

The Coming of the Lord

Purpose: to analyze Matthew 24-25 (and related passages) and passages talking about the imminent coming of the Lord especially in regard to the hyperpreterist position on these texts

- I. Key point
 - A. The methodology of the hyperpreterists that I have read is wrong
 - B. They often use parallels between passages to show identity of subject
 1. Reminds me of an immature Bible student who overuses concordance and center column references and assumes that every text that contains the same word or phrase is discussing the same thing
 2. There is no control in this approach. There are many, many parallels in passages that clearly deal with quite different subjects
 - C. Consider my new research on the identity of Babylon, the harlot in Revelation 17-18
 1. Babylon is actually the city of Tyre. I can prove it by the amazing parallels between what John says about Babylon in Revelation and statements about Tyre throughout the prophets. If this is not talking about the same city then someone needs to prove it!
 2. Here are details about Babylon in Revelation that are spoken about Tyre
 - a. A harlot: Isaiah 23:16,18
 - b. Sits on the waters: Ezekiel 27:4
 - c. Clothed with jewels: Ezekiel 28:13
 - d. Focus on gold: Zechariah 9:3
 - e. Many nations come against (see Revelation 17:16): Ezekiel 26:3
 - f. Many iniquities: Ezekiel 28:18
 - g. Arrogant "I am" statements: Ezekiel 27:3; 28:1
 - h. Falls in one day: Ezekiel 26:18
 - i. Burned up by fire: Ezekiel 28:18; Amos 1:10; Zechariah 9:4
 - j. Enriched kings: Ezekiel 27:33
 - k. Fall lamented by those around her: Ezekiel 26:15-18
 - l. Kings are afraid at her fall: Ezekiel 26:18; 27:35
 - m. Linked with merchants, traders: Isaiah 23:8
 - n. Elaborate descriptions of merchandise, including specifically wood, silver, bronze, horses, ivory, wheat, oil, iron, spices, precious stones, sheep, lives of men(!): Isaiah 23:3; Ezekiel 26:12; 27:12-25
 - o. Wears purple: Ezekiel 27:16
 - p. Sailors appalled: Ezekiel 26:16; 27:29-31
 - q. "Who is like": Ezekiel 27:32
 - r. Ships wail: Isaiah 23:1
 - s. Cast down: Ezekiel 28:17

- t. Never found again: Ezekiel 26:21
- u. Becomes silent: Ezekiel 27:32
- 3. If parallels prove identity, this nails the identity of Babylon in Revelation! And my parallels are much closer than many of the ones offered in what I have read from the hyperpreterists

II. A study of Matthew 24-25

A. Introduction

1. We will also consider some points from parallel passages Mark 13 and Luke 21
2. In context of Matthew this is part of the fifth major sermon in the book (5-7, 10, 13, 18) that all end with the same basic wording, showing that Matthew intended them to be seen as parallel
3. Jesus concluding the woe part of the sermon in chapter 23 with a scathing rebuke of the people of Israel
 - a. They had constantly killed righteous men God had sent to them
 - b. God would make this generation pay for the blood of the innocent men who had been murdered
 - c. Because they refused Jesus when He tried to bless them their house (nation and temple) was left empty. That means God was moving out (consider Ezekiel 8-11)
4. The disciples point out the temple buildings and Jesus says that they would be totally destroyed 24:1-2
 - a. Temple contained impressive buildings
 - (1) 1/6th of the land area of Jerusalem
 - (2) 35 acre enclosure
 - (3) Size of stones
 - (a) Josephus says up to 60 feet in length
 - (b) We have found stones as large as 42 ft long, 11 ft high and 14 ft deep, weighing over a million pounds
 - b. As splendid as the structure is, its time is over
 - (1) In place of the disciples' tourist awe, Jesus substituted stark realism
 - (2) He saw through the exterior to its desecration and doom
 - (3) The reversal of Haggai 2:15
 - c. The context in Mark and Luke underscores another point
 - (1) Jesus condemns the scribes for devouring widows' houses (Mk 12:40; Lk 20:47)
 - (2) Then he gives an example with the poor widow who they had extorted the last coin from and left her with nothing to live on
 - (3) Then he shows that it was all a waste anyway. That the temple adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts as it was would be

totally demolished. What a shame that the widow was exploited for such a useless enterprise

5. The disciples ask when and what sign 3
 - a. Typical for Jesus to make a striking or puzzling public pronouncement and the disciples to ask Jesus about it privately (see Mark 4:3-10; 7:15-17; 9:28; 10:9-10)
 - b. I am not sure what the disciples had in mind with their questions. I don't know that they made a distinction between the destruction of the temple and Jesus' coming and the end of the age. But, Jesus makes a distinction in His response, regardless of how inadequate their ideas may have been
- B. The sign is not 4-14
 1. Various upsetting things that would happen in the world 4-8
 - a. Deceivers 4-5
 - (1) So much danger in false hopes of impostors
 - (2) They must keep their heads when all around them are panicking or falling prey to opportunists
 - (3) They must not be deceived by appearances, premature excitement
 - (4) We must steel ourselves to see through these glory hounds and not be caught up in the excited delusions of the crowd
 - (5) See also 11, 23-25
 - b. Wars and natural disasters 6-8
 - (1) Don't be terrified; these things are controlled by God (Lk 21:9: these things must take place first)
 - (2) Earthquakes struck Phrygia in 61 and leveled Pompey in 63
 - (3) He emphasizes that the end is not yet; many things that did not signal the demise of the city
 - (4) History is full of troubled periods; don't get things out of perspective or be panicked into imagining that the end is imminent
 - (5) There may still be an extended period of labor before the end (of the temple)
 - (6) So there would be three things that would happen that would not signal even the end of Jerusalem: false claims to be the Messiah, social chaos, physical signs in the universe. Ironically, so many today take these as the signs of the end of the world
 2. Persecution and discouragement during this period 9-13
 - a. Shift from preceding calamities
 - (1) In 6-8 they were things affecting all people, but these things specifically target Christians
 - (2) We move away from world affairs to the more specific experience of the church in those troubled times

- (3) From the danger of being misled to the danger of succumbing to persecution
 - b. They must prepare for serious opposition (in Luke betrayed by family; hated by all)
 - c. Various bad reactions
 - (1) Some will apostatize completely and betray their fellow disciples
 - (a) Previous discourse (ch 18) had talked about the mutual love and concern that should be distinguishing mark of true disciples
 - (b) Now has turned to hatred and repudiation
 - (2) Some will succumb to false teaching that destroys their faith
 - (3) Some will cool off and become useless for the kingdom
 - d. Mark and Luke speak of this as an opportunity to testify about Christ
 - (1) Citizens of US have the right to remain silent; disciples do not have that right
 - (2) They do not need a well-prepared defense script but a readiness to preach the exalted Christ
 - e. Must endure to the end
 - (1) They are to do the one thing they can do: endure, be steadfast
 - (2) Deliberate, sustained faithfulness to kingdom demands
 - (3) Disciple need not ponder the chronology as much as the ethical responsibility they have to persevere in discipleship and mission
 - (4) Saved (cf., those who fall away in 10-12); spiritual security of those who stand firm in their discipleship
 - f. Gospel preached to all the nations
 - (1) Despite persecution the worldwide mission must go on
 - (2) Church response to persecution: declare Jesus' message
 - (3) Consider passages like Colossians 1:23; Romans 10:18; 16:26
- C. The sign is 15-31
- 1. Flee the tribulation 15-22
 - a. Exhortation to life 15-16
 - (1) Some terrible outrage against the temple's holiness
 - (a) The zealots did horrible things in the temple
 - (b) Something that one would need to discern at the time
 - (2) Is Jesus encouraging the audience to read Daniel with understanding, or Matthew editorially encouraging his own readers to ponder the matter? Probably the first
 - (3) Same as when Jerusalem is surrounded by armies. Perhaps the siege would be lifted a time or two
 - (4) Flee to the mountains

- (a) Counter-intuitive; natural tendency would be to flee within city walls for refuge in time of war
 - (b) Clearly not referring to second coming when fleeing is useless
 - b. Urgency of fleeing 17-18
 - (1) Going back into house could cost precious time and result in getting luggage that could slow escape
 - (2) As essential as cloak was, running at news of destruction was even more urgent
 - (3) Possibly standard language for emergency (Luke 17:31)
 - c. Difficulty of the flight 19-20
 - (1) Small children would make more difficult
 - (2) Winter would be harder with the cold and rains and swollen streams that are tougher to ford
 - d. Horror of the tribulation 21
 - (1) Again confirming that this is not the end of the world
 - (2) This is God's wrath (Luke 21:22)
 - e. Shortening of the tribulation 22
 - (1) Lasted only five months because of God's concern for His people
 - (2) As often, presence of God's people blesses even the wicked
- 2. False Christs 23-27
 - a. When unprecedented tribulation occurs, deceivers will capitalize on the situation
 - (1) Catastrophic situation is fertile breeding ground for messianic claimants
 - (2) Times of crisis are opportunities for would-be messiahs who offer to meet the need of the hour
 - b. Secret appearances of the Christ; compare J.W. idea of the secret invisible return of Christ in 1914
 - c. Eagerly display signs and wonders
 - (1) Jesus was reluctant to show signs and wonders (12:39; 16:1-4; 27:40), was quiet (12:15-21), asked silence about his miracles (8:4; 9:30)
 - (2) His false imitators work wonders for public display to attract attention, use signs as billboards to draw audience
 - (3) Trying to deceive the elect
 - (a) God's people have the spiritual resources to resist
 - (b) Plus they are forewarned
 - (c) Optimism that their faith will stand the test

- d. Don't believe them when they say that the Messiah was in some remote area meeting secretly with His people
 - e. The true return of the Son of Man will need no human herald and will rest on no doubtful claim
 - (1) The real coming of the Lord will be totally unlike the claims of the impostors during the siege
 - (2) Will be like a flash of lightning across the whole sky
 - (3) Consider passages like 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
3. Where the corpse is the vultures will gather 28
- a. Goes back to the main thought of the tribulation of those days
 - b. The nation is dead (23:38), the vultures will gather to devour it (Roman armies are coming to destroy Jerusalem)
4. Cataclysmic judgment language 29-31
- a. Immediately after tribulation mentioned in 19 and 22
 - b. Language about cosmic collapse is used by OT prophets to symbolize God's acts of judgment in history, especially catastrophic political reversals
 - (1) In O.T. does not mean physical dissolution of the universe
 - (2) We should read with background of OT scripture and not tradition of religious explanations
 - (3) Sun and moon darkened: Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7-8
 - (4) Stars falling: Daniel 8:10; Isaiah 14:13-15
 - (5) Shaking of the heavens: Isaiah 13:13; 34:4-5; Haggai 2:21
 - (6) Coming of the Son of man in the clouds: Isaiah 19:1 (see also Revelation 2:16)
 - (7) Gathering of the elect: Hosea 11:10-11; Isaiah 11:11-12; 27:13; 43:5-6; 56:8; Psalm 107:3
 - (8) Roaring of the sea and the waves: Isaiah 17:12-14
 - c. These are signs of the Son of Man reigning in heaven; God is vindicating Jesus
 - d. People of Jerusalem will recognize what they have done, but it will be too late to avert the consequences of having rejected Him
 - e. When Israel's power is removed, Christ's vindicated authority brings men to Him
 - f. Note the O.T. background of the language
- D. The when question 32-35
- 1. The time you can see by the signs
 - a. Analogy of fig tree: when it leafs out it is a sign that summer is near
 - b. By the same token the abomination of desolation shows that Jerusalem's destruction is imminent

2. This will be a demonstration of
 - a. Their redemption drawing near, their rescue (Luke 21:28)
 - b. Jesus' presence and a display of His kingship, His royal power (Luke 21:32)
 3. Before this generation passes away
 - a. The word generation means those contemporary with Jesus
 - (1) Especially with the word this
 - (2) Especially in the context of the end of Matthew 23
 - (3) Consider the use of the word: Matt 1:17; 11:16; 12:39-45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; Luke 1:48,50; 7:31; 9:41; 11:29-32; 50-51; 16:8; 17:25; Acts 2:40
 - b. False theories: usually reinterpretation of 'this generation', occasionally of 'all these things'
 - (1) Jewish race
 - (2) Wicked people
 - (3) The generation at the end
 - (4) Artificial explanations
 - (5) Of course this generation would not pass away if by definition it could extend out indefinitely!
 - (6) Within that generation, Jerusalem's destruction would constitute compelling proof of God's presence in His sovereign reign
 4. Jesus' words are solid and abiding in all this sea of change
 - a. Jesus' words can be totally trusted
 - b. His word is more permanent than the universe: see Isa 51:6; Jer 31:35-36; 33:20-21
- E. The end of the world/second coming of Jesus 24:36-25:46
1. Argument for a major break here
 - a. Unknown time vs. time of that generation
 - (1) Certainty of Jesus' prediction in vs 34
 - (2) Now Jesus is ignorant of when it will happen
 - (3) Really strains us to imagine that 33-34 and 36 are talking about the same thing. If they are, Jesus contradicted himself
 - (4) There is a huge dodge that is attempted: Jesus knew basically when, but He didn't know exact day or hour. Perhaps He knew the month and the year. Would be humorous, but people mean that argument to be taken seriously!
 - (a) Consider contrast between those days and that day and hour: 19, 22, 29 vs 42, 44, 50; 25:13
 - (b) That day should be interpreted as day of judgment: 10:15; 11:22,24; 12:36; now consider 7:22; Luke 10:12; 2 Timothy 1:12,18; 4:8; 1 Corinthians 3:13; consider Matthew 10:19

- b. Period with no signs vs. the signs were given just like the leafing of the fig tree that tells that summer is near
 - c. Calm period vs. cataclysmic period: see Luke 21:25-27
 - (1) Before, marching armies, masses of refugees, falling stars and veering planets
 - (2) Now, weddings, plowing, milling, sleeping
 - d. Be on the alert vs. flee to the mountains
2. Major objection: Luke 17 because it uses language from both sides of the break in Matthew 24
- a. The answer is that similar language does not refer to identical themes, especially in different texts. By that token why not take the figures in 29-31 and say that they must refer to judgment on Babylon, Egypt or whatever. We are dealing with the proverbial language of judgment that applies to all judgments to some extent
 - b. Especially Jesus uses proverbial kind of statements in very different contexts. I will give some examples with an idea of what they mean. I have not restudied the meanings of these in many years, so perhaps with more study we would come to a different conclusion about the meaning of one or another. But the point is that identical proverbial statements mean different things in different contexts
 - (1) Lamp not put under a bushel
 - (a) Matthew 5:15: let your influence be seen
 - (b) Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16: ultimate purpose of the parables is to reveal the truth
 - (c) Luke 11:33: my evidence is plain and easy to see
 - (2) With what measure you mete, measured back to you
 - (a) Matthew 7:2: judging
 - (b) Mark 4:24: attention to God's words
 - (c) Luke 6:38: generosity
 - (3) Slave not greater than his master
 - (a) Luke 6:40: blind following blind teachers
 - (b) John 13:16: humility
 - (c) Matthew 10:24; John 15:20: men will hate you
 - (4) Tree and its fruit
 - (a) Luke 6:43-44: actions
 - (b) Matthew 12:33-37: words
 - (c) Matthew 7:15-20: teachings and life
 - (5) Lamp is the eye
 - (a) Matthew 6:22-24: single focus
 - (b) Luke 11:34-36: receptivity

- (6) Leaven
 - (a) Matthew 16:6,12: false teaching
 - (b) Luke 12:1: hypocrisy
 - (c) Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21: kingdom of God
- (7) Covered and revealed
 - (a) Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17: Word of God
 - (b) Matthew 10:26-27: don't cover up your relationship with Christ
 - (c) Luke 12:2-3: hypocrisy
- (8) He who has and he who has not
 - (a) Matthew 13:12; Mark 8:25; Luke 8:18: parables are a sifting process
 - (b) Luke 19:26; Matthew 25:29: judgment and unused opportunities
- (9) Settle with opponent quickly
 - (a) Matthew 5:25-26: with man
 - (b) Luke 12:58-59: with God
- (10) Salt of the earth and losing its flavor
 - (a) Matthew 5:13: influence
 - (b) Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34: distinctive quality of Christianity
- c. If we are going to use the parallel language argument, why not compare Matthew 24:36f with Luke 12:35f. Both use phrase on the alert, speak of thief and householder and of the faithful and wise stewards
- d. We will consider later what Luke 17 refers to and how to interpret it

3. Analysis of 24:36-51

- a. Ordinary period of time 36-41
 - (1) Notice how future events are mentioned primarily to teach ethical lessons: alertness 24:36-25:13, faithfulness 25:14-30 and compassion 25:31-46
 - (2) Not even the Son knows
 - (a) Progression: no human, neither angels, not even the Son
 - (b) Interesting that where Jesus calls Himself the Son he admits that He does not know something
 - (3) Jesus return is completely unexpected (37-41) or sooner than expected (45-51) or later than expected (25:1-13)
 - (4) Ordinary period with normal events occurring

- (a) Their concern for matters like eating, drinking and marrying is pathetically superfluous
 - (b) According to Luke, disciples must not succumb to intoxicating attractions of sinful world
 - (5) Divergent fates show that God's sudden judgment annuls external similarities; sharp separation
 - (a) Human race will be divided into two camps
 - (b) Perhaps taken by destruction and left in security (but it could be the other way)
 - (6) The end is unknown and will come suddenly: live in constant readiness
 - b. Thief in the night 42-44
 - (1) Call for constant alertness, because no amount of calculation can anticipate the surprise
 - (2) Jesus' metaphor of the coming of the burglar made a strong impression on the early church: 1 Thessalonians 5:2,4; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3; 16:15
 - c. Faithful and evil slaves 45-51
 - (1) Faithful slave is not ready because he sits by the window watching for the master, but because he gets on with the job he has been given
 - (2) The wicked slave assumes that the master will not be back soon and that he will not be held to account
 - (a) Indulges his selfish irresponsibility at the expense of his fellow slaves
 - (b) Danger of arrogance in religious leaders. Preachers who use churches for their personal ambition
 - (3) Hypocrisy is a very serious sin in Matthew: 6:2-18; 15:7; 22:18; 23:13-36
 - (4) Wailing and gnashing of teeth is common in Matthew: 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 25:30, 41, 46
4. Parable of the virgins 25:1-13
- a. Kingdom will be like: future tense is significant
 - b. Foolish virgins were not prepared
 - (1) Probably torches with oil soaked rags wrapped on a stick
 - (2) A torch w/o a jar of oil like a flashlight w/o batteries
 - c. Spiritual preparation cannot be borrowed
 - (1) Readiness cannot be achieved by a last minute adjustment
 - (2) Preparation cannot be transferred or shared
 - (3) Hardnosed realism that preparedness is not something that others can provide for you: each needs his own oil

- (4) If they give their oil away everyone might end up in the dark
 - d. He will come at an unexpected time
 - (1) Christians must neither assume that He will come soon neither that His coming will be delayed
 - (2) Bridegroom will come on His schedule, not ours
- 5. Parable of talents 25:14-30
 - a. Gave them a huge amount of money
 - (1) Opportunities based on ability
 - (2) God's expectations vary based on what He has given us
 - b. Good servants were eager and enthusiastic: Doubled the principal
 - c. Foolish servant
 - (1) By doing nothing he failed miserably; religion concerned only with doing nothing wrong
 - (2) Risk is at the heart of discipleship (10:39; 16:25-26)
 - (3) Is it significant that the one with the least ability is condemned?
 - (a) Did he think that since he could not do as great a things as the others, he would do nothing?
 - (b) So afraid of doing the wrong thing that he did nothing?
 - (4) When Jesus returns He will not ask if we had the date right, but what we have been doing
- 6. Judgment scene 25:31-46
 - a. There is no middle group
 - b. Both destinies are previously prepared
- 7. Consider two things
 - a. These parables and the judgment scene are not scenes of the destruction of Jerusalem
 - b. The logical break is at 24:36

III. Further thoughts on Luke 17:22-37

- A. In my judgment refers to the second coming
- B. The only statements in Luke 17 that were not referring to the second coming in Matthew 24 are these:
 - 1. Don't go back to get your stuff 31
 - a. I believe this is a metaphorical saying in this context
 - b. Consider Lot's wife: longing for this world
 - c. Attachment to earthly things will lead to disaster
 - d. Prepare for Christ's return by absolute indifference to worldly interests
 - e. Don't cling to earthly goods to prepare for second coming

2. Where the body is, the vultures will gather 37: the judgment comes against those who are spiritually dead
- IV. What about other passages dealing with coming of the Lord, end of all things, etc.
- A. One of their big ideas is that all the coming passages refer to the same thing. That is not true. Consider John 14:23 or the coming passages in Revelation 2 and 3 (2:5, 16; 3:3, 11, 20)
 - B. Texts they use
 1. Philippians 4:5: the Lord being at hand there I take as spatial, not temporal. Jesus is present with us, not that He will return soon
 2. Romans 13:11-12: I don't know why we wouldn't see this passage as encompassing our either dying or Jesus returning. Either of them makes our salvation a day nearer today than yesterday
 3. James 5:5-9: I would take this as in Revelation 2-3. The Lord often comes in judgment or blessing at various times
 4. Acts 17:31: depends on the verb mello. They say it means about to occur, but Arndt-Gingrich does not see that in this passage. When they have to redefine Greek words, the case is weak
 5. 1 Peter 1:5: depends on the Greek hetoimos, which is also not defined by Arndt-Gingrich the way they do
 6. 1 John 2:18: any way you cut it there have been more hours since John wrote. Perhaps he meant that this is a critical, decisive time
 7. 1 Peter 4:7: perhaps the best idea is that we are going along beside a cliff and the edge is ever near us. We may walk beside it for a long time but we are always only a step away from the end. The truth is not all things ended in AD 70
 8. Hebrews 10:37: perhaps this part of the quotation is not even applicable. It is not the part that the writer focuses on. Also, perhaps we will soon die and meet Him
- V. Some lessons and observations
- A. Importance of careful study
 1. Some errors seem fairly innocuous, but we need to be accurate in our handling the Word
 2. You wonder how much of the ground for this teaching has been prepared by things like
 - a. I read Holy Spirit in the Work of Redemption by Franklin Camp about 30 or 35 years ago; didn't go this far but saw the destruction of Jerusalem all over the New Testament
 - b. Errors in interpreting passages like Hebrews 8:13; Matthew 24; Revelation (identity of Babylon), etc.
 - c. Some of these errors don't seem to have consequences that are that serious, but they make us more vulnerable to other false doctrines
 - B. Some principles of study
 1. Study in context way more important than text comparisons; sometimes I wonder if people would have understood the Bible much better if there were no concordances or center column references!

2. Stepping away from a system to just see what is there. We have a tendency to have tunnel vision in our Bible study
 3. Be careful for constant redefinition of terms. Easy to develop a pseudo-gnosticism where only the enlightened really know the true mystical meaning of the Scriptures. There is a lot to be said for just believing what we read in the Bible
- C. The importance of the heart and the life in Bible study and interpretation
1. John 3:19-21 is still true
 2. Often errors of interpretation are not intellectual, they are moral
 3. People's lack of spiritual life and spiritual consistency make them vulnerable to false teachers; consider 2 Timothy 3:6-7; 1 Timothy 6:3-5, etc
 4. You can see this principle most clearly when people with reasonably good Bible study backgrounds fall for errors so outrageous as these
- D. If we accept the hyperpreterist view much of the NT has only limited application for us
- E. Recommended resource: R.T. France's commentary on Matthew in the New International Commentary on the NT is very good in general, and very good on Matthew
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