PARABLES & PAROUSIA

How the Master Returned



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PARABLES & PAROUSIA

HOW THE MASTER RETURNED

By Matt Behrens, The Heretical Horseman

“Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.” (**Matthew 24:46**)

INTRODUCTION: THE QUESTIONS NOBODY WOULD ANSWER

I believed the world would end. I believed we would be raptured and the wicked would be left behind. I believed they had little chance of reaching heaven unless they were martyred in a seven-year global tribulation. I believed the earth would be utterly destroyed and remade, and that the new earth would be a utopia where we lived in new bodies with no sinners anywhere, only us.

Every church I ever went to preached those things. I held them for thirty-eight years, and I came out of the Calvary Chapel system fully convinced that Christ was coming back somewhere between 2015 and 2018.

It never made sense to me. How many comings were there? Why would we reign on earth with Him for a thousand years, only for the nations to come against us at the end of it? Why would we come back here after the rapture? Who could possibly go to war against Christ while He was standing here in physical form? I had so many questions, and nobody would answer them.

Then I read David Chilton's commentary on Revelation, *The Days of Vengeance*, and I heard about AD 70 for the first time. I learned that there is a serious case that Revelation was written before the Temple fell. I went looking for the Antichrist of the end-times books and found that the word appears only in John's letters, where John says many antichrists had already come (**1 John**

2:18). I went looking for a seven-year tribulation and could not find one. I came to believe that Ezekiel wrote about the fall of the first Temple and John wrote about the fall of the second, and that John borrowed Ezekiel's language to do it. I had been told the church is raptured after Revelation 3 because John is called up to heaven in chapter 4. Ezekiel was carried off in visions as well (**Ezekiel 8:3**), and nobody says he was raptured.

I was shocked by how much of the prophets' language I had missed. I realized I had never studied this for myself. I had relied on pastors.

It cost something to say so out loud. I was asked to leave a church for asking the obvious questions. My kids' friendships with the pastor's kids ended. We were labeled, and I was warned that I was on a slippery slope to full preterism. At the time I thought full preterists were heretics, and I wanted nothing to do with them. The pastor turned out to be right about the slope. It led out of the rapture system altogether, because I came to see that the fulfilled reading is the one that stays closest to the text when you ask who was being spoken to and when.

It's time we cowboy up and accept that the Bible is the final word.

This book is about seven stories Jesus told, and about one question I ask of each of them. When the master came back, who was at the door?

Most of us were taught that the parables of a master who leaves and returns are about the Second Coming, and that the Second Coming is

still ahead of us. The servants in those stories, we were told, are the church through the ages, waiting. I no longer believe that. In the parables that show a reckoning, it falls on the people the story began with, and no parable tells of a reckoning with servants the story never showed you. I believe Jesus was telling the men in front of Him that they were those servants. The sermons the parables belong to put a date on the return, and Jesus said some of the men listening would live to see it.

That is a minority reading, and I know it. I am asking you to test it against the text.

WHO I QUOTE AND WHERE WE PART WAYS

I quote other writers in this book to show you that men who studied these passages for years saw the same things in them. I never quote a man to settle a question by his name.

You should know one thing about the writers I quote most. Gary DeMar, Kenneth Gentry, David Chilton in his published books, Gary North, James Jordan, Joel McDurmon, and John Bray all hold that Jesus' sermon on the Mount of Olives was fulfilled, in whole or in large part, when Jerusalem fell in AD 70. I lean on them for that. None of them accepts the name full preterist. Gentry, North, Jordan, McDurmon, and Chilton in his published books hold that a bodily return of Christ, a general resurrection, and a final judgment are still ahead, and Gentry has written against the view I hold. John Bray wrote that he didn't agree with Max King on the resurrection. Gary DeMar is a separate case, and the next paragraph describes him in his own terms. When I quote them, I quote them for what they saw in a passage. Agreeing with a man about one passage isn't agreeing with him about everything, and I don't claim their agreement beyond the page I cite.

Gary DeMar's position on those future events has been disputed in public since 2022. He has declined to affirm them, and he rejects the label "full preterist." I describe him the way he describes himself. One of his works cited here, *The Olivet Discourse in Outline*, is an unpublished

master copy dated June 2nd, 2023, supplied by American Vision. Where the same material is in his printed books, I cite those.

Where I make the fuller claim, I quote a man who makes it, Michael Sullivan.

C. H. Dodd, Joachim Jeremias, N. T. Wright, and R. T. France are standard scholars on the parables and on Matthew. None of them shares my view. I use them for background and for the history of how these stories have been read.

I think the road several of these men are on ends where I’m standing. That’s my judgment about the road. I’m not telling you what any of them thinks.

One more thing about sources. Where I describe what R. T. France, Joachim Jeremias, C. H. Dodd, or N. T. Wright argued and don’t quote them, I’m summarizing their case as I understand it. I give no page number in those places because I’m not quoting. Where I quote a man through another writer, I say whose pages I’m using. Check me against the books.

A NOTE ON METHOD

Scripture is quoted from the English Standard Version. Where an argument rests on the Greek and not on any English translation, the sentence says so and gives the word with its meaning. In my own sentences I capitalize He, Him, and His for Jesus and for God, and Word when it means Scripture. Inside quotations from the ESV, I've left the translators' lowercase as they printed it. Where the ESV prints a dash inside a verse, I've used a comma.

When I quote a historian, I give the book and section from a public-domain translation, and every passage I quote is reproduced in Appendix B so you can check it without buying anything. Flavius Josephus is the main witness. He was a Jewish general who surrendered to Rome and watched the siege of Jerusalem from the Roman side. He wasn't a Christian, and he had no reason to make Jesus' parables come true.

Most chapters take up the strongest objections before they close, stated the way the people who hold them would state them. I answer each one from the text, and I tell you what my answer proves and what it doesn't. I don't think anything in this book is impossible to refute, and I've tried not to write a sentence that says so.

What this book does not claim

It doesn’t claim that every parable is about the return of the master. Most of them are about other things. The sower, the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the laborers in the vineyard, and more than two dozen others teach other lessons, and chapter 1 sorts them out and sets them aside on purpose. My claim is narrow, and chapter 1 states it exactly, with its exceptions. Where a master leaves and returns, the reckoning falls on the people the story began with, and I believe the sermon around the parable dates it.

It doesn’t claim that the plot of a parable proves anything alone. A story keeps its cast, and chapter 2 faces that objection. What I have is the frame around the stories. Jesus attached commands to most of them and addressed those commands to “you.” The men who heard them reacted as people who knew they were meant. The sermons they belong to say when.

It doesn’t claim that judgment is over, that the kingdom has stopped growing, or that the church has nothing left to do. The last chapters are about what continues after the master’s return: a kingdom whose increase has no end, a judgment every person still meets, and servants who still hold the master’s goods.

HOW TO READ A PARABLE LIKE A POLICY

I read insurance policies for a living. They're some of the most difficult documents ordinary people ever sign, and most people never read them until something burns down.

In my work, a word changes the meaning of a sentence. A comma changes it. A semicolon changes it. Whether someone is owed millions of dollars after being denied can come down to the details of the policy, and context decides how those details are read. Nobody in my business gets to say what he wishes the policy said. You read what it says, to whom it says it, and when its terms run.

Is that how you were taught to read Matthew 24? It isn't how I was taught. I was taught to start with a system and fit the verses into it. When I started reading the Bible the way I read a policy, the system didn't survive.

This chapter gives you four questions to ask of any passage in this book. None of them takes a degree. Each one comes with an example, so you can see it work before you watch me use it.

Who is the policy written to?

Every policy names the people it covers. If your name isn't on it, the promises in it aren't made to you, however much you would like them to be. You may learn a great deal from reading your neighbor's policy. You can't file a claim on it.

Every book of the Bible was written to somebody as well. Paul says the Scriptures were "*written for our instruction*" (**Romans 15:4**). They're for you. Most of them weren't written to you, and the difference matters.

Try it with one verse. Jesus said, "*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains*" (**Luke 21:20–21**). Who is "you"? Jesus was speaking in Jerusalem, to people who were looking at the Temple He was talking about (**Luke 21:5–6**). Do you live in Judea? Have you ever been in a position to flee from it? The first question to ask of any prophecy is who was standing there when it was spoken.

When do the terms run?

A policy has dates on it. Coverage begins on one day and ends on another, and a loss that falls outside those dates isn't covered, no matter how real the loss is. Nobody reads "this policy period" to mean any period he likes.

The New Testament puts dates on its prophecies more often than most of us were ever shown. "*Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here*

who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (**Matthew 16:28**). "*Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*" (**Matthew 24:34**). "*The time is near*" (**Revelation 1:3**).

I was taught a set of explanations for why those words don't mean what they say. God's time isn't our time, they said, and they quoted Peter's line that a thousand years are as one day (**2 Peter 3:8**). Chapter 6 gives my reading of that verse. "Soon" means suddenly. "Near" means near in importance. Each explanation sounded reasonable alone. Would you accept any of them from an insurance company? If a carrier told you that "within thirty days" could mean thirty years because the company keeps a different calendar, you would hire a lawyer.

I'll add a caution from my own mistakes. One word seldom settles a question. The case for the timing rests on the whole collection of time statements read together, and it's strongest where a statement could be checked, such as the Temple falling within a generation.

What does the rest of the policy say?

No clause in a policy is read alone. If one paragraph is unclear, you read it beside the others, and the document explains itself. A term that's defined on page two means the same thing on page forty.

Scripture often works the same way, and the Gospels often explain each other. Matthew records Jesus saying, "*So when you see the abomination of*

desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)" (**Matthew 24:15**). Readers have argued about that phrase for centuries. Luke records the same moment in the same sermon, and he puts it in plainer words: "*when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.*" I believe Luke is telling you what Matthew's hard phrase was pointing at. Lay the two verses side by side and judge that for yourself. You didn't need a newspaper to find out. You needed the parallel passage.

That's the rule I'll follow in every chapter. When a parable is hard, I look at what stands on either side of it and at how the other Gospels tell it, before I look anywhere else.

What did those words already mean?

Policies are full of terms that have a history. Words like "occurrence" and "collapse" have been argued over for a century, and anyone who ignores that history will misread the page in front of him.

The prophets gave the New Testament its vocabulary, and the same thing is true of it. When Jesus speaks of the sun going dark, the stars falling, or the Son of Man coming on the clouds, He's using language His audience had heard in the synagogue all their lives. Isaiah wrote, "*Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt*" (**Isaiah 19:1**). Isaiah doesn't describe anyone in Egypt seeing the LORD on a cloud. The

next verses describe civil war and a harsh ruler. “Coming on a cloud” was how a prophet said that God was arriving to judge a nation.

Before I decide what a picture means, I ask whether the Old Testament has already used it, and what it meant there. The parables are full of such pictures. The vineyard is Isaiah’s. The fig tree is Hosea’s and Jeremiah’s. The harvest is John the Baptist’s and Joel’s before him. Jesus was quoting old symbols to people who already knew them.

Read it for what it says

Those are the four questions. Who was He talking to? What did He say about when? What does the rest of Scripture say about it? What did those words mean before He used them?

I spent thirty-eight years letting other men answer those questions for me. I’m not asking you to let me answer them for you now. I’m asking you to open the passage and ask them yourself. If you want to try it on the whole of Jesus’ sermon before you go further, I have a short piece called “Put Yourself in Their Sandals” at thehereticalhorseman.com that walks through it.

A policy means what it says to the people it names, for the period it states. I’ve come to believe the Word of God deserves at least that much respect from its readers.

PART I: THE PATTERN

CHAPTER 1: WHY JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES, AND WHICH ONES THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

Nobody in the Gospels ever heard a parable and asked what century it was about.

Most of us were taught to read them the opposite way. We were handed the parables as timeless moral tales, true for every age and aimed at no one in particular. The ones about a master who goes away and comes back were filed under "the Second Coming," and for most of us that meant a coming still ahead. The story of a man who leaves his servants in charge and returns to settle accounts became a story about us, waiting.

The people who stood in front of Jesus didn't hear them that way. When He told the parable of the tenants in the Temple courts, Matthew records what happened next: "*When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them*" (**Matthew 21:45**). Mark and Luke say the same (**Mark 12:12**, **Luke 20:19**), and chapter 4 reads all three. The men who heard the story knew they were in it, and they were right.

This book is about a particular set of parables, the ones where a master leaves and comes back. It makes one claim about them. In the stories that show a reckoning, it falls on the people the story began with. No parable tells of a reckoning with servants the story never showed you. I believe the sermons those parables belong to put a date on the

return. Jesus said, “*there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom*” (**Matthew 16:28**). On the Mount of Olives He said, “*this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*” (**Matthew 24:34**). The parables tell in pictures what the time statements tell in so many words.

Before I make that case, I owe you two things. I owe you the reason Jesus taught this way at all, and I owe you a list of the parables I’m talking about, because the fastest way to lose this argument is to claim too much.

Why He spoke in parables

The disciples asked Him. “*Then the disciples came and said to him, ‘Why do you speak to them in parables?’ And he answered them, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given’*” (**Matthew 13:10–11**). Then He gave the reason, and it isn’t the one you would have guessed: “*This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand*” (**Matthew 13:13**).

The parables did two things at once. To the disciples they revealed. To “them,” the generation that had rejected John and was rejecting Him, they concealed. Matthew says that speaking this way was itself a prophecy coming true: “*All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable.*

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: 'I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world'" (**Matthew 13:34–35**). That is **Psalm 78:2**, from the psalm that recounts how the fathers in the wilderness saw the works of God, didn't believe, and were judged for it.

Two things follow from this.

First, a parable has an answer, and the disciples were given it. When they didn't understand the weeds, they asked, "*Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field*" (**Matthew 13:36**), and He explained it piece by piece. When Peter didn't know who a parable was aimed at, he asked that as well: "*Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?*" (**Luke 12:41**). The parables come with their own keys, and the keys are in the text. Those keys are what this book uses. I read the sentence before the parable and the sentence after it, because that's where Jesus put the answer.

Second, the parables were aimed. Nathan told David a story about a rich man who took a poor man's lamb, and when David pronounced the sentence Nathan said, "*You are the man!*" (**2 Samuel 12:7**). That's what a prophet's parable is for. The man listening convicts himself before he knows whose case he's judging. The parables of Jesus' last week work the same way, and Matthew, Mark, and Luke all stop to tell you the audience noticed.

“How long, O Lord?”

Jesus then tied that reason to Isaiah. “*Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive’*” (**Matthew 13:14**). He was quoting **Isaiah 6:9–10**, the day the prophet saw the Lord on His throne and was sent to a people whose ears would be heavy and whose eyes would be shut.

Have you ever read what Isaiah said next? He asked the question you would have asked.

“*Then I said, ‘How long, O Lord?’ And he said: ‘Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled.’ The holy seed is its stump*” (**Isaiah 6:11–13**).

Read that again. The blindness has an “until” on it. It lasts until the cities are empty and the land is a waste. Even the tenth that remains is burned a second time. What is left at the end is a stump, and the stump is called the holy seed.

Isaiah spoke those words about his own people in his own day, and they came true first when Assyria and then Babylon emptied the land. I’m not claiming Isaiah 6 skipped over that. I’m pointing at what Jesus did with it. He took Isaiah’s commission and said it was being fulfilled in the crowd in front of Him. John says the same of the people who saw

His signs and wouldn’t believe (**John 12:40**). Paul quotes the same verses to the leaders of the synagogue in Rome in the last scene of Acts (**Acts 28:26–27**). On three occasions the New Testament lays Isaiah’s commission on that generation.

If the blindness Jesus quoted came with an end date in Isaiah, and the end date was a ruined land, what should the people standing there have expected? I hear that stump in Paul’s remnant. He doesn’t quote Isaiah there, and the link is mine: “*So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace*” (**Romans 11:5**). Paul gives the hardening an “until” of his own in **Romans 11:25**, and that verse is a hard one that this book doesn’t take up. The nation was hardened, the land was about to be laid waste, and a holy seed remained. The reason Jesus gave for speaking in parables already carried the outline of this book.

Two families, and the ones I am leaving out

Jesus told about forty parables, depending on how you count. Some lists reach sixty by including the lamp, the salt, and other one-line comparisons. Some stop near thirty by counting only full stories. Appendix A gives my working list of forty. Most of them aren’t about the return of the master at all, and my argument depends on saying so at the start.

I sort them this way.

The first family is absence and return. A master, an owner, or a nobleman goes away, or a bridegroom is late in coming. The servants are given a charge. Time passes, a night in some

stories and “a long while” in others. The master comes back and settles with the people he left. There are seven of these: the wicked tenants (**Matthew 21:33–46**, **Mark 12:1–12**, **Luke 20:9–19**), the servants waiting for their master (**Luke 12:35–38**), the faithful and wise servant (**Matthew 24:45–51**, **Luke 12:42–48**), the doorkeeper (**Mark 13:34–37**), the ten virgins (**Matthew 25:1–13**), the talents (**Matthew 25:14–30**), and the minas (**Luke 19:11–27**). Six of the seven were told in the last week before the cross or at Jericho on the way into it. The seventh, in **Luke 12**, came earlier on the same journey. These are the parables this book is about, and chapter 2 lays them side by side.

The second family is growth and harvest. The kingdom is a mustard seed, leaven in flour, a field with wheat and weeds in it, seed growing while the farmer sleeps, a net full of fish. These parables are about what the kingdom does once it has come. Some say it keeps growing until it fills everything. Others say there’s a sorting at “*the end of the age*” (**Matthew 13:39**, **Matthew 13:40**, **Matthew 13:49**). That phrase is the one the disciples used in their question on the Mount of Olives (**Matthew 24:3**). This family bears on my claim, and Part IV takes it up. It’s a different kind of story, though. Nobody leaves in the mustard seed.

Everything else falls into three groups. One group is aimed at “this generation” and has no master who leaves: the children in the marketplace (“*to what shall I compare this generation?*” **Matthew 11:16**), the unclean spirit who returns with seven others (“*So also will it be with this evil*

generation," **Matthew 12:45**), the barren fig tree with one more year (**Luke 13:6–9**), the two sons, the great banquet, and the wedding feast where the king "*sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city*" (**Matthew 22:7**). These are judgment parables. Some of them sit right beside the absence parables and share their verdict, and I use them where the text itself joins them. A second group is about grace and invitation: the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son, the two debtors, the laborers in the vineyard, the Pharisee and the tax collector. A third group is about discipleship: the sower, the hidden treasure, the pearl, the two builders, the unforgiving servant, the good Samaritan, the friend at midnight, the rich fool, the dishonest manager, the rich man and Lazarus.

Is the good Samaritan about AD 70? It isn't. The lost sheep is about a shepherd's joy over one sinner. The sower is about how the Word is received in four kinds of ground. If I folded those into my claim, I'd be reading a timetable into a story that doesn't have one, which is the very thing I say the newspaper-prophecy industry does. You would need only one example to pull the whole book down. My claim is narrow on purpose, and the next section states it exactly.

What "the same servants" means

In most of these parables a master leaves a set of servants, tenants, or citizens, and when he comes back he reckons with those same people. The tenants who beat the servants and killed the son are the tenants the owner comes and destroys

(**Matthew 21:41**, **Luke 20:16**). The servant set over the household is the servant found faithful or found drunk when the master arrives (**Matthew 24:46–51**). The ten virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom are the ten the story sorts when he comes, five inside the door and five outside it (**Matthew 25:10–12**). The master of the talents "*settled accounts with them*" (**Matthew 25:19**), the three he gave the money to. The nobleman, "*when he returned, having received the kingdom*," called for "*these servants to whom he had given the money*" (**Luke 19:15**). The citizens who said "*We do not want this man to reign over us*" (**Luke 19:14**) are the citizens slaughtered at the end (**Luke 19:27**). In no story does the master leave one set of servants and come back to a set the story hasn't shown you. The tenants are the hard case, because their cast covers centuries, and chapter 4 takes that up.

I want to state the claim once, exactly, with its exceptions, because an overstated claim is what gets a book taken apart. In the stories that show a reckoning, it falls on the people the story began with, and I believe the sermons date it to the generation Jesus was speaking to. Four of the seven stand inside the sermon that says "*this generation*." The tenants are dated two chapters later (**Matthew 23:36**). For **Luke 12** and the minas I have to argue the date from the parallels, and I'll say so when I get there. Several of the seven need a word of their own. In the ten virgins nobody leaves. The bridegroom is late, and five of the ten are outside the door when he comes. In the doorkeeper the master's return is warned of and never told. In the tenants the cast covers many

generations, since the servants are the prophets, and chapter 4 faces what that does to my argument. The “you” commands are attached to the watch parables. The minas and the tenants have no such command. For the tenants, three Gospel writers tell you who took the story personally. For the minas, Luke tells you why it was told (**Luke 19:11**), and chapter 5 argues from that. In the tenants the one who comes is the owner and the Son is the one who was killed, so that parable shows the pattern and doesn’t by itself date the coming of the Son of Man.

Jesus didn’t say every man listening would live to see the return. He said “*some standing here*” would (**Matthew 16:28**). James was dead within fifteen years (**Acts 12:2**), and Jesus told Peter how he would die (**John 21:18–19**). The “you” in these sermons is a generation and a flock, and some of that flock would still be standing.

The pattern alone proves nothing. A story has a cast, and the cast stays on stage. That’s the strongest objection my claim faces, and chapter 2 answers it before doing anything else.

The short answer is that I don’t rest the claim on the plot. I rest it on the frame around the plot. Jesus attached commands to these stories and addressed them to “you”: “*You also must be ready*” (**Luke 12:40**, **Matthew 24:44**). The men who heard them reacted as men who knew they were meant. The sermons the stories belong to carry time statements. The plot shows the pattern, and the frame says who the pattern is for.

The one question under all of it

Most people who disagree with this book agree with more of it than they expect. For the parables Jesus told on the Mount of Olives, they agree that the departure is the ascension. They agree that the return is the coming of the Son of Man. They agree that the servants are the people of God and the tenants are Israel's leaders. Many of them agree that the burned city of the wedding feast is Jerusalem in AD 70, and commentators far outside my view have said so for centuries. The disagreement is over when the master came back.

One question sits under every chapter. When Jesus told the men in front of Him to watch, were they the ones who would be found watching?

Suppose "*you also must be ready*" was said to men who would all be dead for two thousand years before the master came. Then the parables are about us, and the men who heard them were given a warning they could never act on. Suppose it was said to a generation that would live to see it. Then the parables are about them. We read them the way we read Nathan's parable to David, as a sentence delivered on time to the people it named.

I believe the second reading is the faithful one, and I believe the text says so in more places than most of us were ever shown.

Weren't the Mount of Olives parables told to the disciples, not to the chief priests?

Yes, and it matters. "*They perceived that he was speaking about them*" shows that the parable of the tenants was aimed at the men in the Temple courts. It doesn't show that the talents or the virgins were. Those were told privately to the disciples on the Mount of Olives (**Matthew 24:3**). You could grant that the chief priests were the tenants and still hold that the disciples in Matthew 24 and 25 stand for the church through the ages.

This chapter hasn't earned that step, and I haven't asked you to take it yet. Chapter 2 has to earn it from the commands Jesus gave those disciples and from the date He put on His answer.

Didn't Jesus tell parables to hide the truth, and not only because people were blind?

Mark's wording is harder than Matthew's. In Mark, Jesus says that for those outside everything is in parables, "*so that 'they may indeed see but not perceive'*" (**Mark 4:12**). If you take that to mean the hiding was the purpose and not only the result, you're reading Mark fairly, and I have no quarrel with you. The point this book needs holds on both readings. The parables had a target, and the target was the generation in front of Him.

Go deeper: "Put yourself in their sandals. Would you have heard two thousand years?" at TheHereticalHorseman.com/posts/their-sandals

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CHAPTER 2: THE PATTERN: A MASTER LEAVES, AND THE SAME SERVANTS ANSWER

I want you to see the seven parables side by side before I say anything about them. Each is cut down to its plot.

A landowner plants a vineyard, leases it to tenants, and goes "*into another country*" (**Matthew 21:33**). He sends servants for the fruit, and the tenants beat and kill them. He sends his son, and they kill him. "*When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?*" (**Matthew 21:40**). The audience answers its own case: "*He will put those wretches to a miserable death*" (**Matthew 21:41**). Luke adds how long the owner was gone, "*for a long while*" (**Luke 20:9**), and ends the same way: "*He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others*" (**Luke 20:16**).

Servants wait up for a master who is away at a wedding feast. "*Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes*" (**Luke 12:37**).

A master sets one servant over his household and leaves. "*Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes*" (**Matthew 24:46**). If that servant says to himself, "*My master is delayed*" (**Matthew 24:48**), and beats his fellow servants and gets drunk, "*the master of that*

servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces" (**Matthew 24:50–51**).

"*It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake*" (**Mark 13:34**). He may come "*in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning*" (**Mark 13:35**).

Ten virgins take their lamps to meet a bridegroom. "*As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept*" (**Matthew 25:5**). At midnight he comes. Five go in with him, and five are shut out.

A man going on a journey calls his servants, entrusts his property to them, and goes away (**Matthew 25:14–15**). "*Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them*" (**Matthew 25:19**).

"*A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return*" (**Luke 19:12**). He gives ten servants a mina each. "*But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us'*" (**Luke 19:14**). "*When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him*" (**Luke 19:15**). The servants are rewarded or stripped, and then he says, "*as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me*" (**Luke 19:27**).

That’s seven stories with one plot. Someone with authority leaves. The people he leaves are given something to hold: a vineyard, a household, a door, a lamp, a sum of money. He’s gone for a while, a night in some stories and “a long time” in others. He comes back. In each story that shows the reckoning, the people who answer for what they held are the people he left holding it.

Doesn’t every story keep the same cast?

I said in chapter 1 that the plot proves nothing alone. I want to make the case against myself as well as I can.

A story needs a cast, and the cast stays. If I tell you about a father who leaves on a long business trip and comes back to find out what his children did with the house, the same children will be at the door when he returns. That’s how a story works. Nobody hears it and says, “He must have come back within their lifetimes.” The children stand for whoever is in the house when the father walks in. If Jesus had wanted to say that the Son of Man would return in forty generations, He had no way to tell a parable with forty generations in it. He would have told this very story, with one set of servants at both ends, and you would take the servants to mean “My people, whoever they are, when I come.” On that reading, “the same servants” is how stories are told and says nothing about the calendar.

It’s a good objection, and I grant what it’s owed. The plot alone doesn’t date the return. Jesus’ own parable of the tenants folds centuries of prophets

into one cast, and chapter 4 faces that. If the cast list were all I had, I wouldn't have written this book.

I have more than the cast list. I have the frame. In most of these parables, Jesus steps out of the story and speaks to the people in front of Him as "you," with a command they could carry out. In the tenants, the Gospel writers tell you who took it personally, and for the minas Luke tells you why the story was told.

The frame: who the parables were for

Start with Luke 12, because it's the one place where someone in the audience asked.

Jesus has just told the parable of the servants waiting for their master, and then the thief: "*You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect*" (**Luke 12:40**). Peter interrupts. "*Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?*" (**Luke 12:41**).

Isn't that the very question this book is asking? Is the warning for the men standing there, or for everyone who will ever read it?

Jesus answers with another parable. "*Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?*" (**Luke 12:42**). It's the story Matthew 24 tells. The manager says, "*My master is delayed in coming*" (**Luke 12:45**), and "*the master of that servant will come on a day*

when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces" (**Luke 12:46**).

Peter asked whether it was for us or for all, and Jesus answered with a story and left the question standing. He described a manager who is alive when the master leaves, alive while the master is away, and alive when the master returns. Peter was being set over the household. Peter himself didn't live to see AD 70, and Jesus had told him how he would die (**John 21:18–19**). The "you" is the flock he led, and Jesus said some of them would still be standing (**Matthew 16:28**). Jesus had just told this group, "*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*" (**Luke 12:32**). The "you" who must be ready in **Luke 12:40** is the little flock of **Luke 12:32** and the Peter of **Luke 12:41**.

Go next to the Mount of Olives. Four disciples came to Him privately (**Mark 13:3**) and asked when the Temple would fall and what the sign of His coming would be (**Matthew 24:3**). He answered them for two chapters. Inside that answer, after He had said "*this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*" (**Matthew 24:34**), He gave the thief and said, "*Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect*" (**Matthew 24:44**). The faithful servant comes next. The ten virgins follow, ending with "*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour*" (**Matthew 25:13**). The talents open with

the word "*For*" (**Matthew 25:14**), which makes that parable the reason for the watch command just given.

Mark's version is shorter and blunter. After the doorkeeper, Jesus says, "*And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake*" (**Mark 13:37**). The "you" in that sentence is the four men on the hill. The "all" widens the command past them, and you may fairly ask how far. It leaves the date where He put it. "Stay awake" comes seven verses after "*this generation will not pass away*" (**Mark 13:30**).

The parables say "the servants," and the frame says "you." The watch parables of the last week are wrapped in commands given to named men on a named hill, in answer to a question about a building they were looking at.

The parables of the last week have the other kind of frame. They carry a verdict on the audience, and the Gospel writer notes that the audience knew it. "*When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them*" (**Matthew 21:45**). Luke introduces the minas with the crowd's own expectation, "*because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately*" (**Luke 19:11**). Luke says the parable was told to correct that hope, and chapter 5 takes up what that does to my case. The citizens who wouldn't have the nobleman reign over them are the people of the city Jesus is about to ride into and weep over, "*because you did not know the time of your visitation*" (**Luke 19:44**).

Put the two frames together. In the watch parables Jesus says you must be ready. In the city parables the audience says He means us. Would the disciples, who heard both, have gone home thinking the servants stood for someone else?

The word for "delay"

Two of these parables turn on one word. The wicked servant says, "*My master is delayed*" (**Matthew 24:48**). The bridegroom "*was delayed*" (**Matthew 25:5**). The Greek verb in both is *chronizō*, to take one's time. The New Testament uses it five times. Three are in these parables (**Matthew 24:48**, **Matthew 25:5**, **Luke 12:45**). One is Zechariah lingering in the Temple longer than the people expected (**Luke 1:21**). The fifth is in Hebrews, and it's the only one spoken about Christ's coming outside a parable: "*Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay*" (**Hebrews 10:37**).

The wicked servant said the master delays. Hebrews told its first readers that He wouldn't. Chapter 6 takes that word apart. Jesus also says in His own voice that the bridegroom "*was delayed*," so the delay in these stories is real. The wicked servant is the one who draws the wrong conclusion from it.

Who saw this before I did

I'm not the first to see the pattern.

Gary DeMar made the “same servants” argument in print (***DeMar, Last Days Madness, 4th ed., pp. 148–151***). On the wicked servant he writes, “The master did not return to cut the evil slave’s distant relatives in pieces (24:51); he cut him in pieces. The evil slave was alive when the master left, and he was alive when the master returned. In this context, a ‘long time’ must be measured against a person’s lifetime” (***DeMar, The Olivet Discourse in Outline, p. 119***). On the talents he says the settlement “is made with the same slaves who received the talents” (***pp. 119–120***). He then lists the New Testament’s uses of “a long time” and concludes, “Nowhere does it mean centuries or multiple generations” (***p. 120***). Chapter 8 goes through that list verse by verse.

Joel McDurmon calls the waiting servants and the thief “two perspectives on the same coming event,” and says the wicked manager’s motive is “unbelief in the master’s soon return” (***McDurmon, Jesus v. Jerusalem, pp. 22, 24***). James Jordan once held that Jesus “is changing the venue” at **Matthew 24:36**. He later wrote, “Against this view, which I can no longer hold,” that the “but” of that verse “is just a general connective,” and that the verses after it “make much more sense as a description of the coming exile of the Jews, not of the final coming of Jesus at the end of history” (***Jordan, Matthew 23–25, p. 191***). John Bray concluded that in Matthew 24 “there is no ‘transition’ verse separating the destruction of Jerusalem from another event 2,000 years or so in the future” (***Bray, Matthew 24 Fulfilled, p. 121***).

Each of these men stops somewhere, and this book has to go on from there. Bray's commentary ends at **Matthew 24:51** and never reaches the virgins or the talents. DeMar's outline stops its verse-by-verse work at **Matthew 24:35**. Jordan carries the first-century reading through **Matthew 25:13** and then draws a line at **Matthew 25:14** (***Jordan, p. 210***). Chapter 8 quotes him. R. T. France, the British commentator on Matthew, draws his line earlier, at **Matthew 24:36**, and Kenneth Gentry draws it there with him.

Among readers who give everything in **Matthew 24:4–35** to AD 70, the parables get handed to the future at one of three places: at **Matthew 24:36**, at **Matthew 25:14**, or at the sheep and the goats. Michael Sullivan carries the whole block through to AD 70 (***Sullivan, "What Is Full Preterism?"***), and that's what I believe.

You should know where the real fights are before you read on. Chapter 8 answers Jordan's five reasons for a line at **Matthew 25:14**. Chapter 11 takes the sheep and the goats. Chapter 12 answers France's reasons for a line at **Matthew 24:36**. This chapter has one job. The seven parables share a plot, the plot alone proves nothing, and the frame around each of them points at an audience.

Wasn't Jesus speaking to the disciples as stand-ins for the whole church?

You could grant that "*you also must be ready*" was said to the disciples and still hold that Jesus spoke to them as representatives of the church in every

age. A pastor says “you” to a congregation and means everyone who will ever sit in those pews. That’s a real reading, and it isn’t a foolish one.

My answer is from the setting. The “you” of **Matthew 24:44** sits inside an answer to a question about a building, ten verses after “*this generation will not pass away*.” **Mark 13:37** widens the command to “all,” and I grant that it helps the stand-in reading on the question of who must watch. It does nothing to the date in **Mark 13:30**.

That answer shows the command was given first to those men about their own generation. It doesn’t show that the command has nothing to say to you. Watchfulness is a good thing in any century. What the stand-in reading can’t do is move the master’s return out of the generation Jesus named, because the date is in the sermon and the story doesn’t change it.

Go deeper: “Every prophet warned his own generation. Except Jesus?” at TheHereticalHorseman.com/posts/every-prophet

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PART II: THE PARABLES OF THE CITY

CHAPTER 3: THE TOWER, THE GALILEANS, AND THE FIG TREE WITH ONE MORE YEAR

This chapter is about a parable in which nobody goes away and nobody comes back. I'm putting it first among the city parables anyway, because it's the clearest case in the Gospels of Jesus taking the news of the day and turning it into a clock.

Luke 13 opens with a report. "*There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices*" (**Luke 13:1**). We know nothing else about the incident. Josephus records several of Pilate's clashes with the people of Judea, and he doesn't mention this one. Some Galileans had come to Jerusalem to sacrifice, Pilate's soldiers had killed them in the act, and their blood ran with the blood of the animals. The people who brought the story to Jesus probably expected Him to say something about Pilate, or about the Galileans, or about God's justice.

He said something about the people who brought it.

"*Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish*" (**Luke 13:2–3**). Then He added a second disaster they hadn't raised: "*Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived*

in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (**Luke 13:4–5**). Then, without a break, "*And he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, "Look, for three years now I've come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?" And he answered him, "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down"'*" (**Luke 13:6–9**).

Most of us were taught that the first five verses are a lesson about suffering. Bad things don't happen only to bad people, so you shouldn't judge the victims. That lesson is in the passage, and it's true. Is it what the passage is for? If it were, the fig tree wouldn't follow it, and "*you will all likewise perish*" wouldn't be said twice. Jesus told them that the victims were no worse than they were, and that the same thing was coming for them unless they repented. The point of the two disasters is that the survivors were guilty.

"Likewise"

The passage turns on one word, said twice. "*Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish*." The Greek is *homoiōs* in verse 3 and *hōsautōs* in verse 5. Both can mean "in the same way."

In the first, a Roman governor's soldiers killed worshippers at the altar, and human blood ran with the blood of the sacrifices. In the second, a tower in Jerusalem fell on the people under it. One

was the sword of Rome in the Temple. The other was falling stone in the city. Jesus took two events His audience already knew and told the nation that this was a picture of them, unless they repented.

Forty years later both pictures came true in the same city, on a scale the people who brought Him the news couldn't have imagined.

Josephus was with the Romans by then. He reports what went on inside the city in the months before Titus arrived, when three factions were fighting each other for the Temple. John of Gischala had engines of war that threw stones and darts over the buildings into the Temple courts, and Josephus says they "fell upon the priests, and those that were about the sacred offices; insomuch that many persons who came thither with great zeal from the ends of the earth, to offer sacrifices at this celebrated place, which was esteemed holy by all mankind, fell down before their own sacrifices themselves, and sprinkled that altar which was venerable among all men, both Greeks and Barbarians, with their own blood; till the dead bodies of strangers were mingled together with those of their own country, and those of profane persons with those of the priests, and the blood of all sorts of dead carcasses stood in lakes in the holy courts themselves" (***Josephus, Wars of the Jews 5.1.3***).

Read that again. Worshippers' blood was mingled with their sacrifices, in the Temple. This time it was the nation, far more than a handful of Galileans, and the men who did it were Jerusalem's own fighters.

Then the towers came down. When the Romans broke into the upper city in September of AD 70, the defenders abandoned the great towers of Herod's palace and, in Josephus's words, "fled immediately to that valley which was under Siloam" (***Wars 6.8.5***). That's the same Siloam where the tower had fallen on eighteen men a generation earlier. The Romans had already "set all on fire as far as Siloam" (***Wars 6.7.2***). When there was nothing left to kill or plunder, "Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne; and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. . . . but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited" (***Wars 7.1.1***).

One tower fell on eighteen men, and Jesus said, "*unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.*" Forty years later the city fell to the Roman sword, and what was left of it was pulled down stone by stone. The only towers left standing were kept as a monument to what had been destroyed.

I don't think Jesus was predicting those events in detail from Pilate's atrocity and a falling tower. I think He was doing what Nathan did with the lamb. He took something His audience already knew and told them it was a picture of themselves. The manner of the death matched because the judgment He was warning about was the same

kind of judgment, a city taken by the sword and pulled down on its own people. He said so in ordinary speech a few chapters later: "*your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation*" (**Luke 19:43–44**).

The clock around the passage

Luke didn't drop these verses into his Gospel at random. Read what sits on either side of them.

Just before them, Jesus turns to the crowds: "*When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming.' And so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?*" (**Luke 12:54–56**). Then He tells a small parable about a man on his way to court: "*As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny*" (**Luke 12:58–59**). The nation was already on the road to the courthouse. The time to settle was on the way, before the verdict.

Then come the Galileans, the tower, and the fig tree.

At the end of the same chapter comes the lament: "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! Behold, your house is forsaken*" (**Luke 13:34–35**). The verse goes on, "*you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'*" Many read that as a welcome still to come, and you should know it's there.

I read the run from **Luke 12:54** to **Luke 13:9** as one argument, and the lament that closes the chapter gives its verdict. You can read the weather, and you can't read the hour. You're on your way to court and should settle now. The dead at the altar and under the tower are a picture of what is coming for you. The fig tree has one more season. Your house is forsaken.

Joel McDurmon writes that the passage from the weather signs through the fig tree "has one theme: 'the time is short.' And put in Jesus' immediate situation, that theme was specific to His audience: 'the time is short for you'" (***McDurmon, Jesus v. Jerusalem, p. 41***). He also says that this passage started his whole project on Luke's travel narrative: "Once I realized the eschatological meaning here, the whole section and all the parables immediately begged for preterist analysis" (***p. 38***). I understand why. Once you see that "you will all likewise perish" is a warning to a

nation living on a deadline, the parables around it stop being timeless. They're addressed to somebody.

The fig tree

Israel had been a fig tree in the prophets long before Jesus told this story. "*Like the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season, I saw your fathers*" (**Hosea 9:10**). When Jeremiah pronounced the LORD's sentence on Judah before the first destruction of Jerusalem, he put it this way: "*When I would gather them, declares the LORD, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered*" (**Jeremiah 8:13**). Micah lamented a nation without a righteous man in it: "*there is no cluster to eat, no first-ripe fig that my soul desires*" (**Micah 7:1**). A fig tree planted in a vineyard, with an owner who comes for fruit and finds none, was a familiar picture to that audience. It was Israel under inspection.

The owner's verdict is the one the prophets had already given: "*Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?*" The vinedresser's plea is the only new thing in the story: "*let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.*"

Two things about this are usually missed.

First, the axe was already out. John the Baptist had said so at the Jordan: "*Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown*

into the fire" (**Luke 3:9**). The fig tree parable doesn't introduce the threat. It extends the deadline. The owner has been coming for fruit, the sentence is already written, and the vinedresser buys one more season. The parable ends with the axe still in the picture: "*if not, you can cut it down.*" Nobody in the story suggests the tree will be spared for good.

Second, the extra year is a year. The parable gives a measured extension. "*This year also.*" "*Next year.*" McDurmon takes the extra year of digging and manure as Jesus' own ministry, and he calls it "the last chance" (***p. 41***). Older commentators tried other schemes. I don't fix the math to a calendar, because the text doesn't. The shape is what matters. The same tree receives a short reprieve with a limit on it, and then the verdict comes. The men who heard the parable were the tree, and many of them would be alive for the verdict.

Matthew gives the other end of the picture. In Passion week, on the road into Jerusalem, "*seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, 'May no fruit ever come from you again!' And the fig tree withered at once*" (**Matthew 21:19**). I read that act as the parable of **Luke 13** carried out. The owner had come looking for fruit one more time, and the extra season was over. Mark frames the same event around the cleansing of the Temple. The fig tree is cursed on the way in and

found withered on the way out (**Mark 11:12–14**, **Mark 11:20–21**), so that you can't miss what the tree stands for.

That's why this parable stands at the head of the city parables, before the tenants and the nobleman. It sets the clock they all run on. The fig tree has one more year. The tenants have until the owner comes. The nobleman's citizens have until he returns with the kingdom. In each case the story is aimed at the people in the audience, and the reckoning is near enough that Jesus can tell them to settle on the way to court.

The fig tree is a judgment parable with a clock in it, and I don't claim it's about the *parousia*, the Greek word for His coming. It belongs in this book because it tells you, before the absence parables begin, what kind of time Jesus' audience was living in. They were living on borrowed time.

Isn't Jesus just teaching that bad things happen to good people?

He does teach that. If you say the point of **Luke 13:1–5** is "do not assume the victims were worse sinners than you," you're repeating something Jesus said. He said it on the way to a second point, "*unless you repent, you will all likewise perish*," and He said the second point twice. Then He told a parable about a tree that's one season from the axe. Which point do you think the passage is built around?

This answer shows that the warning is aimed at a nation and at that generation. It doesn't prove that suffering is always a judgment, and Jesus says the opposite in the same breath.

Doesn't "likewise" just mean "you too"?

It can. *Homoiōs* and *hōsautōs* can mean "in the same manner," and they can mean "also." If they mean only "also," then the match between the two disasters and the way Jerusalem fell is a striking providence, and Jesus wasn't pointing to it. I think the two disasters He chose, one at the altar and one of falling stone, make "in the same manner" the better reading. McDurmon reads it that way: "it would involve the toppling of buildings in Jerusalem" (***p. 39***).

If you take "likewise" as "you too," you still have a warning to the nation, addressed to the generation standing there, and that's all this chapter needs. The passages from Josephus are the record of what "likewise" turned out to mean. I don't offer them as proof that Jesus predicted each detail.

Put yourself in their sandals

You came to Jesus with terrible news. Pilate's men have killed your countrymen at the altar. You expect Him to be angry at Rome. He looks at you and says that unless you repent, you'll die the same way. Then He tells you about a tree that has one more year.

Would you have gone home thinking He meant people two thousand years away?

Go deeper: Tough Verses, “Israel became a nation in 1948. The fig tree has put out its leaves.,” at TheHereticalHorseman.com/hard-texts#fig-tree-1948

CHAPTER 4: THE TENANTS AND THE BURNED CITY

If I had to pick one parable to show that Jesus' audience knew whom the story was about, it would be this one. The text tells you three times that they knew.

It is Passion week. Jesus has ridden into Jerusalem to shouts of "*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*" (**Matthew 21:9**), which is **Psalm 118:26**. He has cleared the Temple courts. The next morning He has cursed a fig tree with leaves and no fruit, which I read as the parable of the last chapter carried out. Now He's teaching in the Temple, and "*the chief priests and the elders of the people*" (**Matthew 21:23**) have come to ask by what authority He does these things. He answers with a question about John's baptism, which they refuse to answer. Then He tells them three parables in a row: the two sons, the tenants, and the wedding feast. This chapter is about the second and the third, because each one has a sentence handed down in it.

The song Isaiah sang

Jesus didn't invent the vineyard. He quoted it.

"*Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country*" (**Matthew 21:33**). Men raised on

Isaiah would have heard the opening of **Isaiah 5** under those words: *"My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes"* (**Isaiah 5:1–2**). The winepress and the tower are Isaiah's details, and the fence answers to the hedge and wall of **Isaiah 5:5**, which is why commentators of nearly every school hear Isaiah here.

Isaiah's song is a lawsuit. The owner asks the men of Judah to judge between him and his vineyard (**Isaiah 5:3**), and then he pronounces the sentence himself: *"I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste"* (**Isaiah 5:5–6**). Then Isaiah tells you who the vineyard is: *"For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!"* (**Isaiah 5:7**).

Isaiah's vineyard was Judah before Assyria and Babylon came. Jesus' vineyard is the same vineyard, with the same owner, a generation before the Romans came. Jesus adds one thing, and it's the tenants. In Isaiah the vineyard itself fails. In Jesus' version the vineyard is fine, and the men who were trusted with it are the problem. The lawsuit has been filed again, and this time the defendants are the men standing in front of Him.

The owner in the story lives somewhere else. He "*went into another country,*" and Matthew's verb means to go abroad. The story treats him as an owner who is away and still very much the owner, who sends to his vineyard from where he's and finally comes himself. The owner is God, and God's country is heaven. I draw that from the story. The word by itself only says he went abroad.

The servants, the son, and the sentence

"*When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them*" (**Matthew 21:34–36**). The Chronicler had already told this part of the story about Judah before the first destruction: "*The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy*" (**2 Chronicles 36:15–16**). The servants are the prophets, as nearly everyone who comments on the parable agrees.

"*Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him*" (**Matthew 21:37–39**).

Jesus was telling the chief priests what they were about to do, in the same week they did it. Luke's version has the owner thinking it over: "*What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him*" (**Luke 20:13**). "Beloved Son" is what the Father called Him at the baptism (**Luke 3:22**). The men in that courtyard had good reason to know whom He meant.

Then Jesus asked a question. "*When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?*" (**Matthew 21:40**). He let the defendants pronounce the sentence. Isaiah had asked the men of Judah to judge between the owner and his vineyard. The chief priests answered: "*He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons*" (**Matthew 21:41**). In Luke, Jesus gives the sentence Himself and the crowd recoils: "*He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.*" When they heard this, they said, "*Surely not!*" (**Luke 20:16**). The verdict is on the record in both Gospels, and it has two parts. The tenants are destroyed, and the vineyard is given to others.

Then Jesus confirmed it with the psalm the crowd had sung at the gate. "*Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?*" (**Matthew 21:42**, quoting **Psalm 118:22–23**). The crowd had sung verse 26 at the gate. Jesus handed the builders verse 22. "*Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and*

given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him" (**Matthew 21:43–44**).

He said "from you." He was speaking to the chief priests and the Pharisees in that courtyard, and the text leaves the sentence on them.

"They perceived that he was speaking about them"

All three Gospels put one fact in the way of the futurist reading.

Matthew writes, "*When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet*" (**Matthew 21:45–46**). Mark writes, "*And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them*" (**Mark 12:12**). Luke writes, "*The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people*" (**Luke 20:19**).

The men in the story knew they were the tenants. I think they understood that the owner was coming for them. They knew "*the kingdom of God will be taken away from you*" meant them. Their response was to go and do the very thing the parable said they would do. Joel McDurmon says it well: "The Pharisees and priests were clever enough, however, to recognize that the parable was spoken

about them (Luke 20:19). The irony, for them, is that this recognition drove them only to begin the very crime that the parable foretold they would commit" (***McDurmon, Jesus v. Jerusalem, p. 153***).

Now ask the question this book asks of every absence parable. When the owner came back, who did he come back to? The parable answers, "those tenants." The men who heard it answered, "us." The story has no third generation of tenants in it. The generation that killed the son is the generation the owner destroys.

If the owner's coming is the judgment of AD 70, the parable fits the history. The generation that crucified Jesus was the generation that saw the city and the Temple destroyed, and in those same forty years the kingdom passed to "*a people producing its fruits*," the church that the book of Acts describes. If the owner's coming is still future, then Jesus told the chief priests that judgment was coming on them and their city, and two thousand years have passed without it. Can you make that second reading fit the words "those tenants"?

Gary DeMar makes the point this way: "There is no mistaking the context, the audience, and the time of judgment; the generation with whom Jesus spoke would be destroyed within forty years, along with the temple and the city" (***DeMar, Last Days Madness, 4th ed., p. 41***).

“For a long while”

Luke’s version carries one phrase the others don’t. “*A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while*” (**Luke 20:9**). The Greek is *chronous hikanous*, which means a considerable time.

How long is that “long while”? If the servants are the prophets, it’s centuries. The tenants who beat the first servant and the tenants who killed the son lived hundreds of years apart, and the story still calls them “*those tenants*.” Jesus said the same thing without a parable. He told the scribes and Pharisees that they were the sons of those who murdered the prophets, and that “*all the righteous blood shed on earth*” would come on them (**Matthew 23:31–35**).

I have to be honest about what that does to my argument. A parable can fold many generations into one cast, and this one does. I can’t use Luke’s “long while” to show that a long time fits inside one lifetime, and chapter 8 doesn’t use it that way.

Two things remain. The parable shows its generations. Servant after servant is sent, and then the son, so you can see the years pass inside the story. The reckoning also lands on one generation, the one that killed the son: “*Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation*” (**Matthew 23:36**). A long history stood behind those tenants, and the owner’s coming still fell on the men of Jesus’ day and their

city. He told them so in the verse between: "*Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers*" (**Matthew 23:32**).

Moses had said it would end this way. Before he died he told Israel, "*in the days to come evil will befall you*" (**Deuteronomy 31:29**), and he taught them a song about it. The song speaks of "*a crooked and twisted generation*" (**Deuteronomy 32:5**) and has God say, "*I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation*" (**Deuteronomy 32:20**). Israel had seen hard endings before Jesus' day, and I don't claim the song skipped over them. What I can show you is who picked up its words. Jesus called the people in front of Him a "*faithless and twisted generation*" (**Matthew 17:17**). Peter told the crowd at Pentecost, "*Save yourselves from this crooked generation*" (**Acts 2:40**). The generations of the fathers killed the prophets, and the generation that Jesus and Peter named with the song's words filled up the measure.

Chapter 8 asks whether the talents show any such succession.

The wedding feast and the burned city

Jesus didn't stop at the tenants. "*And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat*

calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.'" But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city'" (**Matthew 22:1–7**).

The king in this parable never leaves, and the story is still the tenants told from the other side. The servants are sent and killed. The sentence falls on "*those murderers*," the same people who did the killing. This time Jesus names the form of the sentence: he "*burned their city*." Then the feast goes on without them: "*'Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests*" (**Matthew 22:9–10**). The vineyard is given to others, and the hall is filled from the roads. They're two pictures of one transfer. The parable doesn't end there. The king comes in to look at the guests, and one is thrown out (**Matthew 22:11–14**). That inspection comes after the city is burned, and chapter 8 comes back to it.

A chapter later, still in the Temple, speaking to the crowds and His disciples and turning on the scribes and Pharisees (**Matthew 23:1–2**, **Matthew 23:13**), Jesus dropped the pictures: "*so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.*

Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. . . . See, your house is left to you desolate" (**Matthew 23:35–36**, **Matthew 23:38**). The blood of the servants, the sentence on the murderers, the desolate house, and "this generation" are all there. That's the tenants and the wedding feast without the parable.

Josephus is brief and terrible about what followed. Of the Temple he writes, "that fatal day was come, according to the revolution of ages; it was the tenth day of the month Lous, [Ab,] upon which it was formerly burnt by the king of Babylon" (***Josephus, Wars of the Jews 6.4.5***). Of the city, in the passage quoted in the last chapter, Titus ordered it demolished to the foundations and left three towers "to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was" (***Wars 7.1.1***). Of the people he writes, "the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege eleven hundred thousand, the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation [with the citizens of Jerusalem], but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army" (***Wars 6.9.3***). Scholars dispute Josephus's numbers, and I don't need them to be exact. I need only what nobody disputes. The city was burned within the lifetime of the men who heard "*he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.*"

Couldn’t “a miserable death” mean the final judgment of those men, and not the fall of their city?

It could, taken alone. You can grant that the kingdom passed to the church in the first century and still hold that “*put those wretches to a miserable death*” is what those men will face at the last judgment.

My answer comes from the parable’s own neighbors. **Matthew 22:7** names the sentence as a burned city. **Matthew 23:36–38** dates it to “this generation” and a desolate house. Those verses were spoken in the same Temple, in the same visit, about the same leadership. What this proves is that Jesus gave the sentence a form and a date. It doesn’t prove what became of each chief priest. The step from “the city” to “those men” is my inference about what the fall of the city meant for the leaders in it.

If these tenants cover centuries, why can’t the servants in the other parables?

They could, as far as storytelling goes. This parable shows that Jesus was willing to put many generations into one cast, and I won’t use Luke’s “*long while*” to argue that a long time fits inside one life. Luke’s phrase, *chronous hikanous*, is also different Greek from Matthew’s “*a long time*” in the talents, *polyn chronon*, much time.

What this parable gives me is smaller. When Jesus folds generations together, He lets you see it, and He still lands the reckoning on one generation and names it. Chapter 8 asks whether the talents show anything of the kind.

Put yourself in their sandals

You're a chief priest. You came to the Temple this morning to demand this man's credentials. He has told you a story about tenants who beat the owner's servants and killed his son, and He has made you say out loud what the owner will do to them. Then He looked at you and said the kingdom of God will be taken away from you.

Can you say you would have heard "those tenants" and thought of anyone but yourself?

Go deeper: "God filed a lawsuit against His own people. Jesus read the verdict." at TheHereticalHorseman.com/posts/covenant-lawsuit

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CHAPTER 5: THE NOBLEMAN AND THE FAR COUNTRY

Luke tells you why Jesus told this parable before he tells you the parable, and his reason is the verse futurists love most in the whole passage.

"*As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately*" (**Luke 19:11**).

As the argument goes, this is Jesus Himself correcting people who thought the kingdom was near. The crowd thought it was close, He told them a story about a nobleman who goes far away and comes back after a long absence, and the lesson is to slow down. If that's what the verse means, then this is the one parable in the Gospels where Jesus pushes His coming off into the distance. A book that argues the opposite has to answer it first. I'll answer it first.

Didn't Jesus tell this parable because the kingdom was not near?

Start with the word "immediately." The Greek word is *parachrēma*, and it means on the spot. Luke is almost the only New Testament writer who uses it. Sixteen of its eighteen uses are in Luke and Acts, and the other two are Matthew's fig tree, which withered "*at once*" (**Matthew 21:19–20**). Look at how Luke uses it. Zechariah's tongue is loosed and "*immediately*" he speaks (**Luke 1:64**). The woman with the discharge touches Jesus'

garment and "*immediately*" the flow stops (**Luke 8:44**). The bent woman is straightened "*immediately*" (**Luke 13:13**). The blind man at Jericho, one scene earlier, "*immediately*" recovers his sight (**Luke 18:43**). Peter denies Christ and "*immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed*" (**Luke 22:60**). Sapphira hears Peter's words and "*immediately*" falls dead (**Acts 5:10**).

Did any of those take forty years? Did any of them take a week? Luke's word means right now, on the spot, with no gap.

The second word matters as well. The crowd supposed the kingdom was about to "appear." The Greek is *anaphainesthai*, to come into view. Luke uses that verb one other time, of a ship: "*When we had come in sight of Cyprus*" (**Acts 21:3**). It's the word for something rising over the horizon where everyone can see it. The crowd expected the kingdom of God to come into open view on the spot, that same week, as Jesus walked the last seventeen miles from Jericho up to Jerusalem.

That expectation is what Jesus corrected. He didn't correct "this generation." He said "*this generation*" again two chapters later, in Luke's account of the sermon about the Temple, to His disciples (**Luke 21:32**). He corrected this week. The King would first go away to receive the kingdom, and then He would come back with it.

That was no small correction, and the next six days show how badly it was needed. The crowd shouted at the gate. The leaders asked about tribute to Caesar. The disciples argued over which of them

was greatest. Forty days after the resurrection they were still asking, "*Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" (**Acts 1:6**). He answered that the times and seasons were the Father's to fix (**Acts 1:7**). He withheld the day there as He did in **Matthew 24:36**, and He didn't take back "*this generation*." Jesus replaced their hope with a kingdom received in a far country and brought back to the same people.

The parable

"*He said therefore, 'A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, "Engage in business until I come." But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, "We don't want this man to reign over us." When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business'*" (**Luke 19:12–15**).

Then the king settles accounts. The first servant has made ten minas: "*Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities*" (**Luke 19:17**). The second has made five and receives five cities. The third hands back the one mina he was given, wrapped in a cloth, because he was afraid. The nobleman condemns him "*with your own words*" (**Luke 19:22**), takes the mina, and gives it to the man with ten: "*I tell you that to everyone*

who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away" (**Luke 19:26**).

Then comes the last line of the story. "*But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me*" (**Luke 19:27**).

Luke doesn't give you a moment to recover. The very next verse says, "*And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem*" (**Luke 19:28**).

Count the people in the story. Three groups are on the scene when the nobleman leaves: the servants who receive the minas, the citizens who send the delegation, and the nobleman himself. Three groups are on the scene when he returns: "*these servants to whom he had given the money*," "*these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them*," and the king. Luke's Greek uses the word *toutous*, which means "these," the ones already named. Matthew makes the same point in the parable of the talents: "*the master of those servants came*" (**Matthew 25:19**).

Get this. The enemies who are slaughtered at the end of the story are the same citizens who sent the delegation at the beginning of it. The story has no room for a different set of servants or a different set of citizens when the king comes back. Jesus told it to people who were about to walk into the city whose leaders would, within the week, tell a

Roman governor, "*We have no king but Caesar*" (**John 19:15**). Who do you think He was talking about?

The far country they all remembered

Jesus told this story in Jericho, at the house of Zacchaeus (**Luke 19:1–10**). People in Jericho who heard "*a nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return*" had a local reason to think of Archelaus, because he had rebuilt the royal palace in their town.

When Herod the Great died in 4 BC, his will named his son Archelaus as king, and Caesar had to confirm it. Archelaus had to go to Rome to get his kingdom. Josephus tells it: "Archelaus went down now to the sea-side, with his mother and his friends, Poplas, and Ptolemy, and Nicolaus, and left behind him Philip, to be his steward in the palace, and to take care of his domestic affairs" (***Josephus, Wars of the Jews 2.2.1***). The man who claimed the throne left, and stewards were left in charge. His brother Antipas sailed after him to contest the throne.

Then the citizens sent their delegation. "Those that came were fifty in number, but there were more than eight thousand of the Jews at Rome who supported them. And when Caesar had assembled a council of the principal Romans in Apollo's temple . . . the multitude of the Jews stood with the ambassadors, and on the other side stood Archelaus, with his friends" (***Wars 2.6.1***). The fifty asked for no king at all. They asked that Caesar "would join their country to Syria, and administer

the government by their own commanders" (***Wars 2.6.2***). "*We do not want this man to reign over us*" is a fair one-line summary of what they said.

Augustus split the difference. He made Archelaus ethnarch, a lesser title than king, over "Idumea, and all Judea, and Samaria" (***Wars 2.6.3***), and sent him home. Archelaus came back to the same country and the same opponents, and Josephus says he treated them harshly (***Wars 2.7.3***). The rebel Simon had burned his palace at Jericho while he was away (***Wars 2.4.2***), and when Archelaus came home he "magnificently rebuilt the royal palace that had been at Jericho" (***Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 17.13.1***). It was the monument of a man who had gone to a far country to ask for a kingdom and had come home to rule. About ten years after Herod's death the same kind of delegation had him removed: "in the ninth year of his government he was banished to Vienna, a city of Gaul, and his effects were put into Caesar's treasury" (***Wars 2.7.3***). Judea became a Roman province under a governor, which is why there was a Pilate in the story at all. Matthew records that his name frightened Joseph at the very start of that rule, when he brought the child back from Egypt: "*when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there*" (**Matthew 2:22**).

This parallel has a limit, and you should know where it is. Josephus doesn't record Archelaus slaughtering the delegates. The parable is a story about Jesus, and the verdict in **Luke 19:27** is His own. What Archelaus shows you is what "receiving a kingdom in a far country" meant to the people in

that room. Archelaus came back with less than he asked for, and the nobleman in the story comes back with all of it. A man leaves to claim a throne. A steward is left in charge. He's gone for months. A hostile delegation says they won't have him. He comes back to rule over the same household and the same opponents, and the accounts are settled in their lifetime. Archelaus's own steward answered to him when he came home, and no one had to wait for the steward's great-grandchildren.

Joachim Jeremias takes the Archelaus background as a given in *The Parables of Jesus*. N. T. Wright reads the minas as a warning that Israel's God was coming back to Zion as judge in that generation. Wright doesn't read the journey as the ascension, and I part from him there. I name them for the setting. The conclusion is mine.

Where the kingdom was received

If the far country in Jesus' story isn't Rome, where is it? The parable says the nobleman went away "*to receive for himself a kingdom*." Daniel had already described that scene.

"*I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed*" (**Daniel 7:13–14**).

In that vision the Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days, and the kingdom is given to Him there. Jesus went to the Father to receive His kingdom. Forty days after the resurrection "*a cloud took him out of their sight*" (**Acts 1:9**). Hebrews says where He went: "*Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf*" (**Hebrews 9:24**). Peter announced the result at Pentecost: "*Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified*" (**Acts 2:36**).

The far country is heaven, and the kingdom was received there. I get that from the story and from where Jesus went. Luke's phrase "*a far country*" is the same phrase he uses for where the prodigal son went (**Luke 15:13**), so the words alone won't carry it. Hebrews says Abraham desired "*a better country, that is, a heavenly one*" (**Hebrews 11:16**). That makes a good picture to set beside the parable, though the Greek wording is different and I won't call it a link.

The kingdom had been received. What remained was the return to settle accounts. I take **Matthew 16:28** as Jesus' own date for it: "*there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom*." Others refer that verse to the transfiguration six days later, and chapter 11 comes back to it.

Jesus' correction of "immediately" was a correction of the crowd's map. They had the right generation and the wrong map. They thought the

kingdom would be unveiled at Jerusalem when He arrived. He told them the King would receive it somewhere else and bring it back. Joel McDurmon reads the parable's two ends the same way: "In hindsight it is easy to see that He referred to His ascension to the right hand of God (Acts 2:34–36) as the receiving of the Kingdom, and that His day of reckoning in which He would destroy those that rejected Him was the destruction of Jerusalem in ad 70" (***McDurmon, Jesus v. Jerusalem, p. 130***). Michael Sullivan makes the point about the distance: Jesus' audience "would not gather from Jesus' parable of the man going to a 'distant country' as taking thousands of years" (***Sullivan, "What Is Full Preterism?", fullpreterism.com***).

"Engage in business until I come"

One more thing in the parable deserves your attention, because most sermons get it right and most end-times teaching gets it wrong.

The servants are told to trade with the minas "*until I come*." The faithful ones are rewarded with cities, which means they're rewarded with rule: "*you shall have authority over ten cities*." A few days later, at the table, Jesus promised the Twelve a share in His rule : "*I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (**Luke 22:29–30**).

The day the king settles accounts is the day the faithful are promoted from managing to ruling, and their work goes on. The kingdom the nobleman brought back was handed over and staffed. Nobody shut it down.

That matters for how this whole book ends. The return of the king audited the first stewards, removed the unfaithful ones, judged the citizens who had refused Him, and gave the faithful more. The age that followed is the one you and I live in, and the business is still open. Chapter 12 comes back to this.

How could anyone in AD 30 know how far "far" was?

This is the strongest objection to what I've said, and it deserves a straight answer. Grant that the crowd expected the kingdom that week. Jesus still answered with a nobleman who goes far away, and a man standing in Jericho couldn't have told from the story alone whether "far" meant forty years or four hundred.

That's true of the story alone. The story doesn't stand alone. **Luke 21:32** is in the same Gospel, spoken to the same disciples, and it says "*this generation*." Inside the parable, "these servants" and "these enemies" are the same people at both ends. The parable tells you who will be there when the king returns, and the Olivet Discourse tells you when. What this answer proves is that Luke gave his readers both pieces. It doesn't prove that the parable sets a date without help.

Doesn't Daniel 7:13 describe Jesus coming down?

Many who study this vision, including a good number of preterists, take **Daniel 7:13** as the Son of Man going up to the Ancient of Days to receive the kingdom, and that's how I read it. Michael Sullivan reads it differently. He follows an old Greek version of Daniel and takes the scene as the coming itself (***Sullivan, recorded talk on Daniel, "The Stone Kingdom," part 1***).

The parable works on both readings, because the nobleman does both things. He receives a kingdom, and he returns. If you take **Daniel 7:13** as the going up, the far country is where the kingdom was given. If you take it as the coming down, the parable still says the kingdom was received before the return, and **Acts 2:36** still says it had been received by Pentecost.

Put yourself in their sandals

You're standing in Zacchaeus's house in Jericho. Archelaus's palace is here in town. Your father told you about the day the delegation sailed for Rome, and about the day he came home to rule. Jesus has just said that a nobleman is going away to receive a kingdom, that his servants have work to do until he comes, and that his enemies will answer to him when he returns. Then He walks out the door and starts up the road to Jerusalem.

Can you say you would have heard that story and thought of people who wouldn't be born for two thousand years?

Go deeper: “Jesus is not coming back to rule from Jerusalem. He already rules from heaven. Ask Pilate.” at TheHereticalHorseman.com/posts/whole-earth

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PART III: THE PARABLES OF THE WATCH

CHAPTER 6: THE SERVANTS WHO WATCH

Three Gospels each carry a parable about servants who are told to stay awake. Two of them get almost no treatment of their own in the preterist books I've read, and the third is usually read as a stand-alone warning to the church in every age. I want you to read them together, where the Gospels place them, and then ask the question this book asks of everything. When the master came, who was at the door?

Luke 12: belts fastened, lamps burning

"Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!" (**Luke 12:35–38**).

Two things about the setting come first.

The first is the phrase "stay dressed for action." The Greek says to have your loins girded, and Joel McDurmon has seen what that phrase is doing. It's the Passover instruction. *"In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you*

shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover" (**Exodus 12:11**). McDurmon says the wording of the Greek Old Testament in Exodus 12:11 and Luke's wording here match each other and nothing else in Scripture (***McDurmon, Jesus v. Jerusalem, p. 27***). That claim is his, and I haven't checked every occurrence in the Septuagint. If he's right, Jesus was telling His disciples to stand the way Israel stood on the night of the exodus. They were to be dressed to leave, because the LORD was passing through in judgment and His people would be going out. That fits the verses just before it, which read like logistics: "*Sell your possessions, and give to the needy*" (**Luke 12:33**). The Jerusalem church sold property in **Acts 4:34** to care for its poor. McDurmon thinks the warning about the city was part of the reason (***McDurmon, pp. 21–22***), and it would have been a sensible one.

The second is the clock. "*If he comes in the second watch, or in the third.*" The watches of the night are three or four hours each. The master is away at a wedding feast, the kind of event that runs late, and the servants are to be ready at the door whether he comes at ten o'clock or two in the morning. The story's own time scale is one night. The servants don't know the hour, and nobody in the story is wondering about the decade.

Luke sets the thief beside it: "*But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect*" (**Luke 12:39–40**). McDurmon calls these

“not a mixed metaphor, but two perspectives on the same coming event” (***p. 22***). The waiting servants open the door gladly. The householder who gets robbed wasn’t expecting anyone. It’s the same night and the same arrival, with two kinds of people in the house.

Then Peter asks whether this is “*for us or for all*” (**Luke 12:41**), and Jesus gives the answer I walked through in chapter 2. There’s the faithful manager set over the household, and there’s the wicked one who says, “*My master is delayed in coming*” (**Luke 12:45**). The sentence follows: “*the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful*” (**Luke 12:46**). Luke adds a grading of the punishment, “*that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating*” (**Luke 12:47**), and then the line that applies it to the men listening: “*Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required*” (**Luke 12:48**). The verse after that is, “*I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!*” (**Luke 12:49**). Seven verses later He turns on the crowd for being able to read the sky and unable to read “*the present time*” (**Luke 12:56**).

How could a chapter say more clearly that the watch was for the people in it?

Mark 13: the doorkeeper and the four watches

Mark's version of the Olivet Discourse ends with the shortest of the three parables, and with the sentence that settles who it was for.

"*But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning, lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake*" (**Mark 13:32–37**).

Seven verses earlier He had said, "*Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*" (**Mark 13:30**).

Look at the four times the master might come: evening, midnight, cockcrow, and morning. Those are the four Roman watches of a single night. Luke's "*in the second watch, or in the third*" has the same one-night frame. The master has left on a journey, and the servants are told to expect him back in one of the four watches of tonight. This is a story about an absence that could end in any hour, and about servants who can't afford to sleep through any of them.

Then Jesus applies it. "*What I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.*" The "you" is Peter, James, John, and Andrew, who had asked the question (**Mark 13:3**). The "all" is everyone they would carry the warning to. Jesus kept the two apart and said the same thing to both. The "you" is the four men on the hill, and I take the "all" to be the people those four would reach. The verse doesn't name the "all." It does put them under the same warning in the same breath, a warning Jesus had just tied to "*this generation*."

Matthew 24: "you also must be ready"

Matthew's version is the fullest, and the connecting words do the work in it.

"*Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in*

pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (**Matthew 24:42–51**).

"Therefore" in **Matthew 24:42** draws the conclusion from **Matthew 24:36–41**. The day and hour are unknown, and for that reason they're to stay awake. "Therefore you also" in **Matthew 24:44** applies the thief to the men listening. "Who then" in **Matthew 24:45** asks which of those men will be the servant found faithful. Each of these links points back to "*concerning that day and hour no one knows*" (**Matthew 24:36**). R. T. France and Kenneth Gentry say that verse opens a new subject. I say it continues "*this generation*" two verses earlier, and chapter 12 gives my reasons. I wrote a whole book on **Matthew 24:34**, *The Most Embarrassing Verse in the Bible*, and I won't repeat it here.

James Jordan says this about the faithful servant: "Though this is a parable, and arguably the first of a set of three, it continues the narrative straight from the preceding statement" (***Jordan, Matthew 23–25, p. 212***).

Look at what the faithful servant is set over. It's a household, and his job is to feed it "*at the proper time*." I read that as the apostles' commission in a sentence. The reward for faithfulness is that "*he will set him over all his possessions*," which is the minas' "*authority over ten cities*" in different words. Jesus promised the Twelve that very thing at the table later that week (**Luke 22:29–30**).

The wicked servant is marked by two sins. He beats his fellow servants, and he drinks with drunkards. Within a few years of the ascension the Jerusalem leadership was beating the apostles (**Acts 5:40**) and stoning Stephen (**Acts 7:58**). I think the parable had that beating in view, and McDurmon reads it the same way (***p. 30***). The parable doesn't name the Sanhedrin. You can take the wicked servant as any unfaithful steward and the timing argument doesn't change. The servant who says "my master delays" and beats the household is the servant the master cuts in pieces when he comes. Everyone in the story is alive at both ends of it.

The one word

Chapter 2 introduced the word *chronizō*, to delay or to take one's time. The New Testament uses it five times. Two of them, **Luke 12:45** and **Luke 1:21**, were covered in chapter 2. The other three belong on the table together.

The wicked servant says, "*My master is delayed*" (**Matthew 24:48**). Eight verses later Jesus, telling the next parable in His own voice, says, "*As the bridegroom was delayed*" (**Matthew 25:5**). It's the same verb. Hebrews uses it a third time, of the Lord Himself: "*the coming one will come and will not delay*" (**Hebrews 10:37**).

I used to say the parables never call the master slow. That's wrong, and **Matthew 25:5** is the verse that shows it. There's a delay in these stories, and Jesus says so. Jordan puts it well: "Yes,

there is a delay, but just as certainly there is also a coming!" (***Jordan, p. 213***). He adds that the length of it isn't given.

What is the wicked servant wrong about? He's wrong about what the delay means. McDurmon points out that the verb in his mouth is active: "The thought is not that the master 'is delayed' (as if it were out of His control), but that he himself 'delays'" (***McDurmon, p. 24, n. 2***). I wouldn't hang much on the grammar, since the ESV uses the same English in **Matthew 25:5**. The servant's meaning is clear on any translation. The master is taking his time, and a servant can do as he likes in the meantime. The master "*will come on a day when he does not expect him*."

Hebrews then speaks to people living in that delay. The writer tells readers who could "*see the Day drawing near*" (**Hebrews 10:25**), "*Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay*" (**Hebrews 10:37**). The first words come from **Isaiah 26:20**, and the rest from **Habakkuk 2:3**: "*If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay*." Habakkuk was speaking of a vision. Hebrews, following the Greek Old Testament, speaks of the One who comes. The Greek is *ou chronisei*. It's the parables' own verb with a "not" in front of it, in the one place the New Testament uses it of Christ's coming outside a parable.

Put the three together. A servant said the master was taking his time. Jesus said the bridegroom did take time. Hebrews told its own readers that the

time left was "*a little while*." The time marker in Hebrews is about those readers and the Day they could see drawing near.

The thief, and who Paul said it was for

The thief sits beside the faithful servant in both Matthew and Luke. He's the figure most often used to make the coming unknowable, and by that route to make it distant. Paul closes that door himself.

"*For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief*" (**1 Thessalonians 5:2–4**).

The thief surprises the people who are saying "peace and security." He doesn't surprise the brothers, because they're awake. That's the same division Jesus drew between the servants at the door and the householder who was robbed. Paul draws it for a church he wrote to as people who expected to see that day (**1 Thessalonians 4:15**).

Peter uses the thief the same way, and he tells you who was saying the master delayed: "*scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation'*" (**2 Peter 3:3–4**). Then he says, "*the day of the Lord will come like a*

thief" (**2 Peter 3:10**). The scoffer's line is the wicked servant's line said out loud. Peter's own answer to them comes in between, in **2 Peter 3:8–9**, and I take it up at the end of this chapter.

Revelation finishes the set. To Sardis Jesus says, "*If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief*" (**Revelation 3:3**), and in the sixth bowl, "*Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake*" (**Revelation 16:15**). James writes to the scattered twelve tribes: "*the coming of the Lord is at hand. . . . behold, the Judge is standing at the door*" (**James 5:8–9**). That door is the doorkeeper's door. Paul, Peter, James, and John's letter to Sardis each use the thief or the door as a warning to their own readers.

Jordan grants the whole set to AD 70. Of the thief sayings in 1 Thessalonians 5, 2 Peter 3, and Revelation 3 and 16 he writes, "All of these passages concern the Cataclysm of the first century, the end of the Old Creation" (***Jordan, p. 199***). Chapter 12 uses that against the scholars who say the early church took Jesus' crisis parables and aimed them at a distant coming.

Couldn't the master be gone for ages before the night he returns?

He could, as far as the picture goes. A parable's clock belongs to the story. A master who is "going on a journey" might be gone a long time before the night he comes home, and four watches of one night don't measure the journey.

My point is narrower than that. However long the journey is, the servants who are told to watch through those four watches are the servants he finds awake or asleep. The date comes from the "you" and from "*this generation*" seven verses earlier.

Doesn't Peter say a thousand years are as one day?

He does, and it's the best verse there's for stretching the time. "*But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you*" (**2 Peter 3:8–9**). If God's "soon" can be a thousand years, then "*will not delay*" could cover any length of time, and the watch could belong to every century.

I read the passage differently, and I offer it as a reading. Peter is answering scoffers, and the scoffers are his readers' own neighbors. Jude says the scoffers the apostles predicted had already come (**Jude 17–19**). Peter tells those same readers what to do about the day he's describing. They're to be "*waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God*" (**2 Peter 3:12**), and he says, "*since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish*" (**2 Peter 3:14**). I take verse 8 as a statement about God's patience with people who thought He was late. I don't find Peter using it to change what "near" means.

That answer doesn't remove the verse. If you read "*a thousand years as one day*" as God's own measure of the wait, you have a text, and it's a strong one.

Doesn't "you also must be ready" speak to every believer in every age?

Plenty of careful Bible students take it that way, and I granted in chapter 2 that it's a real reading. Mark helps here. "*What I say to you I say to all*" keeps "you" and "all" apart, and the "you" is four named men who had just been told that their generation would see all these things. The verse doesn't say who the "all" are. It widens the command past the four, and I grant that this helps the other side on the question of who must watch. It doesn't move the date Jesus gave seven verses earlier.

The first watch belonged to them. You and I still have something to learn from servants who stay awake, and chapter 12 says what.

Put yourself in their sandals

You are Peter. You're sitting on the Mount of Olives across from the Temple, and you have just asked when it will fall. Jesus has told you that this generation won't pass away until it does. Now He tells you to stay awake, because the master could come in any of the four watches tonight.

Would you have gone to sleep that night thinking the watch belonged to someone else?

Go deeper: “No one knows the day or hour. They knew the generation.” at TheHereticalHorseman.com/posts/day-or-hour

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CHAPTER 7: THE TEN VIRGINS

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (**Matthew 25:1–13**).

This is the parable people reach for when they want to say the church has been waiting a long time for a bridegroom who hasn't come. The bridegroom "was delayed." The virgins fell asleep. The cry came when no one expected it. We're told it pictures the whole church age, with a long wait, a sleeping church, and a sudden return. I understand why it reads that way to someone who

already believes the return is future. I want to show you how it reads when you start from the word it begins with.

“Then”

The first word is *tote*, which means “then” or “at that time.” Matthew uses it about ninety times, more than the rest of the New Testament put together. With a future verb, as here, it points to a time already on the table. What time is on the table here? Look at the sentence before it: “*the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (**Matthew 24:50–51**). At the time of that master’s coming, “*the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins.*”

The verb agrees. “Will be like” is future, *homoiōthēsetai*, and it matches the futures of **Matthew 24:50–51**, “will come” and “will cut.” Jesus hasn’t changed the subject or opened a new timeline. He’s telling them what the kingdom will look like, from the other side of the door, when that master comes to that servant. The faithful servant parable ends with a master who arrives at an unexpected hour and a servant who wasn’t ready. The virgins parable begins with a bridegroom who arrives at an unexpected hour and five girls who weren’t ready. I read it as the same arrival told a second time, with a wedding party in place of the household.

James Jordan reads the “then” the same way: “In context, the time would be the unknown but soon-coming ‘day and hour,’ and in particular the time just mentioned, when the master would return and pass judgment on his priestly servants” (***Jordan, Matthew 23–25, p. 221***). I think he’s right, and my reading of the parable hangs on it. France and Gentry agree that “then” points back to that master’s coming. They place that coming after a change of subject at **Matthew 24:36**, and chapter 12 takes up their reasons.

How long was the bridegroom delayed?

“As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry.”

The verb for “delayed” is *chronizō* again, the wicked servant’s word from **Matthew 24:48**, and the last chapter showed what the New Testament does with it. Here I want you to look at the clock inside the story, because the story has one.

Ten girls go out with lamps to wait for a procession. The bridegroom is slower than expected, and they nod off. At midnight the cry goes up. The text doesn’t say when they went out. It says the cry came at midnight, after they had fallen asleep. That’s the whole delay, part of one night in one village, with one set of girls.

Gary DeMar has a line I can’t improve on: “the delay of the bridegroom in the parable of the ten virgins is not very long, unless the virgins are related to Rip Van Winkle. The virgins get drowsy

at dusk, and the bridegroom returns at midnight (Matt. 25:6)" (***DeMar, Last Days Madness, 4th ed., pp. 149–151***).

How can anyone turn that into two thousand years? Ask what the parable uses the delay for. The same ten virgins who went out are the ten the story sorts at midnight. Five of them had oil and five didn't, and nothing about the delay changed which five were which. The delay tested them, and it didn't change which five were which.

Jordan reads the parable as fulfilled in AD 70, and he puts the bridegroom's delay at "roughly a forty year period" (***Jordan, p. 202***), from Jesus' ministry to the fall of the city.

Who went out to meet him, and which way they walked

"*Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.*" The Greek phrase is *eis apantēsin*, "to a meeting." It deserves a few lines, because a whole doctrine has been built on it somewhere else.

Look at how the New Testament uses the word. A group of Roman Christians comes out "*as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us*" (**Acts 28:15**), and then Paul goes on into Rome. Paul writes of those "*who are alive, who are left*" being "*caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*" (**1 Thessalonians 4:17**). In this parable the virgins go out to the bridegroom, and then "*those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast.*" In two of those three places the people who go out to meet someone come back in with him.

That’s too few to make a rule, and the word has no fixed meaning. In this parable the direction is stated. The bridegroom arrives, the ready ones meet him and go in with him, and the door shuts behind them.

I say this because some who share my view of the timing read the ten virgins, along with 1 Thessalonians 4, as a literal removal of the living saints before Jerusalem fell. Ed Stevens argues for that view (***Stevens, Expectations Demand a First Century Rapture***). I don’t hold it. I won’t rest that on this parable, since the ready ones do go in behind a shut door, and a parable’s picture can be pressed in more than one direction. I mention it only so you know that preterists don’t all read this verse alike.

The shut door and “I do not know you”

The ending is the sternest in any of the parables, and it’s the part most sermons soften. “*Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’*”

Jesus had said that before, to a crowd on the road to Jerusalem, about a door and a generation. “*Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from’*” (**Luke 13:24–25**). That passage sits in the same chapter as the tower of Siloam and the

fig tree with one more year. It ends with the same people, "*you yourselves cast out,*" watching Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at table in the kingdom with people from east and west (**Luke 13:28–29**).

In **Luke 13**, the shut door and "*I do not know where you come from*" are the verdict on people who ate and drank in His presence and didn't enter. The foolish virgins had lamps. They belonged to the wedding party. They were the people who should have been ready and weren't, and when the bridegroom came the door shut on them.

That's the shape of the tenants, the wedding feast, and the faithful servant as well. In each one, the people who were given the charge and failed it are shut out when the master arrives. The virgins add one thing. They show that the test was readiness over a stretch of time, and that the stretch of time, however long it felt to a sleepy girl, ended on a single night with the same girls.

If no one knew the day or the hour, wasn't the time wide open?

The parable closes with the refrain of the whole discourse: "*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.*" This is where the futurist says the matter is settled. If the day and hour were unknown, the time was open, and an open time can run as long as it likes.

Read the refrain against the verse it echoes. "*But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only*" (**Matthew 24:36**). Two verses before

that, Jesus says, "*this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*" (**Matthew 24:34**). Matthew put the generation and the unknown day two verses apart, in the same speech, and he didn't think they contradicted each other. A man can know the year his lease ends and still not know the day the landlord will come. DeMar says the passage "identifies the generation but not the day or hour" (***DeMar, The Olivet Discourse in Outline, unpublished master copy dated June 2nd, 2023, p. 114***).

The virgins are told to watch because the hour is unknown, and the generation had already been named. The one thing Jesus held back was the hour inside it, and the parable turns that one unknown into a story.

Look also at who "you" is. The "you" who know neither the day nor the hour in **Matthew 25:13** is the same "you" of **Matthew 24:42** ("*you do not know on what day your Lord is coming*") and **Matthew 24:44** ("*you also must be ready*"). The next word is "For" (**Matthew 25:14**), and the talents begin, as the reason the watch is worth keeping. That's chapter 8.

This answer proves that an unknown hour and a known generation fit together. It doesn't prove the generation by itself. That comes from **Matthew 24:34** and from "then."

Can’t a few hours in a parable stand for two thousand years?

A parable’s hours aren’t literal hours, and I won’t claim that dusk to midnight dates the return. The story’s clock shows something else. It shows that the delay tested the same people and that nobody new took their place. A reading that stretches the delay across sixty generations has to explain why the story keeps the same ten girls at both ends.

I have also left the wedding customs and the meaning of the oil alone. Scholars who describe first-century village weddings differ on the details, older commentators take the oil as the Spirit or faith or good works, and the parable settles neither question.

Put yourself in their sandals

You’re sitting on the Mount of Olives. Jesus has just told you about a servant whose master comes at an hour he doesn’t expect. Then, without stopping, He says, “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins,” and He ends with you: “*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.*”

Would you have heard a warning for a church two thousand years away, or a warning to keep your own lamp lit?

Go deeper: “Did Jesus lie? Three promises. One deadline.” at TheHereticalHorseman.com/posts/did-jesus-lie

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CHAPTER 8: THE TALENTS AND "AFTER A LONG TIME"

This is the verse the whole book has been walking toward, because it's the one the other side reaches for first.

"*Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them*" (**Matthew 25:19**).

The other side says that if Jesus ever told His disciples His return would be far off, this is where He said it. "At an hour you do not expect" is about surprise. "After a long time" is about how long.

Stephen Hayhow, who draws the line at Matthew 24:35, makes the argument this way. The virgins and the talents "speak of the absence of the bridegroom/master, who is said to be 'a long time in coming' (v. 5) and 'After a long time the master of the servants returned . . .' (v. 19)," and this "suggests, not the events of A.D. 70 which were to occur in the near future, in fact within the space of a generation, but a distant event, the return of Christ" (***quoted in DeMar, The Olivet Discourse in Outline, p. 119, from Christianity and Society 4:2, April 1994***). James Jordan carries one answer all the way through the virgins and then parts company at this parable, for this reason among others. Most evangelical scholarship reads the talents the same way, as a parable of a coming that's still ahead.

This chapter has one job. It shows what “a long time” means in this parable, in Jesus’ other parable of a long absence, and in the rest of the New Testament. Then it answers, one at a time, the five reasons Jordan gives for moving the break to Matthew 25:14.

The parable

“*For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them*” (**Matthew 25:14–19**).

The two faithful servants are told, in the same words, “*Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master*” (**Matthew 25:21**, **Matthew 25:23**). The third defends himself: “*Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours*” (**Matthew 25:24–25**). The master condemns him out of his own mouth, as the nobleman did the servant with the mina in the cloth: “*You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not*

sown . . . ? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest" (**Matthew 25:26–27**). The talent goes to the man with ten, and the verdict follows: "*cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (**Matthew 25:30**).

What the parable says about its own "long time"

Start inside the story, because the story sets limits on the phrase before anyone else gets to it.

"*The master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.*" The Greek says *tōn doulōn ekeinōn*, "of those servants," pointing back to the servants of verse 14. It says *met' autōn*, "with them." The "long time" has a beginning and an end inside the sentence. It begins when the man goes away from three servants. It ends when he comes back to those three. Inside the story it's the length of an absence from them, and it ends in an audit of their books. Whether "them" can stand for a body that outlives its first members is the next question.

"Settled accounts" is a bookkeeping phrase, *synairei logon*, and Matthew is the only New Testament writer who uses it. The other place is the unforgiving servant: "*a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants*" (**Matthew 18:23**). In both stories a master audits the servants who hold his money. Nobody audits their heirs. Nobody hands the ledger to a later

generation of stewards. The man who received five talents brings back ten. The man who buried one digs it up. They're the men he left.

Gary DeMar says it in two sentences: "In this context 'a long time' is no longer than an average lifetime. The settlement is made with the same slaves who received the talents" (***DeMar, Last Days Madness, 4th ed., pp. 148–149***).

The other parable with a long absence

Jesus used a phrase like this of one other absent master. *"A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while"* (**Luke 20:9**).

I'd like to tell you that this settles it, and it doesn't. Chapter 4 showed why. The servants the owner sends are the prophets, so that "long while" reaches back through centuries, and "*those tenants*" are a body that spans many generations. A parable can fold generations into one cast. If the tenants can stand for Israel's leaders across the age of the prophets, could "*those servants*" stand for the church across its whole age? Jordan says they do (***Jordan, p. 233***). That's the best form of the case against me, and the tenants give it a precedent.

My answer is that in the tenants you can tell generations are folded together, because the owner keeps sending and you know who the servants are. The talents give you nothing like that. In the tenants you watch the years go by. One servant is sent and beaten, another is sent and killed, more are sent, and last of all the son. The

succession is in the story. In the talents there's one departure, one set of three servants, and one return. The master hands each man his sum in person (**Matthew 25:15**), and each man brings back his own (**Matthew 25:20–25**). Nobody inherits a talent. Nobody is sent a second time.

The tenants give you a reason to stretch the cast, and the talents give you none. The best reply is that "*those tenants*" looked like one set of men too, until you knew the history. I grant that. Even in the tenants, the reckoning fell on the one generation that killed the son (**Matthew 23:36**). That answer shows that the talents give you no reason from inside the story to stretch the cast. It doesn't show that such a reading is impossible.

What "a long time" means in the New Testament

DeMar gives a list of ten places where the New Testament speaks of a long time, and I have checked each one. I leave out one of the ten, **Acts 26:29**, because "*Whether short or long*" there's probably not about a length of time. The other nine follow. The Greek varies from verse to verse, and only **John 5:6** has Matthew's exact words, *polyn chronon*, much time.

The demoniac in the country of the Gerasenes: "*For a long time he had worn no clothes*" (**Luke 8:27**). Herod "*had long desired to see him*" (**Luke 23:8**). Jesus knew that the man at Bethesda "*had already been there a long time*" (**John 5:6**), and John has just said he had been an invalid for thirty-eight years (**John 5:5**). Simon the magician "*for a*

long time he had amazed them with his magic" (**Acts 8:11**). Paul and Barnabas at Iconium "*remained for a long time*" (**Acts 14:3**), and Luke gives no figure. At Antioch "*they remained no little time with the disciples*" (**Acts 14:28**). Paul's own people "*have known for a long time*" what kind of Pharisee he was (**Acts 26:5**), which reaches back to his youth. The sailors "*had been without food for a long time*" (**Acts 27:21**), a matter of days. The people of Malta "*had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him*" from the snakebite (**Acts 28:6**), a matter of hours.

DeMar concludes, "Nowhere does it mean centuries or multiple generations" (***DeMar, Last Days Madness, 4th ed., p. 149***). That's true of his list. It isn't true of the whole New Testament, and you should know the verses that break it. Luke's "*long while*" in the tenants is one, as the last section showed. Hebrews is another. It says God spoke "*through David so long afterward*" (**Hebrews 4:7**). The Greek is "after so long a time," with the same noun Matthew uses, and the time in view runs from Moses to David, which is centuries.

The claim has to be smaller than DeMar made it. In each of those nine places, the long time falls inside one life, and in the Gospels the one place that puts a number on Matthew's phrase gives thirty-eight years. That's within a few years of the span between the ascension and the fall of Jerusalem. The words can cover a generation. They can also cover centuries, as Hebrews shows, and

in Hebrews the text tells you that the people at each end are different people. The talents give no sign that they are.

The word study doesn't date the master's return. It shows that "a long time" doesn't require a far-off return, and it sends you back to the sentence around the phrase to find out who was waiting.

Jordan's five reasons

James Jordan has done the most thorough work on this passage of anyone who disagrees with me, and he says where he changed his mind. He rejects the break at Matthew 24:36 and carries one answer through the virgins. Then, at Matthew 25:14, he writes: "When we come to 25:14-46, however, the emphasis shifts to the course of history after the Cataclysm down to the end of history" (***Jordan, Matthew 23–25, p. 210***). He gives five reasons (***pp. 201–203***). I'll take them in order.

One: the handoff. The master of **Matthew 24:47** "*will set him over all his possessions*," and the talents open with a man who entrusts his property to servants. Jordan reads that as a new era, the priest promoted to king. I read it as the same departure told a third time. The man "going on a journey" in **Matthew 25:14** is *apodēmōn*, the same verb as the owner who "*went into another country*" in the tenants (**Matthew 21:33**). **Matthew 25:14** also opens with "For," *gar* in Greek. The talents are the reason for "*Watch therefore*" in **Matthew 25:13**. Would Jesus give His disciples a command and then support it with a story about a different age?

Two: the reward is joy and not dominion. Jordan writes, “the reward in the third parable is not more dominion in this world, but entry into the joy of the master (25:21, 23). It would seem that history is over at this point” (***p. 202***). The reward is both, and the dominion is in the same verse: “*You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.*” “Set you over much” is the minas’ “*authority over ten cities*” and the faithful servant’s “*set him over all his possessions*.” I take “*the joy of your master*” to be the feast of the parable before it: “*those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast*” (**Matthew 25:10**). The faithful servants go in to the feast the wise virgins went in to.

Three: no command to watch. Jordan writes, “A chord we have heard six times in succession is suddenly absent. It seems we are dealing with a different event, one far into the future beyond the days of the disciples” (***p. 203***). The chord is the sentence right before the parable, “*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour*” (**Matthew 25:13**), and the parable is tied to it by “For.” The one-talent man is condemned because he wasn’t ready for the audit: “*at my coming I should have received what was my own*” (**Matthew 25:27**).

Four: “a long time.” Jordan writes, “In the first and second, it is merely a delay, while in the third, it is a long time. The forty years from Pentecost to Cataclysm is not what one would readily regard as a long time, though of course in the life of an individual it would be” (***p. 202***). Read that sentence again. He grants the point in the last

clause and sets it aside in the first. Forty years is a long time in the life of an individual, and the parable is about individuals: “those servants,” “with them.” Jordan grants that forty years is a long time in one man’s life, and he still thinks the step from “delay” to “a long time” points to a longer age. I think the servants in the sentence set the measure.

Five: the judgment scene that follows. Jordan reads the sheep and the goats as chiefly the Last Judgment, with a first fulfillment in AD 70, and he lets that scene pull the talents forward with it. That’s chapter 11. For now, look at how the scene opens. “*When the Son of Man comes in his glory*” (**Matthew 25:31**) picks up “*the coming of the Son of Man*” from **Matthew 24:37** and **Matthew 24:39**, and “*the Son of Man is coming*” from **Matthew 24:44**, with no new question and no new audience. I read **Matthew 16:27–28** as Jesus’ own date for that coming, “*with his angels in the glory of his Father*,” within the life of “*some standing here*.” Jordan allows that reading (***p. 208***). If the judgment scene belongs inside the one answer, the fifth reason turns around.

Jordan told us why he gave up the break at **Matthew 24:36**. The “but” there was “just a general connective” (***p. 191***), and the verses that followed made more sense in the first century. I think the same two tests, applied at **Matthew 25:14**, give the same result. The connecting word there is “*For*,” which joins and doesn’t divide. He

also dates the start of this parable to AD 30 as well as AD 70 (***p. 233***), which tells me the handoff is less clean than his argument needs.

The outer darkness

One detail makes many people sure this parable must be about the end of the world. "*Cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (**Matthew 25:30**).

Matthew uses "*outer darkness*" three times. The first is spoken about the centurion at Capernaum, to the crowd following Jesus: "*many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (**Matthew 8:11–12**). I take "*the sons of the kingdom*" there to be the people of Jesus' own day who had the promises and refused Him. Many commentators read that banquet as the final one, and you should weigh that.

The second is in the wedding feast. The king says of the man without a wedding garment, "*cast him into the outer darkness*" (**Matthew 22:13**). In that story the man is thrown out after the city has burned and the new guests have come in. That verse doesn't help me date the phrase, and I won't use it that way.

The phrase is Jesus' picture of being shut out of the kingdom's feast while others go in. He used it of His own generation in **Matthew 8:12**, and

"*weeping and gnashing of teeth*" is also the verdict on the wicked servant in **Matthew 24:51**. The phrase alone doesn't fix the date of this parable in either direction. It puts the unfaithful servant outside the door the faithful have just walked through.

Isn't the Son of God free of the limit of a human lifetime?

This is the best reply to DeMar's list. The New Testament's other "long times" are about human affairs, where a lifetime is the natural ceiling. An absence of the Son of God isn't held to that ceiling.

That's a fair point about the phrase in general. Inside this story the "*long time*" is the absence of a master from three servants he paid in person, and it ends with those three. The answer shows that the story gives no sign of a longer cast. It doesn't show that God could never wait longer than a lifetime for anything.

Doesn't most evangelical scholarship read this as the delay of a future coming?

It does. Most evangelical scholars read the parable as a word about the delay of a coming that's still ahead, and you should know that the weight of scholarship is on that side.

My answer is the argument of this whole book. The coming the disciples were told to watch for was the one they were told their generation would see, and the "long time" of this parable is measured by

the servants who heard it. Chapter 12 takes up what that means for the scholarship on the parables of delay.

Put yourself in their sandals

You're one of the Twelve. Jesus has told you to watch, because you don't know the day or the hour. Then He says "For," and He tells you about three servants whose master goes away, stays gone a long time, and comes back to settle accounts with them.

When you heard "those servants," who else could you have thought He meant?

Go deeper: Tough Verses, "One day is as a thousand years," at TheHereticalHorseman.com/hard-texts#2-peter-3

PART IV: THE HARVEST AND THE GROWTH

CHAPTER 9: THE END OF THE AGE

We leave the absence parables for two chapters. The question they raise is when the master came back, and that question has a twin in Matthew 13. The twin carries a phrase the disciples would later use themselves when they asked their question on the Mount of Olives.

"*The harvest is the end of the age*" (**Matthew 13:39**).

This chapter is about that phrase. It's also the chapter where the writers I rely on most don't agree with each other or with me, and you deserve to know why I've come down where I have.

The parable and its key

"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers,

“Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn”’” (**Matthew 13:24–30**).

Jesus explained this one Himself. *“He answered, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father’”* (**Matthew 13:37–43**).

The parable of the net says the same thing in fewer words: *“So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace”* (**Matthew 13:49–50**).

Everything turns on when “the end of the age” was.

The phrase

The Greek is *synteleia tou aiōnos*, the completion of the age. *Synteleia* means a completion, an end that finishes what came before it. The word appears six times in the New Testament. Five are in Matthew, all spoken by Jesus or to Him, all singular, “the age.” Three are here (**Matthew**

13:39, **Matthew 13:40**, **Matthew 13:49**), one is the disciples' question on the Mount of Olives (**Matthew 24:3**), and one is the last verse of the Gospel (**Matthew 28:20**). The sixth is in Hebrews, and it's plural.

Read the disciples' question in full. "*As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?'*" (**Matthew 24:3**). "These things" is the destruction of the Temple, which Jesus had just predicted (**Matthew 24:2**). The disciples asked when the Temple would fall, and in the same sentence they asked for the sign of His coming and of the end of the age. They put all three in one question. They had heard the harvest parables. They knew what "the end of the age" meant when their Teacher said it. It meant the sorting, the angels, the furnace, and the righteous shining. When He told them the Temple would come down, they asked when that would be, and they took it for granted that the end of the age came with it.

Did Jesus correct them? He answered the question, and thirty-one verses into the answer He said, "*this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*" (**Matthew 24:34**).

Joel McDurmon makes this argument in his chapter on the weeds. He says the disciples joined the fall of the Temple to the end of the age, and he adds, "Indeed, it was linked" (***McDurmon, Jesus v. Jerusalem, p. 48***). He concludes, "It is clear that Jesus did not have in mind the end of the

world, nor did He mean the final judgment. Rather, Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43 describe the judgment that would come upon unbelieving Jerusalem" (***p. 48***). He adds, "Thus the parable describes the then-soon-coming end of that old age and the destruction of its children, and the beginning of the gathering in of the true children of God's Kingdom. It should not be understood as teaching anything beyond this" (***p. 49***).

Hebrews is the one book outside Matthew that uses the word, and it puts the word in the plural and in its own day: "*But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*" (**Hebrews 9:26**). "The end of the ages," *synteleia tōn aiōnōn*, was when Christ appeared and died. Paul says the same with a different noun. The Old Testament stories were written "*for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come*" (**1 Corinthians 10:11**). Paul and the writer of Hebrews both said they were living at the end of the ages. The writer of Hebrews also told his readers that what was "*becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away*" (**Hebrews 8:13**), written, as most date it, while the Temple was still standing.

"This age" and "the age to come" are Jesus' own words for the two ages (**Matthew 12:32**), and Paul's (**Ephesians 1:21**). I take the age that was ending to be the age of Moses, the Temple, and the sacrifices. The age to come was the one the apostles were already tasting (**Hebrews 6:5**). "The

end of the age" in Matthew 13 is the end of that age, and in Matthew 24 the disciples asked when it would come in the same breath as the stones.

What the harvest looked like

This is where the preterist reading is accused of reading history into the text, and the charge is fair whenever the reading claims too much.

The parable says that at the end of the age the Son of Man will send His angels to gather "*out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers*" and throw them into the fire, and that the righteous will then shine. It doesn't say "Jerusalem," and it doesn't say "Romans." It describes a sorting, done by heaven, at the close of the age. The lawless are removed from the kingdom, and the righteous are vindicated.

John the Baptist had preached the same harvest at the Jordan to the same generation: "*His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire*" (**Matthew 3:12**). He said it to Pharisees and Sadducees, and he asked them, "*You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*" (**Matthew 3:7**). The wrath was coming on them. The axe was "*even now*" at the root (**Matthew 3:10**). Did John think the threshing was two thousand years off?

Daniel had given the picture Jesus borrowed for the righteous. "*Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above*" (**Daniel 12:3**). That passage begins with "*a time of trouble, such*

as never has been" (**Daniel 12:1**), the words Jesus echoed when He spoke of the tribulation (**Matthew 24:21**). It ends with the time "*when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end*" (**Daniel 12:7**). I read the shattering of the holy people's power as the fall of their city and Temple. Daniel put the shining of the righteous at that point, and Jesus did too.

On the ground, the harvest looked like this. The gospel went out from Jerusalem across the Roman world for a generation, and the wheat and the weeds grew together in the same field, the same synagogues, and the same cities. I read what followed as the Son of Man coming in judgment on the city that had killed the prophets and was persecuting the church. The causes of sin were gathered out of the kingdom, and the persecuted church, which had been told to flee when it saw the armies (**Luke 21:20–21**), was vindicated.

McDurmon says of the weeds that "Many of them literally were burned in fire during the destruction of Jerusalem" (***p. 48***), and that the gathering of the wheat into the barn answers to the Christians' flight before the siege and to the angels gathering the elect in **Matthew 24:31** (***p. 49***). I wouldn't press the details that far. The parable is about the sorting, and I date the sorting from the question the disciples asked and the answer Jesus gave.

Where the writers I trust divide

Now comes the hard part. Some of the writers I cite most for the first-century fulfillment of Matthew 24 and Revelation don't read Matthew 13 this way.

David Chilton wrote that "both the wheat and the tares will grow together until the harvest at the end of the world (Matt. 13:37–43)" (***Chilton, Paradise Restored, pp. 189–190***), and he meant the end of history. Gary North was blunter: "Only at the end of the world is a final separation made. Until then, for the sake of the wheat, the tares are not ripped out" (***North, "Common Grace, Eschatology, and Biblical Law," in Chilton, The Days of Vengeance, p. 634***). For both men the growth of the kingdom through history is the main thing, and they put the harvest at the far end of history to leave room for the growth. McDurmon shares their hope for the kingdom's growth, and he still puts the harvest at AD 70 and lets the growth run on afterward. Michael Sullivan reads the harvest the same way and ties it to John's threshing floor in Matthew 3.

This is a disagreement about one phrase. McDurmon agrees with me on the harvest, and he holds a future bodily return and resurrection as firmly as Chilton did.

I stand with McDurmon and Sullivan for this reason. "The end of the age" is Matthew's phrase. He uses it five times, and it's singular every time. I read **Matthew 24:3** and **Matthew 24:34** together as giving the phrase its date. The disciples asked about the end of the age in the same sentence as

the stones, and Jesus answered with "*this generation*." Chilton and North have to read "the end of the age" in Matthew 13 as the end of history, and read the same phrase in **Matthew 24:3**, from the same mouths, as the end of the old covenant age. What in the text gives the phrase two meanings? If the disciples' question in **Matthew 24:3** is about AD 70, and Chilton reads it that way, then "the end of the age" was AD 70, and the harvest parables that gave the disciples the phrase were about that same end.

What Chilton and North were protecting is real, and the next chapter is about it. The kingdom does keep growing, and nothing in AD 70 stopped it. Reading the harvest at AD 70 doesn't shorten the growth. It dates the sorting that cleared the field. The mustard tree was small when the weeds were burned, and it has been growing ever since.

If the age ended in AD 70, did Jesus stop being with His people?

This is the most serious objection to the chapter. "*And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age*" (**Matthew 28:20**). If the age ended in AD 70, was His promise over?

The promise is for "all the days," *pasas tas hēmeras* in Greek, up to the end of the age. Jesus was speaking to eleven men about the years in which they would make disciples while the old order was still standing, and He promised to be with them through every day of it. The verse says

nothing about leaving afterward, and the New Testament says the opposite elsewhere: "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (**Hebrews 13:5**).

I grant that "to the end of the age" sounds at first like the far horizon of the church's work, and that reading has centuries of sermons behind it. If you keep "the end of the age" in the future here, you have to keep it in the future in **Matthew 24:3** as well, and then say where Jesus answers that half of the question. France says He does so at **Matthew 24:36**, and chapter 12 takes that up. My answer shows that the promise can be read as a promise to the apostles for their own years. It doesn't prove that reading. I don't use the verse as a promise about today, and I get His presence with us now from **Hebrews 13:5**, which repeats a promise God had already carried from Moses to Joshua.

Doesn't "the field is the world" require a judgment of the whole world?

The field in the parable is the *kosmos*, the world, and a sorting of the whole world sounds like more than the fall of one city. I agree that the field is the world. The gospel was sown across the Roman world for forty years, and the weeds grew in every city Paul preached in. The sorting is described as a gathering "*out of his kingdom*," wherever the kingdom was.

I take the date of the harvest from the phrase, read with **Matthew 24:3** and **Matthew 24:34**, and the size of the field doesn't change it. If you hold that a worldwide field requires a worldwide

judgment at the end of history, you're seeing something real in the text. You'll still have to explain the disciples' question.

Put yourself in their sandals

You have heard Jesus say that the harvest is the end of the age. Later He walks out of the Temple and tells you that not one stone will be left on another. You ask Him when, and you ask in the same breath about the end of the age, because you assume they come together. He doesn't correct you. He tells you this generation won't pass away until all these things take place.

Would you have walked down that hill believing the end of the age was thousands of years off?

Go deeper: "'We're in the last days!' The apostles said they were, more than thirty times." at TheHereticalHorseman.com/posts/last-days

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CHAPTER 10: THE KINGDOM THAT KEEPS GROWING

If the last chapter is right, you're entitled to ask what is left. If the harvest came in AD 70, and the weeds were burned and the wheat gathered, what has the kingdom been doing for nineteen centuries since?

It has been growing. That's the answer the other half of Matthew 13 gives, and it's the half that Chilton and North were right to insist on, even where I think they put the harvest in the wrong place. This chapter is about the parables that describe the kingdom after it has come: the mustard seed, the leaven, and the seed that grows by itself. It also takes up the fig tree of Matthew 24, which has nothing to do with the kingdom's growth and is often read as though it did.

The smallest seed and the hidden leaven

"*He put another parable before them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.' He told them another parable. 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened'*" (**Matthew 13:31–33**).

The two pictures make one point. What starts small ends up everywhere. The mustard seed is tiny, and the plant it makes is big enough for birds to nest in. The leaven disappears into the dough, and then the whole lump rises. David Chilton underlined the phrase "till it was all leavened": "Note well that all is leavened; the verse is teaching total conquest, by one side or the other" (***Chilton, Paradise Restored, p. 71***). He also said what this chapter needs: "The Kingdom was established when Christ came. But it has not yet reached its full development. Like the mustard tree, it started out small, but will grow to enormous size (just as the stone Daniel saw became a mountain and filled the whole earth)" (***p. 71***).

The birds in the branches are an Old Testament picture Jesus' audience would have known. Ezekiel wrote of a cedar: "*On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest*" (**Ezekiel 17:23**). Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a tree, and "*the beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches*" (**Daniel 4:12**). In both, the birds are the nations finding shelter under a great kingdom. Jesus took the picture of a world empire and gave it to a mustard seed.

Daniel's stone stands behind both parables. "*A stone was cut out by no human hand . . . But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth*" (**Daniel**

2:34–35). Daniel explains it: "*in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever*" (**Daniel 2:44**). Daniel's stone strikes first, and then it grows. I see the same order in **Matthew 13**, where a judgment comes at the end of the age and the kingdom goes on growing after it. Daniel's stone strikes the empires, and I'm not claiming the two blows are the same blow. McDurmon sees the same order: "This all relates to the New Testament age. A tiny group of disciples was saved from the destruction of Jerusalem. Over time they have grown to fill the world" (***McDurmon, Jesus v. Jerusalem, p. 50***).

Luke puts the mustard seed and the leaven in the same chapter as the tower of Siloam, the fig tree with one more year, and the narrow door (**Luke 13:18–21**). In his telling, the two growth parables sit between the healing of a bent woman on the Sabbath and the warning that the door will be shut. The kingdom was already growing while the old order was being given its last year. Both were true at once, and Luke saw no need to separate them.

The seed that grows by itself

Mark alone has this parable, and I haven't found a preterist writer who treats it alone.

"*And he said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and*

grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come'" (**Mark 4:26–29**).

Three things stand out. First, the growth is God's work and the farmer doesn't understand it: "*he knows not how.*" The kingdom's increase is no human project. Second, the growth comes in stages, "*first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain*," and a farmer who pulled up the blade because it wasn't yet the ear would be a fool. Third, the parable ends in a harvest: "*at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.*" The wording echoes Joel, "*Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe*" (**Joel 3:13**), and I take it as the same harvest as **Matthew 13:39**.

I read this parable as the forty years between the resurrection and the fall of Jerusalem, because it ends in a harvest. The mustard seed and the leaven name no harvest, and that's why I let them run on. The seed was scattered at Pentecost. It grew through the book of Acts in ways no apostle planned, and when the grain was ripe the sickle went in. The parable never says the field was abandoned after the harvest. In Matthew's fuller version the weeds were burned, the wheat was gathered into the barn, and the mustard seed in the next verse is still growing.

Mark's parable doesn't date its own harvest. I have dated it from Matthew's fuller version, and you could take the sickle of **Mark 4:29** as a harvest at the end of history without contradicting anything Mark says.

"Of the increase of his government there will be no end"

One Old Testament sentence says what the growth parables picture, and I rest on it when I'm told that a harvest at AD 70 shrinks the kingdom.

"*Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this*" (**Isaiah 9:7**).

The ESV, with the King James, says the increase of His government has no end. Some translations say "greatness." I take the ESV's sense, and Daniel's growing stone supports it. The kingdom keeps increasing from the throne of David, which Peter said at Pentecost Christ had been raised to sit on (**Acts 2:30–36**). Gabriel told Mary the same: "*of his kingdom there will be no end*" (**Luke 1:33**). Paul closed a prayer with it: "*to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever*" (**Ephesians 3:21**). He said all generations. Hebrews calls it "*a kingdom that cannot be shaken*" (**Hebrews 12:28**), right after telling its readers that the things which could be shaken would be removed.

That's what the growth parables are about. The harvest at the end of the age ended the age. It didn't end the kingdom. The old order was shaken and removed. The kingdom that can't be shaken kept growing, and the promise is that it always will. When I say the King came in AD 70, I'm not saying His kingdom stopped increasing. Isaiah says it's established and upheld "*from this time forth and forevermore*," and its increase has no end.

The fig tree of Matthew 24, and what it is not

One more parable has to be dealt with here. It has nothing to do with growth, and the most popular reading of the last century turned it into a growth parable anyway.

"*From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*" (**Matthew 24:32–34**).

For two generations a great many American readers have been taught one meaning for this passage. The fig tree is Israel, the leaves are the nation's rebirth in 1948, and "this generation" is the generation that saw it. The reading was taught from pulpits and paperbacks, and a good many dates set by it have passed. I want to say three things about it without mocking anyone, because the men who taught it were trying to take Jesus' words seriously.

First, the fig tree in this passage is an illustration from nature. Luke makes that clear by adding a few words: "*Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near*" (**Luke 21:29–30**). Luke's "*all the trees*" makes the point general. Jesus is saying what any farmer knows. Leaves mean summer is close. Gary DeMar presses this point: "Thus, it's not just the fig tree but trees in general whose leaves herald the nearness of summer. The parable of the fig tree is used as an analogy" (***DeMar, Last Days Madness, 4th ed., pp. 133–134***). On the timing he writes, "Leaves come out in spring. This is an indicator that summer is near. A single season is in view, not forty or fifty seasons" (***pp. 133–134***). Robert Cruickshank has pointed out how much weight this one verse has been made to carry: "This entire scheme, of replacing their generation with our generation ('replacement theology' if there ever was such thing), is apparently justified on the sole basis that Jesus mentions something about a 'fig tree' in verse 32" (***Cruickshank, "Here's Hoping a Future Generation Will Get 'This Generation' Right," February 5th, 2023***).

Second, if the fig tree were Israel, the result would be the opposite of what that reading wants. The fig tree most often read as a picture of Israel is the one He cursed on the road into Jerusalem: "*May no fruit ever come from you again!*" (**Matthew 21:19**). DeMar writes, "If Israel is the fig tree in Matthew 24:32, then Israel is the fig tree in Matthew 21:18-20 where Jesus says, 'No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you'" (***DeMar,***

The Olivet Discourse in Outline, p. 91). Anyone who insists the fig tree is Israel has to take both passages, and the earlier one is a curse.

Third, and this is what matters for this book, the fig tree lesson has a "you" in it and a "this generation" attached to it. "*When you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.*" The people who would see the leaves are the people Jesus was talking to. The next sentence says their generation wouldn't pass before it all happened.

Chilton read the fig tree of **Matthew 24:32** as Israel (***Chilton, The Days of Vengeance, p. 197***). I disagree with him there and agree with DeMar. The disagreement doesn't touch the timing, because **Matthew 24:34** dates the passage on both readings.

If the harvest was AD 70, aren't you splitting one process in two?

If you follow Chilton and North, you'll say that the growth parables and the harvest parables describe one process that ends in one harvest at the end of history. You'll say I've split them because it suits me.

My reason is the phrase. I date "the end of the age" from **Matthew 24:3** read with **Matthew 24:34**, and the growth parables don't carry that phrase. Reading two sets of parables in one chapter as pointing to two horizons needs a reason from the text, and that's mine. It shows where the

harvest falls. It doesn't show how fast the growth runs afterward, and nothing in these parables gives you a schedule.

Doesn't Paul say Christ reigns only "until" the end?

Paul writes, "*Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet*" (**1 Corinthians 15:24–25**). How does a reign that runs "until" fit with an increase that has no end?

Paul wrote those words in the years before the end of the age, about what Christ was doing in those years. I read "the end" in that passage as the end of the age Paul and his readers were living at the close of. I don't read delivering the kingdom to the Father as giving up the throne. Gabriel said His kingdom has no end. At the seventh trumpet the voices in heaven say, "*he shall reign forever and ever*" (**Revelation 11:15**). In the last chapter of the Bible the throne still belongs to both: "*the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it*" (**Revelation 22:3**).

This passage needs its own book, and I have only said where I stand. Verses 26 and 28 belong to the same question. Verse 26 I take up in *What Now?*, chapter 4. Verse 28 I haven't answered here. If you take "*the end*" in **1 Corinthians 15:24** as still future, we differ about when the handing over happens. We don't differ about whether His kingdom has an end.

Put yourself in their sandals

You’re standing on the Mount of Olives in the spring, and the fig trees along the road are putting out leaves. Jesus points at one and says that when you see these things, you’ll know He’s at the gates.

Would you have looked at those leaves and thought of a nation’s rebirth nineteen centuries later, or of the summer that was a few weeks away?

Go deeper: “They wanted a King to take back the land. He gave us a Kingdom to take back the world.” at TheHereticalHorseman.com/posts/king-vs-kingdom

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PART V: THE THRONE AND THE OBJECTIONS

CHAPTER 11: THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

This is the scene most people picture when they hear “the Last Judgment,” and I’m about to argue that it belongs inside the sermon it closes. This chapter is the one most likely to be misread, so let me say first what I’m not arguing.

I’m not arguing that the destinies in it are temporary. “*These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life*” (**Matthew 25:46**). Both are eternal, and I don’t shrink the word. I’m not arguing that nobody is judged after AD 70. Scripture says “*it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment*” (**Hebrews 9:27**), and that appointment has stood for every person who has died since.

I’m arguing one thing. The coming in **Matthew 25:31**, “*when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him*,” is the coming Jesus had already described and dated in this same Gospel. The judgment of “all the nations” that follows it’s the verdict on the generation and the world that received or refused His messengers.

The men I quote most don’t agree with me about this, and they don’t agree with each other. I’ll show you where each of them stands.

The scene

“*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’*” (**Matthew 25:31–34**). The sheep are commended for feeding, clothing, visiting, and welcoming Him. They ask when they did so, and “*the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me’*” (**Matthew 25:40**). The goats are condemned for the opposite: “*Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (**Matthew 25:41**).

Strictly speaking, this isn’t a parable. It has one comparison, the shepherd sorting his flock, and the rest is description. It’s the end of the answer Jesus began at **Matthew 24:4**, and Matthew closes the whole speech in the next verse: “*When Jesus had finished all these sayings*” (**Matthew 26:1**). Nobody has asked a new question, and nobody has moved. The men who asked “when will these things be?” on the hill across from the Temple are still the audience.

The coming He had already dated

Read **Matthew 25:31** beside a verse from nine chapters earlier. "*For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done*" (**Matthew 16:27**). The Son of Man comes, with His angels, in glory, to repay each person. That's the sheep and the goats in one sentence. Jesus said it at Caesarea Philippi, and the next thing He said was, "*Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom*" (**Matthew 16:28**).

It's the coming of **Matthew 24:30–31** as well: "*they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds.*" There are clouds, glory, angels, and a gathering, and three verses later, "*this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*" (**Matthew 24:34**). When **Matthew 25:31** says "*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him,*" I hear the coming of **Matthew 16:27** and **Matthew 24:30**, and I read both as dated to that generation. Many refer **Matthew 16:28** to the transfiguration six days later. I don't, because verse 27 speaks of angels and of repaying each person, and neither happened on that mountain. You should know the other reading is common.

James Jordan ends up placing the sheep and the goats at the end of history, and he still grants this much: “Jesus was clearly glorified at His ascension, and He sat down to reign at that time. Thus, this passage may well speak of His coming, in His glory, with spirit-angels, to pass judgment on the Old Creation” (***Jordan, Matthew 23–25, pp. 206–207***). On Matthew 16:27 he writes, “Because the parallel is so strong, I am not comfortable insisting that Matthew 16:27 must refer to the Last Judgment. It may very well refer to the Cataclysm” (***p. 208***).

“All the nations”

This phrase makes the scene sound universal, and the sermon has already used it twice.

“*Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake*” (**Matthew 24:9**). “*And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come*” (**Matthew 24:14**). The Greek phrase is the same each time, *panta ta ethnē* in its dictionary form, and Matthew uses it once more in the commission: “*make disciples of all nations*” (**Matthew 28:19**). Inside this one sermon, “all the nations” are the nations the messengers would be sent to, the nations that would hear the testimony, and the nations that would hate the messengers for it. Paul said in his own lifetime that the testimony had been given. The gospel “*has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven*” (**Colossians 1:23**) and “*made known to all nations*” (**Romans 16:26**). He says

proclaimed. He doesn't say every nation believed. The nations of **Matthew 25:32** are the nations of **Matthew 24:14**, gathered to answer for what they did with the message and the men who carried it.

Jordan works through this and grants it: "Thus, the prophesied gathering of all nations in Matthew 25:32 could very well include the Jews, along with the Gentiles of the Oikumene, and be an event fulfilled in the first century" (***p. 205***). He adds, "Thus far, we have not been able to resolve the question of which event is in primary focus in Matthew 25:31-46" (***p. 205***). He also notes that Revelation sends the beast, the false prophet, and the persecutors into the lake of fire in the first century (**Revelation 14:9–11**, **Revelation 19:20**), and concludes, "Once again we find that the language of Matthew 25:31-46 could apply to either the judgment of the Old Creation or the judgment of all of human history" (***p. 206***). Those are the words of a man who finally decides against the first-century reading. That reading comes from the text's own cross-references, which were enough to put it in front of Jordan, who rejects it.

"The least of these my brothers"

The King's test is how the nations treated "*the least of these my brothers.*" Most sermons make the brothers the poor in general, and the chapter becomes a charter for charity. Charity is a Christian duty, and nothing I say weakens it. Who are the brothers in Matthew, though?

Jesus defines the word: "*whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother*" (**Matthew 12:50**). After the resurrection He says, "*go and tell my brothers*" (**Matthew 28:10**), and He means the disciples. The drink given to the thirsty in this scene recalls the cup of cold water of **Matthew 10:42**, given "*because he is a disciple.*" That's in the speech where Jesus sends the Twelve out and tells them, "*Whoever receives you receives me*" (**Matthew 10:40**). In that same speech He says, "*you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes*" (**Matthew 10:23**).

The brothers are the messengers, and the nations are judged on how they received the men Jesus sent. That's what **Matthew 24:9** and **Matthew 24:14** set up. The message would go to all the nations, the messengers would be hated, and then the end would come. To receive the messenger was to receive Christ, and the King says so: "*you did it to me*."

If you take "the least of these" as the poor and needy in general, you have a long tradition behind you and a Christian concern. I think that reading is right about the mercy and wrong about who receives it. The timing doesn't change on either reading.

Jordan reads the scene against Matthew 23 and writes that "the scribes and Pharisees are like the proud goats who are put at the King's left hand and are condemned" (***p. 249***). He's right. How are

the men who killed the prophets and persecuted the apostles “like” the goats, if the goats stand two thousand years away from them?

The throne, and Daniel’s courtroom

“*He will sit on his glorious throne.*” The scene is Daniel’s. “*As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat . . . the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened*” (**Daniel 7:9–10**). In Daniel the Son of Man goes up to the Ancient of Days and receives the kingdom (**Daniel 7:13–14**). In the interpretation, “*judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom*” (**Daniel 7:22**), and the fourth beast’s dominion is taken away (**Daniel 7:26**). Daniel sets the whole courtroom in the days of the fourth kingdom, which I take, with most of the church’s interpreters, to be Rome. I read **Matthew 25:31–34** as that court giving its verdict, with the Son of Man, who had already received the kingdom, enthroned, the nations before Him, and the blessed told to “*inherit the kingdom.*”

Jesus had already told the Twelve when He would sit on that throne, in a verse that uses the same words: “*Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (**Matthew 19:28**). “His glorious throne” there’s the same Greek as “his glorious throne” in **Matthew 25:31**. Jesus promised it to twelve living men as something they would share in.

This matters because of what finally moves Jordan off the first-century reading. He allows that the coming in glory, “all the nations,” and **Matthew 16:27** could each fit the first century. He then says the deciding phrase is “the throne of His glory,” which Matthew 16:27 doesn’t have. On his reading, Jesus’ throne became fully glorious only when the martyred saints were enthroned with Him after AD 70, so that the scene “cannot refer to the Cataclysm but must refer, specifically, to the Last Judgment” (***p. 209***). **Matthew 19:28** has the identical phrase, and Jordan dates the throne of that verse to the first century (***p. 208***). If that throne was glorious then, why must the same words in **Matthew 25:31** wait for the end of history?

If you date “the new world” of **Matthew 19:28** to the end of history, you won’t accept that answer, and you’ll keep Jordan’s reason. I’d point you to Luke’s version of the same promise, given at the Last Supper to men who would “*eat and drink at my table in my kingdom*” (**Luke 22:30**).

Where the writers I quote stand

On the sheep and the goats, the writers I’ve quoted for AD 70 throughout this book hold several different positions.

David Chilton placed the scene at the Last Judgment at the end of history, and quoted Berkhof with approval that “Christ in His mediatorial capacity will be the future Judge, Matt. 25:31-32” (***Chilton, The Days of Vengeance, p. 530***). Kenneth Gentry holds the same, along

with the whole block from **Matthew 24:36** on, as DeMar reports (***DeMar, Last Days Madness, 4th ed., p. 143***). Jordan allows that much of the language could fit AD 70. He then decides for "the final coming" as "principally in view," with AD 70 as "a preliminary fulfillment" (***Jordan, p. 245***). He gives other reasons I haven't taken up here, among them that **Matthew 24:9** has all the nations hating the disciples, which would leave no sheep among them. Gary DeMar takes Matthew 25:31 as Matthew 16:27 and then declines to make the scene a single event: "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)" (***DeMar, Last Days Madness, 4th ed., pp. 150–151***), following Milton Terry. Michael Sullivan reads Daniel 12, Matthew 13, and Matthew 24–25 as one event in AD 70 (***Sullivan, "What Is Full Preterism?"***). Of these men, only Sullivan dates the scene where this chapter does.

This is where I stand. The coming of **Matthew 25:31** is the coming of **Matthew 16:27** and **Matthew 24:30**, and Jesus dated both. "All the nations" is the sermon's own phrase for the nations that heard and hated the messengers, and Paul said the hearing was done. The throne is Daniel's, set in the days of Rome and promised to the Twelve. The brothers are the messengers of Matthew 10. Nothing between **Matthew 24:36** and **Matthew 25:46** asks a new question, changes the audience, or moves the clock.

On those grounds I read the judgment of the nations as the verdict on that generation. It was the once-for-all judgment at the end of the age, with a test that fits the generation the messengers were sent to. The sentences were personal and eternal. Who received them then, and what I can't say about that, comes at the end of this chapter. I read Paul's words to the Thessalonians the same way: God will "*repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels*" (**2 Thessalonians 1:6–7**).

The verdicts were eternal, and that half must not be dropped. "Eternal punishment" and "eternal life" are the two destinies of **Daniel 12:2**, "*some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt,*" and Daniel ties them to the time "*when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end*" (**Daniel 12:7**). The court that sat at the end of the age still sits. Every person since has met the judgment that **Hebrews 9:27** appoints, and meets it before the same King.

DeMar's "judgment over time" is half right, I think. The dominion is everlasting and the judging continues. I part from him because **Matthew 25:31** describes an arrival, "when the Son of Man comes," and an arrival is an event.

Doesn’t a judgment that hands down eternal sentences have to be the final judgment of everyone?

This is the strongest objection to my reading. If the sentences are eternal, the court must be the last one, because nothing would be left to judge afterward. The creeds speak of one judgment of the living and the dead, and their wording is on the objector’s side.

My answer is **Hebrews 9:27**. Each person is judged after death, and that has gone on in every generation. A judgment of the nations at the end of an age doesn’t use up the judgment of persons. You have to decide whether Scripture presents judgment as a single event, or as a verdict that ended an age with a court that still sits. I’ve given my reasons for the second. This answer shows that the two can stand together. It doesn’t prove that the creeds are wrong to speak as they do, and I carry that weight knowingly.

Then who went where?

If eternal sentences were handed down at the end of that age, a fair critic will ask me to say who received them. I can tell you what I believe Scripture says, and I can tell you where it stops.

Judgment in Scripture comes in two parts. There was a once-for-all judgment at the end of that age, when the sleepers in the dust awoke to the two destinies of **Daniel 12:2**. There’s also a judgment each person meets at death (**Hebrews 9:27**).

The dead who were waiting were raised and sentenced then. That much I take from Daniel.

The living of that generation went on living. The persecutors who survived the war didn't vanish in AD 70, and the believers who had sheltered Christ's messengers went on with their lives. Each of them met the Judge at death, as everyone does. What the scene meant for a man who was still alive when that age ended, the passage doesn't say, and I won't say it for the passage.

One more weakness belongs on the table, and it's the weakest joint in this chapter. The test in the scene is how people treated Christ's messengers. That fits the generation the messengers were sent to. It fits the ancient dead poorly, because most of them never met one. A critic can say that if the sentences fell on the raised dead, the test doesn't match them, and if they fell on the living, I can't show you where. I don't have a clean answer to that. I hold the reading because of where the sermon puts the scene, and I won't claim more for this part of it than that.

Doesn't "all the nations" mean everyone who ever lived?

It can sound that way. You could also hold that **Matthew 24:9** and **Matthew 24:14** reach past the first century themselves, which would make "all the nations" in **Matthew 25:32** as wide as they are. The link I have drawn is strong, and it isn't airtight.

What you can’t do is treat “all the nations” as a phrase this sermon hasn’t already used. Jesus used it twice in the same answer, for the nations His messengers would reach and be hated by, before “the end” that He put inside one generation.

Put yourself in their sandals

You’re still on the Mount of Olives. Jesus hasn’t stopped talking since you asked when the Temple would fall. He has told you that you’ll be hated by all nations, that the gospel will be preached to all nations, and that this generation won’t pass away. Now He says that when the Son of Man comes in His glory, all the nations will be gathered before Him and judged by how they treated His brothers.

Can you say you would have heard a new subject begin?

Go deeper: Tough Verses, “All the nations gathered before Him,” at TheHereticalHorseman.com/hard-texts#matthew-25

CHAPTER 12: THE BIGGEST OBJECTIONS, AND SERVANTS NOW

I have answered the objections to each parable inside its own chapter. Five objections are bigger than any one parable, and they get this chapter. A few smaller questions that I set aside earlier are answered here as well. Then I want to end where the parables end, with servants who still have the master's goods in their hands.

Doesn't Jesus change the subject at Matthew 24:36?

This is the objection the whole second half of the book depends on. If Jesus turns from the fall of Jerusalem to the end of history at "*But concerning that day and hour no one knows*" (**Matthew 24:36**), then the faithful servant, the virgins, and the talents all land on the far side of the line.

R. T. France argued it more closely than anyone I've read. He gave all of **Matthew 24:4–35** to the fall of Jerusalem and said that "this generation" in **Matthew 24:34** means what it says. He then drew a line at verse 36. From there to the end of chapter 25, he said, Jesus answers the second half of the disciples' question, and the subject is the end of history. Kenneth Gentry draws the line in the same place, as DeMar reports (***DeMar, Last Days Madness, 4th ed., p. 143***). I count five reasons in his case, and I'll take them in order.

His first reason is the opening words, “But concerning.” The Greek is *peri de*, and France called it the formula for a new beginning. It’s the formula for a new item, and the new item is often inside the same discussion. Paul uses it in **1 Thessalonians 5:1**, “*Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers*,” to take up the timing of the very coming he has been describing since the chapter before. Jesus uses it in **Matthew 22:31**, “*And as for the resurrection of the dead*,” to take up the next point in one argument with the Sadducees. In **Matthew 24:36** He has given the generation, and He goes on to speak about the day and the hour.

His second reason is the change from “those days” to “that day.” The change is real. I read it as the change from a period to a point inside it. “Those days” are the days of the siege, and “that day” is the day the sentence falls. Luke helps here. Two verses after “*this generation will not pass away*” (**Luke 21:32**), with no new question asked, Jesus says, “*But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap*” (**Luke 21:34**). Luke has “that day,” the suddenness, the warning against drunkenness, and “*stay awake at all times*” (**Luke 21:36**), all spoken to the same “you” in the part of the sermon about Jerusalem. The verse between says it “*will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth*” (**Luke 21:35**). The Greek word is *gē*, which also means “land,” and the ESV translates it “earth.” You

should weigh that verse for yourself. If “that day” starts a new subject in Matthew, why doesn’t it in Luke?

His third reason is the strongest. The fall of Jerusalem comes with signs, and “that day” comes with none. How can an event you can see coming be the same as an event nobody can predict? The fig tree answers it. The leaves tell you summer is near, and they don’t tell you the date. A known season and an unknown day can be one event seen at two distances. Everything up to verse 35 says you’ll know the generation. Verse 36 says you won’t know the day. Paul puts both in one breath. The day comes “*like a thief in the night*” on people saying “*peace and security,*” and he tells the church, “*you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief*” (**1 Thessalonians 5:2–4**).

His fourth reason is the vocabulary. France said the “coming” in the first section is Daniel’s word, *erchomai*, and that verses 37 and 39 switch to *parousia*. The two words are mixed on both sides of his line. *Parousia* is already in **Matthew 24:27**, in the section France gives to AD 70. France says the word is there to set the parousia apart from the events of that section. I think that reads a contrast into a verse that gives a reason, “*For as the lightning comes*.” *Erchomai* keeps going after verse 36: “*your Lord is coming*” (**Matthew 24:42**), “*the Son of Man is coming*” (**Matthew 24:44**), “*When the Son of Man comes*” (**Matthew 25:31**). I conclude that Matthew uses two words for one arrival.

His fifth reason is that verse 36 has no word tying it in time to what came before. It has something else. “That day” can point backward, and I think it does here. I grant that Matthew also uses “*that day*” with nothing before it, as in **Matthew 7:22**, and France’s side can appeal to that. If it points backward, the nearest candidates are the coming on the clouds in **Matthew 24:30** and the generation statement in **Matthew 24:34**.

The other side has an answer to that, and you should hear it. The verse right before is “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away*” (**Matthew 24:35**). France’s followers say “that day” points at the day heaven and earth pass away. The reading is possible. I think verse 35 is a statement about how sure His words are, in the way **Matthew 5:18** is. The subject Jesus has been answering for thirty-one verses is the better thing for “that” to point at. Men who have studied this chapter longer than I have split at this verse, and the line at **Matthew 24:36** is held by many commentators who give the earlier verses to AD 70. What I can say is that the text doesn’t draw the line. Whoever puts one there’s drawing it.

France made one more observation, and it helps me more than it helps him. He thought that by the time Matthew wrote, there were probably some who were surprised and disappointed that the coming hadn’t yet happened. If some of Matthew’s first readers were disappointed, they had expected it in their lifetime. France says Matthew answered them with the delays in the parables. I think he

answered them with "*this generation will not pass away,*" and I've argued in chapters 6 to 8 that the delays fit inside it.

For the long version of the case on that one verse, see my book *The Most Embarrassing Verse in the Bible*.

Didn't the early church take parables about a first-century crisis and re-aim them at the Second Coming?

This is the scholars' objection, and it comes from men with no stake in my argument. C. H. Dodd argued that the crisis parables were aimed at the generation that heard them and at the crisis Jesus' ministry had brought on it. He argued that applying them to a later second coming was the early church's doing. Joachim Jeremias went further. He said the parables as Jesus spoke them warned His audience of a catastrophe close at hand, and that the church, facing what he called the delay of the parousia, pointed them at Christ's return. The faithful servant, the virgins, the doorkeeper, the thief, and the talents are all in his discussion.

I accept half of that. Dodd and Jeremias are right that Jesus aimed these parables at the generation in front of Him. They're right that the New Testament writers applied them to the coming of Christ. Where I part from them is the assumption that those are two different things. Both men assumed that the coming the church waited for lay beyond the crisis of that generation. My claim is

that they were one event. If that's right, the church didn't re-aim the parables. It kept them pointed where Jesus had pointed them.

The evidence is in the church's own letters. When the New Testament picks up the thief, the door, and the delay, it does so for readers who expected to see the coming themselves. Paul tells the Thessalonians the day won't surprise them like a thief, and he writes of "*we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord*" (**1 Thessalonians 4:15**). James writes, "*the coming of the Lord is at hand*," and "*the Judge is standing at the door*" (**James 5:8–9**). Peter quotes scoffers who ask where the promise of His coming is, and answers that the day will come like a thief (**2 Peter 3:4**, **2 Peter 3:10**). Peter also says a thousand years are as one day with the Lord (**2 Peter 3:8**), and chapter 6 gave my reading of that verse. Hebrews tells people who "*see the Day drawing near*" that the coming one "*will not delay*" (**Hebrews 10:25**, **Hebrews 10:37**). Jesus tells the church at Sardis, "*I will come like a thief*" (**Revelation 3:3**), in a book that opens with "*the time is near*" (**Revelation 1:3**).

Jordan grants that those thief passages "concern the Cataclysm of the first century" (***Jordan, Matthew 23–25, p. 199***). If the early church re-aimed the crisis parables, it re-aimed them at a crisis its own readers were told to stay awake for.

If you believe the New Testament writers did separate the fall of Jerusalem from the coming, you have most of the scholars with you. You'll need to

explain why the letters that use the thief and the door speak to their first readers as people who should be awake for it.

Doesn't Luke put "the times of the Gentiles" between the fall of the city and the coming?

Luke's version of the sermon has a sentence Matthew's doesn't. "*Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*" (**Luke 21:24**). The verses after it bring in the Son of Man coming in a cloud. A critic will say Luke has put an open-ended age between the fall of Jerusalem and the coming, and that we're living in it.

The sentence puts an "until" on the trampling, and it doesn't say how long the times of the Gentiles are. John uses the same picture and puts a length on it: the nations "*will trample the holy city for forty-two months*" (**Revelation 11:2**). Eight verses after the trampling, Luke records, "*Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place*" (**Luke 21:32**). The trampling and the coming in a cloud both stand before that verse.

That's a reading. "*The times of the Gentiles*" isn't defined in the passage, and many take it as a long Gentile age that's still running. If you take it that way, you'll say that "*all*" in **Luke 21:32** means the signs of verse 31 and not the coming they point to. I grant that verse 31 tells the two apart. I think the trampling of verse 24 is one of the things verse 32 counts, and you'll have to decide.

Doesn't Peter say heaven must keep Jesus until everything is restored?

Peter preached, "*whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago*" (**Acts 3:21**). To most people "*restoring all the things*" sounds like the remaking of the world, and the far country sounds a long way off.

Peter says what "*all the things*" are. They're the things the prophets spoke about. Three verses later he says when the prophets were pointing: "*all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days*" (**Acts 3:24**). He means the days he was standing in. Jesus used the verb from the same root when He spoke of John the Baptist. "*Elijah does come, and he will restore all things*," He said, and then, "*Elijah has already come*" (**Matthew 17:11–12**).

I take the restoring to be the setting up of what the prophets promised, under way as Peter spoke and established within that generation. Some of what they promised is growth without end (**Isaiah 9:7**), and that part isn't finished and isn't meant to be. This answer shows that Peter's own words allow that. It doesn't show that a wider restoration is impossible, and the common reading of this verse is the other one.

Doesn't Jesus say that in the age to come nobody marries or dies?

This may be the hardest verse for my view, and I'd be hiding it if I left it out. The Sadducees asked Jesus about a woman who had married seven brothers in turn. He answered, "*The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection*" (**Luke 20:34–36**).

I believe the age to come arrived in AD 70. People still marry, and people still die. How can both be true?

Read who the sentence is about. It's about "*those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead*." The Sadducees had asked about eight dead people, seven brothers and one wife. Jesus answers about the dead who are raised.

Read the reason He gives. "*For they cannot die anymore*." The Sadducees' case rests on the law that a brother must marry his brother's widow, and that law exists because a man died (**Deuteronomy 25:5**). Where nobody dies, nobody needs it.

The living still marry and still die. Jesus holds both together in one sentence to Martha: “*Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die*” (**John 11:25–26**).

A critic will say that “*that age*” is a time, and that everyone living in it shares its conditions. If we’re in it, we should neither marry nor die. My answer is the phrase “*and to the resurrection from the dead*.” Jesus describes those who reach that age by being raised. That’s a reading. It doesn’t close the gap completely, and you should weigh it knowing that.

Three smaller questions

Was the kingdom taken from the leaders or from the nation? “*The kingdom of God will be taken away from you*” (**Matthew 21:43**) is spoken to the chief priests and the Pharisees. Some widen “you” to the whole nation, and some narrow it to the leadership. I’ve kept it on the men in the courtyard, where the text puts it. The burned city of **Matthew 22:7** and “this generation” in **Matthew 23:36** show how far the sentence reached.

Who supposed the kingdom would appear immediately? Luke says “*they supposed*” (**Luke 19:11**) without saying who. McDurmon argues it was the disciples at Zacchaeus’s table and not the crowd (***McDurmon, Jesus v. Jerusalem, p. 128***).

The verse doesn't settle it, and nothing in chapter 5 changes if he's right. The disciples shared the hope (**Acts 1:6**).

Does "then" at the start of the ten virgins tie that parable to the one before it? Matthew sometimes uses "then" loosely, to mean "next in the telling." In **Matthew 25:1** I take it at full strength, because the verb is future and the scene matches the master's arrival in **Matthew 24:50**. If you take it loosely, you lose that one tie. The date still comes from **Matthew 24:34**.

Servants now

If you have followed me this far, you may be asking what every preterist gets asked. If the master came back in AD 70, what does that make us?

It makes us the servants of the King who came back.

Go back to the nobleman. He told his servants, "*Engage in business until I come*" (**Luke 19:13**). He came. He received the kingdom and returned with it. He settled with the servants, and the faithful heard what every servant in these parables was working for: "*Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities*" (**Luke 19:17**).

The reckoning promoted the stewards. The man who had traded well with one mina was set over cities. The kingdom the nobleman brought back

was staffed. The parable says the faithful were given rule, and I won't say more about what that looked like than the parable does.

That's the age you live in. The servants of the first generation gave their account. The faithful among them were set "*over much*" (**Matthew 25:21**). The kingdom they had been trading for arrived, and "*of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end*" (**Isaiah 9:7**). You belong to the household of a King who has come, who reigns, and whose kingdom is still growing the way the mustard seed and the leaven said it would.

Is there any reckoning left? Yes. "*It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment*" (**Hebrews 9:27**). That appointment is as real for me as it was for the servant with the one talent. The King who sat on His throne at the end of the age hasn't left it, and I'll stand before Him when I die. "*Well done, good and faithful servant*" is still the sentence to work for. "*I never knew you*" (**Matthew 7:23**) is still the sentence to fear.

Are the talents spent? No. They're in your hands. Jesus said, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*" (**Matthew 28:18**), and the throne is still "*the throne of God and of the Lamb*" (**Revelation 22:3**). He sent the apostles to make disciples of all nations in the years before the end of the age. The age ended, and His government kept increasing. I take that to mean disciples are still being made. The church still says "*Come*" (**Revelation 22:17**), and nobody hears without a preacher (**Romans 10:14–15**). His

promise to His people has no end date on it either: "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (**Hebrews 13:5**).

The parables of absence were given to the generation that watched the Master leave, and that generation gave its account when He came back. The parables of growth describe the world you were born into. The seed grows, and nobody knows how. The leaven works through the whole lump. The vineyard has been given to "*a people producing its fruits*" (**Matthew 21:43**).

Nathan's parable ended with "*You are the man!*" (**2 Samuel 12:7**), and David was the man. The parable of the tenants ended with men who "*perceived that he was speaking about them*" (**Matthew 21:45**), and they were right. We aren't the men in those stories. We came after, into the kingdom they were told to watch for, and we have a charge of our own.

What that charge looks like from Monday to Saturday is more than this book can carry. What happens when a believer dies, what became of the dead, and what the church still does are the subject of my book *What Now?*

If you are afraid to look

Some of you're afraid even to look at this. I understand that. I was too.

What do you have to lose? Study it. Test it. Be open and honest with yourself, and go find the answers to your hardest questions. The time is over for the "because I told you so" answers we get when we ask.

We have to be childlike in our faith again. A child asks why the sky is blue. We should start asking why our views have strayed from Scripture, and keep asking the way a child does. If this is true, then what does it mean? We have forgotten how to read Scripture through the eyes of the people it was first written to.

All I ask is that you put your face in a Bible and see what it says, without the notes and the systems we have inherited.

Go deeper: "The Tough Verses, one at a time" at TheHereticalHorseman.com/hard-texts

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APPENDIX A: THE PARABLE CATALOG

This is my working list of forty parables, sorted the way chapter 1 sorts them. Other lists run from about thirty to about sixty, depending on whether one-line comparisons such as the lamp and the salt are counted. Only the first family carries the claim of this book. The second bears on it. The rest are listed so you can see what I left out.

Family 1: absence and return

1. The wicked tenants (**Matthew 21:33–46**, **Mark 12:1–12**, **Luke 20:9–19**). The owner "*went into another country,*" and Luke adds "*for a long while*." He comes back to "*those tenants*." Time marker: "*they perceived that he was speaking about them*" (**Matthew 21:45**), and "*this generation*" (**Matthew 23:36**). Chapter 4.

2. The servants waiting for their master (**Luke 12:35–38**). The master is away at a wedding feast. He comes back to "*those servants whom the master finds awake*." The marker is the address: "*You also must be ready*" (**Luke 12:40**), spoken to the disciples in front of Him. Chapter 6.

3. The faithful and wise servant (**Matthew 24:45–51**, **Luke 12:42–48**). The master leaves one servant over the household. He comes back to "*that servant*." Time marker: "*this generation*" (**Matthew 24:34**), eleven verses earlier. Chapter 6.

4. The doorkeeper (**Mark 13:34–37**). *"A man going on a journey"* leaves his servants in charge. He may come *"suddenly and find you asleep."* Time marker: *"this generation"* (**Mark 13:30**). Chapter 6.

5. The ten virgins (**Matthew 25:1–13**). The bridegroom *"was delayed."* The ten who went out are the ten who are sorted when he arrives. Time marker: *"Then"* (**Matthew 25:1**), tying it to the parable before. Chapter 7.

6. The talents (**Matthew 25:14–30**). *"A man going on a journey"* entrusts his property. *"the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them."* Time marker: *"For"* (**Matthew 25:14**), tying it to the watch command of **Matthew 25:13**. Chapter 8.

7. The minas (**Luke 19:11–27**). A nobleman goes *"into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return."* He comes back to *"these servants"* and *"these enemies of mine."* Time marker: *"this generation"* (**Luke 21:32**), to the same disciples. Chapter 5.

Three passages are closely related and are not absence parables: the thief in the night (**Matthew 24:43–44**, **Luke 12:39–40**), the persistent widow (**Luke 18:1–8**), and the sheep and the goats (**Matthew 25:31–46**), which is a judgment scene and is the subject of chapter 11.

Family 2: growth and harvest

1. The mustard seed (**Matthew 13:31–32**, **Mark 4:30–32**, **Luke 13:18–19**). The smallest seed becomes the largest plant in the garden. Chapter 10.

2. The leaven (**Matthew 13:33**, **Luke 13:20–21**). It is hidden in the flour until "*it was all leavened*." Chapter 10.

3. The seed growing by itself (**Mark 4:26–29**). God gives the growth in stages, and it ends in a harvest. Chapter 10.

4. The wheat and the weeds (**Matthew 13:24–30**, **Matthew 13:36–43**). "*The harvest is the end of the age*." Chapter 9.

5. The net (**Matthew 13:47–50**). The sorting comes "*at the end of the age*." Chapter 9.

The fig tree in leaf (**Matthew 24:32–35**, **Mark 13:28–31**, **Luke 21:29–33**) is a sign parable inside the Olivet sermon and belongs to neither family. It is treated in chapter 10.

Judgment on "this generation"

These have no departure in them. I use them where the text joins them to the first family.

- Children in the marketplace (**Matthew 11:16–19**, **Luke 7:31–35**)
- The unclean spirit's return (**Matthew 12:43–45**)
- The barren fig tree (**Luke 13:6–9**), chapter 3

- The two sons (**Matthew 21:28–32**)
- The wedding feast (**Matthew 22:1–14**), chapter 4
- The great banquet (**Luke 14:15–24**)

Grace and invitation

The two debtors (**Luke 7:41–43**), the lost sheep (**Luke 15:3–7**, **Matthew 18:12–14**), the lost coin (**Luke 15:8–10**), the prodigal son (**Luke 15:11–32**), the laborers in the vineyard (**Matthew 20:1–16**), and the Pharisee and the tax collector (**Luke 18:9–14**).

Discipleship

The sower (**Matthew 13:1–23**, **Mark 4:1–20**, **Luke 8:4–15**), the hidden treasure (**Matthew 13:44**), the pearl (**Matthew 13:45–46**), the new and old treasure (**Matthew 13:52**), new wine and old wineskins (**Matthew 9:16–17**, **Mark 2:21–22**, **Luke 5:36–39**), the wise and foolish builders (**Matthew 7:24–27**, **Luke 6:47–49**), the unforgiving servant (**Matthew 18:23–35**), the good Samaritan (**Luke 10:25–37**), the friend at midnight (**Luke 11:5–8**), the rich fool (**Luke 12:16–21**), the lowest seat (**Luke 14:7–11**), the tower builder and the king at war (**Luke 14:28–33**), the dishonest manager (**Luke 16:1–13**), the rich man and Lazarus (**Luke 16:19–31**), and the unworthy servants (**Luke 17:7–10**).

APPENDIX B: THE HISTORICAL RECORD, IN THE WITNESS'S OWN WORDS

Every quotation from Josephus in this book is reproduced here from William Whiston's public-domain translation, by book, chapter, and section, with the chapter of this book where it is used. Josephus (c. AD 37–100), a priest of the Jewish aristocracy, commanded Jewish forces in Galilee in AD 66–67, surrendered to Vespasian, and watched the siege of Jerusalem from the Roman camp. He wrote *Wars* within a decade of the events. He was not a Christian.

The Archelaus passages are also recorded, at greater length, in Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews* 17.9–13. The *Wars* text is given here, with one line from the *Antiquities* that *Wars* does not have. Where I have left out words inside a passage, the gap is marked with an ellipsis.

2.2.1 (Ch. 5). "Archelaus went down now to the sea-side, with his mother and his friends, Poplas, and Ptolemy, and Nicolaus, and left behind him Philip, to be his steward in the palace, and to take care of his domestic affairs."

2.6.1 (Ch. 5). "It was made by those ambassadors who, before the revolt, had come, by Varus's permission, to plead for the liberty of their country; those that came were fifty in number, but there were more than eight thousand of the Jews at Rome who supported them. And when Caesar had assembled a council of the principal Romans

in Apollo's temple, that was in the palace, [this was what he had himself built and adorned, at a vast expense,] the multitude of the Jews stood with the ambassadors, and on the other side stood Archelaus, with his friends;"

2.6.2 (Ch. 5). "and that they would join their country to Syria, and administer the government by their own commanders,"

2.6.3 (Ch. 5). "he gave the one half of Herod's kingdom to Archelaus, by the name of Ethnarch, … Idumea, and all Judea, and Samaria were parts of the ethnarchy of Archelaus,"

2.7.3 (Ch. 5). "in the ninth year of his government he was banished to Vienna, a city of Gaul, and his effects were put into Caesar's treasury."

Antiquities 17.13.1 (Ch. 5). Archelaus "magnificently rebuilt the royal palace that had been at Jericho."

5.1.3 (Ch. 3). "for those darts that were thrown by the engines came with that force, that they went over all the buildings, and reached as far as the altar, and the temple itself, and fell upon the priests, and those that were about the sacred offices; insomuch that many persons who came thither with great zeal from the ends of the earth, to offer sacrifices at this celebrated place, which was esteemed holy by all mankind, fell down before their own sacrifices themselves, and sprinkled that altar which was venerable among all men, both Greeks and Barbarians, with their own blood; till the dead bodies of strangers were mingled together with those of their own country,

and those of profane persons with those of the priests, and the blood of all sorts of dead carcasses stood in lakes in the holy courts themselves."

6.4.5 (Ch. 4). "But as for that house, God had, for certain, long ago doomed it to the fire; and now that fatal day was come, according to the revolution of ages; it was the tenth day of the month Lous, [Ab,] upon which it was formerly burnt by the king of Babylon;"

6.7.2 (Ch. 3). "On the next day the Romans drove the robbers out of the lower city, and set all on fire as far as Siloam."

6.8.5 (Ch. 3). "So they now left these towers of themselves, or rather they were ejected out of them by God himself, and fled immediately to that valley which was under Siloam,"

6.9.3 (Ch. 4). "Now the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege eleven hundred thousand, the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation [with the citizens of Jerusalem], but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army,"

7.1.1 (Chs. 3, 4). "Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne; and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This

wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison, as were the towers also spared, in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valor had subdued; but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited."

APPENDIX C: SOURCES CITED

Scripture. The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (Crossway). Quotations are the ESV's wording. Capitalization inside quotation marks is the translators'.

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- Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 4th ed. (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999); *The Olivet Discourse in Outline: Biblical and Historical Parallels that Point to a Pre-AD 70 Fulfillment*, unpublished master copy dated June 2nd, 2023, supplied by American Vision.

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