is that believers are to flee immediately the day Christ returns. This view must be rejected because it explicitly contradicts Christ's warning regarding the abomination of desolation. He teaches that if believers do not immediately flee when the abomination of desolation occurs then it will be too late to be saved from utter destruction. Indeed, Josephus has recorded that Jesus' words were precisely true. Those who did not escape when they could were trapped and suffered the consequences.

c) A third possibility is that Luke 17:23-37 has nothing to do with the destruction of Jerusalem, but applies solely to the second bodily coming of Christ. This is actually the view of many commentators (e.g., Plummer, Alford, Lenski, Manson, Hendriksen, Stein, Marshall). Although this view would make it easy to divide the Olivet Discourse at verse 36, it is unlikely that so much material from Matthew 24 would be used by Luke with absolutely no connection to the destruction of Israel.

Thus far we have seen that there are only two viable options regarding the parables after Matthew 24:36. One can argue (based on the "discrepancy" between Lk. 17:30-31 and Mt. 24:15-17 as well as the fact that the Lukan discourse [i.e. in chapter 17] mentions nothing about the destruction of Jerusalem or Roman armies) that Luke 17 only refers to the end of the world (i.e. Jesus' second visible bodily coming, Ac. 1:9-11). If true, Matthew 24:36 would make a logical dividing line to a new (yet related) subject. The other view says that Luke 17:23 ff. does apply to the destruction of Jerusalem and therefore at least some of the material after Matthew 24:36 must be connected to the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, given the emphasis on the surprise or unexpectedness associated with the coming and the portrait painted of normal living, one must not over literalize "day," but consider the warning as applying to the judgment event as a whole (i.e. an eschatological "day of the Lord").

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[HOME PAGE](#)