

## MATTHEW 24 AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE PAROUSIA

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**Abstract.** Discourses concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ have for a long time generated heated controversies among scholars. In the light of the alarming surge in global violence, especially religious fanaticism and terrorism, the exegesis of Matthew 24 with implications for the doctrine of the Parousia becomes essentially expedient. Employing a grammatic-historical method of research, this paper exegetes the focal passage in a traditional preterist-futurist mold which allows for an alternation between the immediate and eschatological fulfillment of scriptural prophecies in line with the double reference principle of biblical hermeneutics. It was discovered that while substantial portions of Matthew 24 already found immediate fulfillment in the events which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem and the city's eventual destruction in AD 70 by the Roman army, the entire periscope awaits a future eschatological fulfillment in the event of the Parousia. In the light of this, the paper advocates that believers should live in justice and righteousness; being engaged in fruitful ministry to the praise, glory, and honor of the Lord.

**Key words:** Parousia, World evangelization, Great tribulation, Double reference principle.

## INTRODUCTION

Discourses centered on the subject of the second coming of Jesus into the world, technically referred to by the term Parousia, have dominated and continue to dominate scholarly gatherings in recent times. Discussions, both from the devotional and the academic standpoints, have become hyped and rife on the return of Jesus. For example, the Nigerian society was thrown into religious frenzy when on 4th November 2016, a news web site called PeopleMagazine.co.za posted a strange story claiming that a baby girl had been born at General Hospital Kubwa, Abuja, with her hands clasped together as though in prayer. The report reads:

The doctors dealing with this special case informed the parents of the child that they would conduct an operation on the hands of their baby girl. Their little one would also be given an antistatic. The operation went smoothly with no complications whatsoever because it seemed like the little girl's hands were simply glued together by a single layer of light skin. Nothing prepared the medical team for what was hidden in the baby girl's hands. As her hands were separated, it is claimed that the message "JESUS IS COMING BACK!" was written on the inside of her hands.<sup>1</sup>

This report created a lot of excitement in the Christian circle but also generated a lot of cynicism and criticism from other religious quarters. Since this report went viral, it has reappeared several times and on different social media platforms though not without some variations.<sup>2</sup>

Earlier in the early 1990s, a prophet had predicted that the world would come to an end on the 8th of December. This prediction created no small pandemonium as people made frantic efforts at renewing their relationships with God while others sold off their businesses, investments, and properties, and lavished the proceeds from the sales on feeding well and living big before the world would end. This was probably with the intent that if the world eventually

came to an end as predicted, their toils would not have been in vain as they would have consumed whatever they made from the sales on themselves. The period also witnessed an unprecedented rate of road accidents as people travelled hastily to their places of origin with the thought that the end of the world should at least meet them amidst their kiths and kin.

On the global scene, several other predictions, both mystical and scientific, have been made concerning the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus Christ. These included, among others, Harold Camping's predictions of 1994, 1995, and more recently 2011; the 1999-2000 millennium fuss promoted by various individuals and groups including Christian ministers like Lester Sumrall, James Gordon Lindsay, Tim LaHaye, Jerry B Jenkins, and James Harmston among others, Ronald Weinland's prediction of September 2011 and May 2012, and the much publicized Mayan calendar believed to have predicted 21 December, 2012 as the end of the world. More recently, David Meade who had earlier predicted that the rapture would take place in September 2017, came out with another prediction when his 2017 prediction failed. He predicted that the rapture would take place on 23 April, 2018.<sup>3</sup> It is quite remarkable that none of these predictions ever came to pass, thus lending credence to the saying of Jesus that no mortal being knows the time of the Parousia.

As noted by C. P. Ceroke, the reason for the kind of attention that issues of the Second Coming have attracted and the fuss it has created may not be unconnected with the Christological and Pauline presentation of the Parousia as an imminent event, one which is very proximate.<sup>4</sup> Oepke Albrecht asserts that the word Parousia is a Greek word introduced into primitive Christianity by Apostle Paul to describe the OT concept of the Day of the Lord. While Albrecht submits that the whole thinking of Jesus was permeated by the ideas of eschatology,<sup>5</sup> Akangbe opines that the Parousia is the heart and central focus of the entire New Testament.<sup>6</sup> The argument of this paper is that a contextual exegesis of Matthew 24 bears significantly

on the NT postulations of the Parousia and carries enormous significance for contemporary Christians especially in the face of global violence. The paper employs a grammatic-historical approach and addresses the concept of the Parousia, exegesis of Matthew 24, and the implications of Matthew 24 for the church in its teachings about, and its preparations for the Parousia.

## EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 24

The NT as a whole and the Gospels in particular, especially the Synoptics, presents Jesus as a great teacher among many others portrait. Among the Synoptics, the Book of Matthew probably stands out as one in which Jesus' teachings are clearly presented and generously accorded time and space. The Book presents five great discourses (or sermons) by Jesus as contained in chapters 5-7, 10, 13, 18, and 24-25. All of these discourses, according to Neil D. Nelson, are of utmost significance to Jesus' followers.<sup>7</sup> Of all these sermons, however, the Olivet (or Eschatological) Discourse in Matthew 24-25 is given a unique importance for two reasons: first, it contains the fullest record of Jesus' prophetic teaching during his earthly ministry; and second, Matthew at its conclusion adds the word "all" to the formula by which he ends the previous discourses.<sup>8,9</sup> By implication, Matthew 24-25 forms the zenith and grand climax of the teachings in Matthew; and as observed by Nelson, it is Jesus' Farewell Discourse or Testament in Matthew's Gospel.<sup>10</sup>

This particular discourse, like most known farewell discourses, was laced with warnings concerning false teachers, appeals to remain faithful and to exercise loving behavior toward one another, predictions of woes and tribulations, warnings of judgment against those who persecute his followers or who do not carry out his commands, and blessings to come to faithful followers. Nelson argues that like other biblical leaders before him such as Jacob (Genesis 47:29-49:33); Moses (Deuteronomy 31:1-34:38); Joshua (Joshua 23:1-24:30); Samuel (1 Samuel 12:1-25), and David (1 Chronicles 28-29) who all gave farewell or death bed speeches to their children,

followers, or successors as the case may be, Jesus prepared his followers to face the future without his physical presence as he drew closer to the occasion of his death.<sup>11</sup>

### Some Common Interpretations of Matthew 24

Matthew 24 has lent itself to varying dispositions of interpretation by scholars of different persuasions. All of these have in one form or the other influenced the application of the passage especially with reference to the time of the actual coming of the Lord. There are two major positions on the eschatological interpretation of Matthew 24, namely preterism and futurism.<sup>12</sup> Preterism holds that the entire pericope of Matthew 24, with the exception of 36-41 has already been fulfilled in the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem. It has the current age in view and emphasizes the destruction of Jerusalem<sup>13</sup> as against the futurist position which stresses the age-ending return of Jesus Christ and establishes little, if any, connection between the Matthew 24 prophecies and the destruction of Jerusalem or the current age.<sup>14</sup> This latter view is held by most evangelicals, especially Dispensationalists.<sup>15</sup>

In between these two main positions, there is the traditional preterist-futurist view, which sees a portion of the passage (usually 24:4-14) as a general description of the course of the present age, and another portion as a “double reference” prophecy of Jerusalem’s destruction and the end of the age.<sup>16</sup> There is also the revised preterist-futurist view, which sees alternating reference in these verses to the course of the age, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the coming of Christ.<sup>17</sup> From the above positions, a number of interpretations have emanated which are briefly discussed below.

The first opinion which trows a futurist path and which is very common today is that Matthew 24 has nothing to say about the destruction of the Jewish Temple in A.D. 70, but rather speaks solely of signs that portend the Second Advent. This view is popular among dispensationalists who argue that the Olivet Discourse is directed to

Jewish disciples who are representatives of the converted Israel of the last days. In other words, the prophecy targets Jewish converts who will live in the far distant future. Adherents of this view maintain that only the Lukan discourse of Luke 21 (written to a Gentile audience) addresses the A.D. 70 destruction of the temple and Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup> However, critical consideration of this passage shows that such an interpretation is arbitrary and seeks to impose the interpreter's biases on the text of the scripture. It amounts more to eisegesis than exegesis, and it expressly violates the perspicuity of Scripture as well as standard Protestant methods of interpretation.

Another popularly held opinion is that this Discourse weaves together, predictions concerning two completely different events: the devastation of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the eschatological return of Christ. According to Godet, "Matthew combines in the answer of Jesus the two subjects indicated in the question as Matthew has expressed it, and he unites them in so intimate a way that all attempts to separate them in the text from Chrysostom to Ebrard and Meyer have broken down."<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Hendriksen writes,

The prophetic material found in this sixth discourse has reference not only to events near at hand (see, for example, verse 16) but also to those stretching far into the future, as is clear from 24:14, 29-31....By the process of prophetic foreshortening, by means of which before one's eyes the widely separated mountain peaks of historic events merge and are seen as one...two momentous events are here intertwined, namely, a. the judgment upon Jerusalem (its fall in the year A.D. 70), and b. the final judgment at the close of world's history.<sup>20</sup>

This view is held by the vast majority of commentators including John Calvin, David Dickson, Matthew Henry, James Moffat, William Manson, R. C. H. Lenski, William Hendriksen, R. V. G. Tasker, and David Hill among others. Schwertly notes that this view is so

common that it could be referred to as the standard evangelical interpretation.<sup>21</sup>

Some modern interpreters also argue for the evidence of a three-pronged prediction in Matthew 24. They argue that Christ predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, the second coming and the end of the world. The general consensus of this school of thought is that Jesus taught and believed that all these three events would take place within one generation. This is based on the statement “this generation shall not pass away” in Matthew 24:34. They thus conclude that Christ was wrong when He predicted the second coming and the end of the world. This view, however, is not in tandem with the spirit of biblical interpretation, especially with regards to biblical numerology and symbolism; and as a result, must be rejected.

Interpreters who argue from the preterist disposition maintain that Jesus did indeed predict that the second coming and end of the world would occur within the generation then living. On this assertion, they claim that the rapture, second coming, bodily resurrection and final judgment have already taken place.<sup>22</sup> Schwertly however, argues that “since this view involves an unbiblical view of the timing and nature of such crucial doctrines as the second coming, the general resurrection, the last judgment, the glorified bodies of believers and the final state, it properly has been designated as heretical and dangerous.”<sup>23</sup>

Another view which has come to be widely accepted, especially among Reformed theologians, is the argument that every prediction in the Olivet discourse up to verse 34 concerns the destruction of Jerusalem and the close of the Jewish age. This view is held by Schwertly who describes it as “partial preterism” in order to distinguish it from “hyper-preterism.” Schwertly argues that “this interpretation respects the clear teaching of Scripture regarding the rapture, second coming, general resurrection, final judgment and nature of glorified bodies, yet takes literally the various time indicators within the discourse (e.g., verse 34).”<sup>24</sup>

The stand of this paper is in support of the second position above. This paper interprets Matthew 24 from the perspective that the text intertwines two major events, and thus subjects itself to double interpretation. This is in tandem with the hermeneutical principle employed in interpreting prophetic texts, and which allows for both an immediate fulfillment as well as an eschatological or futuristic fulfillment. In this discourse, this prophecy finds its immediate fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in AD 70. It however awaits its eschatological fulfillment in the second coming of Jesus and the end of the world.

In the light of the above, the exegesis of Matthew 24 presented in this paper adopts the following structure:

The imminent end of Judaism and destruction of the Temple (v1-2): The text opens with the statement “Jesus left the temple and was walking away (1a).” The exegetical import of this statement is that Jesus would no longer physically enter the temple and within a matter of three decades, the entire structure would come to complete ruin. This symbolizes Jesus’ abandonment of Judaism and its entire sacrificial system which the temple stood for. His imminent death and resurrection would put an end to the old order of sacrifices and rituals and usher in a new era of grace.

The advent and proliferation of false messiahs (4-5, 23-25): Jesus’ answer to the disciples’ question begins with a word of caution. The disciples are to be on their guard against deceptions that will be peddled by false prophets and false christs who will appear and be extremely multiplied before the end comes. Not only will they claim to be Christ, they will back up their claims with great signs and wonders, all in a bid to deceive the elects (vv 5, 24).

Wars and Rumors of Wars (6-8): Also to precede the end of age and the coming of the Christ is the multiplicity of wars and rumors of wars. This means that there would be actual wars happening across international and local scales; they would also hear talks of wars and



conflicts that people feared was about to take place. While this may have applied to the conflicts that would precede the fall of Jerusalem, it also applies to the contemporary widespread conflicts and impending conflicts world over.

Natural Disasters (7): In addition to the ravaging of societies by wars, there would also be devastation caused by natural disasters such as famine and earthquakes. An immediate fulfillment of this portion is the famine prophesied by Agabus before the fall of Jerusalem. Contemporary time also has its own share of fulfilling this prediction as most conflicts have always left behind tales of famine, epidemics, and other natural disasters. Also, at no time in history has there been the occurrence of natural disasters like earthquake, volcano eruptions, tsunami, ocean surge etc. as the present age.

Persecution (9): The text talks of persecutions of varying degrees. The disciples of the early church had their fair share of severe persecutions under different emperors and kings for the sake of the gospel. There are still societies in the 21st century where being a Christian is an offense attracting the death penalty. In Nigeria, several churches have been destroyed and several lives lost in conflicts induced by Islamic fanatics especially in the North-east of the country. The most recent of such is the Boko-Haram insurgency that has ravaged the North-east for more than a decade now.

Betrayal, Apostasy, and Lawlessness (10-13): Schwertly notes that “there was an incredible hatred of Christ and the gospel among Jews in that first generation of the church.”<sup>25</sup> It got to the point of Jews betraying their own family members over to prison and execution under the impression that they were doing a service to the Lord. In contemporary times, one of the teachings of fanatic Islam is that anyone who kills a Christian (an infidel) is doing a service to Allah and stands to gain great rewards in Al-jannah. Hence, believers are not only persecuted but also betrayed. This gross persecution is followed by apostasy, a denial of the faith, by many Christians. Also, many Christians have backslidden into a life of lawlessness and

reckless living. The love of many has waxed cold; all in fulfillment of the prediction by Jesus.

Worldwide Evangelization (14): This sign has generated heated controversy between scholars of the preterist persuasion and those of the futurist disposition. While the preterist argue that the Greek word "*oikoumene*" translated "world" refers only to the then known world, that is, the Greco-Roman world of the 1st century, especially before AD 70, futurists have posited that the word must be seen in respect of the world as it is known today. However, both translations have a strong import for this prediction and its fulfillment: the preterist approach fits the immediate fulfillment which climaxed with the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem and its temple; the futurist position on the other hand awaits its fulfillment as believers take the gospel of the Kingdom to all nations and communities of the world as it is now known.

The Abomination of Desolation (15-16): The reference to the abomination of desolation is a direct quote from Daniel 9:27 in the Old Testament. Hitherto, the preceding instructions to the disciples have been in form of general signs. This particular warning is however more specific because it refers to a direct prophecy from the Old Testament. It has been argued that this particular prediction initially found its immediate fulfillment in the 63 BC desecration of the Temple by the Roman general Pompey who slaughtered a swine for sacrifice on the temple altar.<sup>26</sup> In the context of this passage however, this statement refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the armies of Rome. It also refers to a future antichrist who will bring desecration and defilement to true worship. Contemporary Christianity is witnessing a form of abomination and desecration which is making the witness of the gospel to unbelievers an uphill task.

The Great Tribulation (17-22): This passage apparently reflects a second fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks.<sup>27</sup> Brian Russell remarks that Jesus' prediction of the Great Tribulation finds

an immediate fulfillment in the experience of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans while its future fulfillment refers to the experience the church would have for refusing to worship the anti-christ.<sup>28</sup> The final great tribulation is directly connected to the return of Christ at the end of the world and will be directed primarily at Christians.

The Coming of the Son of Man (26-31): Scholars are divided on the meaning of this text as they are on the other parts of the chapter. While some like Schwertly and Brown submit that the “coming of the son of man” refers to God’s visitation of judgement on the nation of Israel and her religious system epitomized by the temple, others like Keener and Russell emphasize its reference to the physical return of Jesus at the close of the age. This paper argues in support of the latter view. The coming of the son of man refers expressly to the event of the Parousia. This is in tandem with the spirit of objective hermeneutics of scripture.

The timing of his coming (3, 32-51): The response given by Jesus to the disciples’ question as to when the end would take place indicated that it is a closely guarded secret revealed to no one. However, when the time is ripe and right, it will be known to everyone as the Parousia will not be shrouded in obscurity.

## CONCEPT OF THE PAROUSIA

Malherbe is of the opinion that the NT concept of Parousia was derived from a pagan Greek origin used to depict the ceremonial arrival of a King or ruler with great pomp and pageantry. It is also used in the sense of the coming of a deity to help people in need.<sup>29</sup> From this Hellenistic background grew the Christian perception of Parousia. On this premise Bruce submits that “when Christians speak of the Parousia of the Lord, they probably think of the pomp and circumstance attending those imperial visits as parodies of the true glory to be revealed.”<sup>30</sup> In the New Testament, the word Parousia occurs twenty-four times, four of which are found in Matthew 24. Of the remaining twenty, fourteen are found in the Pauline epistles where

they are used as part of a prepositional phrase, except in 2 Cor.10:10, while the general epistles account for the remaining six.<sup>31</sup>

According to Kittel & Friedrich, the basic meaning of the word is to be derived from the verb *pareimi* “be present.” They note that *pareimi* can also take on the sense of “come, approach” as typified in the LXX rendering of Judges 19:3; and that Parousia frequently means “arrival as the onset of presence.” It is in this sense of active presence that the word Parousia is used in legal documents.<sup>32</sup> Although the word has a sacral meaning in philosophy, Plato used it in the profane sense as a synonym of *meqezij* participation.

From the foregoing, it can be inferred that the basic meaning of Parousia is “presence, arrival, or coming.” This assertion is buttressed by Paul’s usage of the term in many of his writings including: I Corinthians 16:17; 2 Corinthians 7:6-7, 10:10; and Philippians 1:26, 2:12. Paul also used the word Parousia in an eschatological sense primarily in his epistle to the Thessalonians where he used it to denote the coming of the Lord (I Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:1) and of the Lawless One (2 Thess. 2:9).<sup>33</sup>

Other terms used by Paul to synonymously describe the same event include the verbal form *erchesthai* “to come” (I Corinthians 4:5, 11:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:10), the *apokalypsis* “revelation” of the Lord (I Corinthians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:7, Romans 2:5), “Day of the Lord” (I Corinthians 5:5, I Thessalonians 5:2), and “that day” (2 Thessalonians 1:10). On the use of these other terms with eschatological connotations, Olagunju remarks that they are derived from Jewish origins, suggesting that the term Parousia was used in this technical sense in pre-Christian Judaism. It is however remarkable that the use of Parousia to denote the coming or presence of the Lord sense is largely confined to I Thessalonians. The Pastoral Epistles employ the word *epiphaneia* “appearance” which according to Malherbe bears more religious affiliation than Parousia.<sup>34</sup> Also worthy of note is the fact that the phrase “Second Coming of Christ” as a meaning for the Parousia appeared for the first time in the latter

half of the second century, when it describes the second coming of Christ in contrast to his humble coming in the flesh.<sup>35</sup>

Although the NT presents Paul as the earliest of its writers to use Parousia in its technical meaning, the expectation of Christ's eschatological coming did not originate with him. Leon Morris argues that this expectation was already part of the Aramaic speaking church before Paul and is evident from Paul's use of the term Maranatha which literally means "come lord" in I Corinthians 16:22.<sup>36</sup> Malherbe buttresses Morris' assertion with the argument that the synoptics in Mark 14: 62, Matthew 26:64, Mark 8:38, Matthew 16:27, and Luke 9:26 reflect that the tradition of the coming of the Son of Man preceded Paul's use of Parousia to describe it.<sup>37</sup>

Also, the Parousia does not in all cases refer to the coming or presence of Jesus Christ. Reiterating this line of thought, Craig Keener remarks that some verses of the New Testament such as I Corinthians 16:17, 2 Corinthian 10:10, and Philippians 2:12 use Parousia to speak of the presence of apostle Paul or his fellow workers. Similarly, the use of Parousia in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 and 2 Peter 3:12, has the antichrist and the Day of the Lord respectively as the subjects of the coming.<sup>38</sup>

According to Olagunju, the New Testament does not attest to any unified conception or attitude concerning Christ's Parousia. He notes that the Parousia is described more specifically in Mark 13: 24-27 parallel in Matthew 24: 29-31, Luke 21: 25-27, I Thessalonians 4:16, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, 2:8, Rev. 14:14-16, 19: 11-16.<sup>39</sup> Worthy of note however is that the motifs treated in these texts are derived from the Old Testament and Jewish salvation expectations which focus on such earthly personalities as the Messianic king. It can therefore be adduced from the foregoing that the heart of the New Testament concept of the Parousia is the advent of Jesus Christ from heaven in bodily form.

## IMPLICATIONS OF MATTHEW 24 TO THE PAROUSIA

From the exegesis of Matthew 24 above and the discussion on the New Testament concept of Parousia, a number of inferences can be drawn for the 21st Century church and believer. First, the exact time of the coming of the Lord is unknown. As such, any prediction seeking to pin the Parousia to a specific date is an exercise in futility. In the light of this, believers are not to entertain any fear whatsoever in the face of persecutions and the perils they must certainly experience as they witness to the resurrection of the Lord and await his return. In the same vein, believers should not concern themselves with the rumors already making the rounds concerning the date of the Parousia. Rather, all hands must be on deck to take the gospel across climes and lands. The African church must not be found wanting in this respect; she must take her rightful place in world evangelization as a mission church sending missionaries to every part of the world and not be content with being a receiving church.

Secondly, the Parousia will not be an event perpetrated in secrecy or subject to denial. It will be as visible as lightning cutting through the dark sky; and as undeniable as the gathering of vultures indicating the presence of carcass (24:27-28). Apart from the visibility and undeniability of the signs ushering in the Parousia, the event itself will be so obvious that the possibility of anyone not recognizing it is will be non-existent.

Another implication of this passage for believers is that since the time is unknown, it behooves all believers to always be at their duty posts; living each day as it was the last in order not to live in injustice and unrighteousness; and being engaged in fruitful ministry to honor of the Lord so that he would be glad at his appearance to take the beloved home with him forever.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined an exegesis of Matthew 24 using the grammatic-historical approach and pitching tent with the double

mention principle of biblical interpretation. The paper has also examined the concept of the Parousia both from the biblical and the contemporary perspective. From the above, the paper concludes that Matthew 24 is best interpreted using the principles for interpreting the prophetic genre which allows for the possibility of double interpretation, the immediate fulfillment and the future fulfillment. In this mold, the bulk of the passage finds fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the events that preceded it; while it awaits its future and final fulfillment in the visible, personal coming of the Lord Jesus to take back the elects home so that they can be with him forever. Consequently, the implications drawn from this exercise include that prophecies and predictions nailing the coming of Christ to a particular date in history are nothing but falsehood hence believers should shun them as they patiently and faithfully await the coming of Jesus Christ.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/nigerian-baby-born-with-message-of-christs-second-coming/> Accessed on 12/08/2018.

<sup>2</sup> The varying accounts of this report have lent weight to its being discredited as false. Whether or not it is true is not verified by this study. The main point is that issues bordering on the coming of Jesus have created waves and are usually headline-makers.

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_dates\\_predicted\\_for\\_apocalyptic\\_events](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_dates_predicted_for_apocalyptic_events) Accessed on 11/08/2018. Other sites that give information on failed predictions of the rapture and end of the world include <https://www.britannica.com/list/10-failed-doomsday-predictions>, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/9730618/Mayan-apocalypse-panic-spreads-as-December-21-nears.html>

<sup>4</sup> C.P. Ceroke, *The Parousia: A Historical Survey of Interpretations*. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 55.

<sup>5</sup> Oepke Albrecht, "Parousia". *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 861.

<sup>6</sup> Fehintola Akangbe, *Explorative Narratives of the Second Coming of Christ in the New Testament*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Neil D. Nelson, "Three Critical Exegetical Issues in Matthew 24: A Dispensational Interpretation," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Vol.23, No.8, 2005:1.

<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Jerusalem and Parousia: Jesus' Eschatological Discourse in Matthew's Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 13.

<sup>9</sup> The typical formula used by Matthew in each of the previous four discourses is "And when Jesus finished these sayings". However, the inclusion of the word "All" in this sermon depicts it as the grand conclusion to all of Jesus' teachings.

<sup>10</sup> Neil D. Nelson, Jr. rightly observes that many scholars since the time of Friedrich Busch, *Zum Verständnis der synoptischen Eschatologie: Markus 13 neu untersucht*, Neutestamentliche Forschungen, vol. 4 (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1938), 44, have viewed the discourse as being a Farewell Discourse rather than an apocalypse in terms of its genre. He remarks that several elements separate the discourse from Jewish apocalypses. Other scholars who have earlier towed this path include G. R. Beasley-Murray, who remarked that "There is no other apocalyptic writing known to me which contains so high a proportion of admonitions and in which instruction and exhortation are so completely



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interwoven” [G. R. Beasley-Murray, *A Commentary on Mark 13* (London: Macmillan, 1957), 18]; and W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, ICC, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 326. For further information on the Olivet Discourse as a farewell discourse see Neil D. Nelson, Jr., “Be Ready for the Hour Is Unknown: A Literary Critical Exegesis of Matthew 24” (Ph.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2000), 253-57.

<sup>11</sup> Nelson, 2.

<sup>12</sup> The two have been the leading positions on the doctrine of eschatology. Although in between, there are sub-divisions and some forms of slightly compromising positions, yet the two have remained the poles or edges between which others are sandwiched. For more detailed discussions of these positions, works like that of Thomas D. Ice, *An Interpretation of Matthew 24 & 25* (Liberty University, May 2009), Ben Chenoweth, *A Critique of Two Recent Interpretations of Matthew 24* (2002), and David L. Turner, *The Structure and Sequence of Matthew 24:1-41: Interaction with Evangelical Treatments* (1989) can be consulted.

<sup>13</sup> Harold Fowler, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 4 vols. (Joplin, MO: College, 1985) 4.389ff.; R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale NT Commentaries (Leicester/Grand Rapids: InterVarsity/Eerdmans, 1985) 333ff.; Other scholars in this bend include J. Marcellus Kik, *Matthew Twenty-four: An Exposition* (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1948); and R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Tyndale NT Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) 223ff.

<sup>14</sup> Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., “Matthew,” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, NT ed., ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor, 1983) 76ff.

<sup>15</sup> Leading Dispensationalists who promote this position include: John F. Hart, “A Chronology of Matthew 24:1-44” Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1986; Walter K. Price, *Jesus’ Prophetic Sermon* (Chicago: Moody, 1972); James F. Rand, “The Eschatology of the Olivet Discourse,” Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1954, and “A Survey of the Eschatology of the Olivet Discourse,” *BSac* 113 (1956) 162-73, 200-213; Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1980) 266ff.; and John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* (Chicago: Moody, 1974) 179ff. For a comprehensive survey of various views, see George C. Fuller, “The Structure of the Olivet Discourse,” Th.D. Dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1964, pp. 11-52.

- <sup>16</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theo-logical Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 474ff. His views represents earlier positions promoted by the likes of William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973); Anthony T. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979); and George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).
- <sup>17</sup> D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 495ff. Although Carson is often referred to as the chief proponent of this seemingly novel idea, similar position had been maintained by David Wenham, “This Generation Will Not Pass. A Study of Jesus’ Future Expectation in Mark 13” in *Christ the Lord*, ed. H. H. Rowdon (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1982) 127-50.
- <sup>18</sup> Brian Schwertly, *Matthew 24 and the Great Tribulation* (2000:1)
- <sup>19</sup> Frederic Louis Godet as quoted in William E. Biederwolf, *The Second Coming Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 326.
- <sup>20</sup> William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 846.
- <sup>21</sup> Schwertly, 3.
- <sup>22</sup> Those who adhere to such a view often label themselves full or consistent preterists. See Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 323; and Charles Wanamaker, *Commentary of I and II Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 116.
- <sup>23</sup> Schwertly, 5. He notes further that orthodox theologians and exegetes describe this heresy as “hyper-preterism” (Kenneth L. Gentry), “Hymenaenism” (Andrew Sandlin) or “pantelism” (Jonathan Seraiah) and argues that Hyper-preterists must redefine a number of very clear, confessional, established doctrines in orders for them to fit into their unbiblical paradigm.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 6.
- <sup>25</sup> Schwertly, 25.
- <sup>26</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The NT Bible Commentary* (Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 95.
- <sup>27</sup> The first fulfillment is the profane act of Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BC who dedicated the Temple to the Greek god Zeus and erected a pagan altar to Zeus at the top of the altar of burnt offering.

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- <sup>28</sup> Brian A. Russell, *Christ's Return as King of Kings* (London: Grace Publications Trust, 2013), 152.
- <sup>29</sup> Richard Malherbe, *The Socio-linguistic World of the New Testament*, (Texas: Main-Thrust Publications, 2012), 272.
- <sup>30</sup> Bruce Chilton, *Chilton's Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (Chicago: Zondervan Press, 2015), 57.
- <sup>31</sup> Balz and Scheider, 43.
- <sup>32</sup> Kittel and Friedrich, 859.
- <sup>33</sup> Malherbe, 270.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Gundry, 211.
- <sup>36</sup> Leon Morris, *Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012), 79.
- <sup>37</sup> Malherbe, 271.
- <sup>38</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The NT Bible Commentary* (Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 325.
- <sup>39</sup> Olugbenga Olagunju "The Concept of Parousia in the New Testament: Its Implications for 21st the Century Church," *American Journal of Theology*, 14(42) October 20, 2011.