

Eschatology 101

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The Prophetic Genre

I. Prophetic Genre Defined

- A. Prophetic passages deal with predictions regarding the future. These predictions are sometimes couched in mystical or symbolic language.
- B. Apocalyptic passages are prophetic passages that deal with the end of the world or the second coming of Jesus Christ.

II. The Importance of Prophetic Genre

- A. 25% of the Bible was prophetic when written.
- B. Fulfilled prophecy proves the accuracy and trustworthiness of the Bible.
 - a. All prophecies regarding the first advent have been fulfilled. This lends significant support to the belief that the prophecies regarding the second advent will be fulfilled as well.
 - b. Prophecies regarding kingdoms, cities, and nations have been fulfilled to the letter in history. Thus it is safe to say that prophecies which have as-of-yet been unfulfilled will be at a future date.

C. Prophecy gives hope to the believer.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

D. Prophecy prompts the believer to live a godly life in light of the soon coming of Jesus Christ.

1 John 3:1-3 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

E. Prophecy answers the question as to the meaning and purpose of history.

F. Prophecy answers questions as to ultimate justice for the oppressed and ultimate punishment for the sinner.

Psalms 73:17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; {then} understood I their end.

III. The Scope of Prophecy

A. Near-Fulfillment

1. These are prophecies that are fulfilled only a few days or years after their pronouncement.
2. Some examples are:
 - a. The death of the unbelieving lord in 2 Kings 7:1, 17
 - b. The ten plagues of Egypt in Exodus 3ff.
 - c. The death of David and Bathsheba's first son in 2 Samuel 12:14ff.

B. Far-Fulfillment

1. These are prophecies fulfilled a hundred or more years from their pronouncement.
2. Some examples are:
 - a. Cyrus in Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1
 - b. The destruction of the temple in Matthew 24:1-3.
 - c. The resurrection in Matthew 20:19.
 - d. Prophecies regarding Antiochus Epiphanes in Daniel 11.
 - e. Prophecies regarding Alexander the Great in Daniel 7.

C. Distant-Fulfillment

1. These are prophecies fulfilled thousands of years after their pronouncement.
2. Some examples are:
 - a. The first advent in Genesis 3:15.
 - b. Predictions regarding the Second Coming.
 - c. Predictions regarding the establishment of David's Throne in 2 Samuel 7.

IV. Types of Prophecy

A. Direct

1. Direct prophecies deal with people, places, and things.
2. Direct prophecies are fulfilled at a single point in time.
3. Direct prophecies are limited in their scope to a relatively small number of objects.
4. The vast bulk of Biblical prophecy falls into this category.

B. Telescopic

1. Telescopic prophecies have both a near and distant component which together appear to be a single prophecy.
2. Examples are:

- a. The two advents in Isaiah 61:1-2.

Isaiah 61:1-3 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

- b. The two resurrections in John 5:28-29.

John 5:28-29 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

C. Double Reference

1. Double reference prophecies have two components, a near/far component and a distant. The near or far component is a foretaste or pattern for a distant component.
2. Sometimes the near fulfillment part of the prophecy is given as sort of a down-payment to insure that the remainder of the prophecy will occur. It is as though God is saying, "If I can do A, then I certainly can do B."
3. Some examples are:
 - a. Antiochus Epiphanes and Antichrist in Daniel 11. The transition verse is v. 36.

- b. Alexander the Great and the Christ in Zechariah 9:8.
- c. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the end of the Church Age in Matthew 24-25.

V. Interpreting Prophecy

A. The Millennial Watershed

1. Pre-Millennial

- a. Truest to the grammatico-historical interpretation of Scripture.
- b. Held by most evangelical scholars.
- c. Differentiates between Israel and the Church.
- d. Is sometimes known as dispensationalism.

2. A-Millennial

- a. Truest to the allegorical interpretation of Scripture.
- b. Held by most reformed scholars, e.g. Presbyterian, Lutheran, etc.
- c. Does not differentiate between Israel and the Church.
- d. Is sometimes known as covenant theology.

3. Post-Millennial

- a. Held by most liberal scholars.
- b. Teaches if Christ comes at all, he will come when we clean up the world.
- c. A resurgence of post-millennialism is seen in the Dominion Theology and Christian Reconstructionism movements.

B. Hermeneutical Paradigms

1. Grammatico-Historical

Prophecy is to be interpreted literally, taking into consideration normal figures of speech, culture, history, geography, and context.

2. Allegorical

Prophecy is to be interpreted allegorically. Symbols, events, and people in prophetic passages have no certain connection to real-life symbols, events, and people.

C. Interpretive Rules for Prophetic Passages

1. Determine the meaning of significant words, phrases, and symbols.
2. Determine the prophecy's context, why was it given, to whom was it given, etc.
3. Determine if the prophecy has already been fulfilled.
4. Determine if the prophecy is conditional or unconditional.
5. Determine the scope of the prophecy, distinct, telescopic, or double reference.
6. Determine the relationship of this prophecy with the whole of Scripture.
7. If the meaning of the prophecy is given in the Scripture, search for no other meaning.

D. Interpretation of Symbols

1. Rule 1

Do not treat an object as a symbol unless there is evidence that it should be treated symbolically.

2. Rule 2

If the passage in which the symbol appears defines the symbol use that definition and no other.

3. Rule 3

If the passage in which the symbol appears does not define the symbol, compare other usages of that symbol in the Bible to interpret its meaning.

4. Rule 4

If the object is a symbol and there is no other use of it in the Bible, compare its use in the cultural setting to identify the meaning.

5. Rule 5

The rule, and not the exception, is that a symbol has only one unique meaning in scripture. Unless there is strong evidence for multiple meanings to a symbol, only one meaning should be used.

6. Rule 6

Do not force every occurrence of a symbol to require the same interpretation. Fig trees do not always refer to Israel.

The Times of the Gentiles - Daniel 2, 7

- I. Nebuchadnezzar's View of World Empires - Daniel 2
 - A. The Head of Gold - Babylon - 605 B.C. to 539 B.C. - Daniel 2:37-38.
 - B. The Arms and Chest of Silver - Medo/Persia - 539 B.C. to 333 B.C. - Daniel 2:39
 - Five major kings - Cyrus the Great, Cambyses, Darius the Great, Xerxes (Esther) and Artaxerxes (Nehemiah).
 - Medo/Persia was known for its silver wealth throughout the ancient world.
 - C. The Thighs and Belly of Brass - Greece - 333 B.C. to 63 B.C. - Daniel 2:39.
 - Split into four parts upon Alexander's death - Lysimachus (Macedonia), Antigonus (Asia Minor), Ptolemy (Egypt), and Selucius (Syria and Palestine).
 - Slowly decayed and was absorbed by Rome who ascended to power around 63 B.C.
 - Its culture left a lasting impact on the world, specifically in its spread of the Greek language, culture, and customs (Hellenization).
 - D. The Legs of Iron - Rome - 63 B.C. to Middle Ages - Daniel 9:40.
 - Rome was never conquered, it just decayed.
 - Rome divided into the eastern and western parts in the A.D. 400's.
 - E. The Feet of Iron and Clay - Revived Roman Empire of the End Times - Daniel 9:41-43.
 - The ten toes represent ten kingdoms which form a loose alliance.
 - F. The Uncut Stone - The Millennial Kingdom of Christ - Daniel 9:44-45.
- II. God's View of the World Empires - Daniel 7
 - A. The Source of these beasts - Daniel 7:1-3.
 - The "sea" is a prophetic symbol of the churning of the Gentile nations. In this vision, the Great Sea is a reference to the Mediterranean.
 - B. Beast #1 - Lion with Eagle's Wings - Daniel 7:4.
 - 1. Represents the Babylonian Empire
 - 2. Descriptive of the fierceness and rapidity of Babylon's conquests.
 - 3. One of the major symbols of Babylon is the Lion.

- C. Beast #2 - Bear - Daniel 7:5.
1. Represents the Medo/Persian empire.
 2. The fact that the bear was raised up on one side indicates the dominance of Persia over the Medes.
 3. The three ribs refer to the three kingdoms conquered by Medo/Persia in its rise to power, Egypt, Lydia, and Babylonia.
- D. Beast #3 - Leopard - Daniel 7:6.
1. Refers to the Greek empire.
 2. Descriptive of the speed with which Alexander the Great conquered the ancient world.
 3. The four wings and four heads refer to the four generals who split up the Greek empire among themselves after Alexander's death.
- E. Beast #4 - The Dreadful Beast - Daniel 7:7
1. Refers to the Roman empire.
 2. Descriptive of the strength and power of Rome in its conquests.
 3. Is the source of the Antichrist - Daniel 7:8.
 4. The ten horns refer to the ten-nation confederacy of the end times as also seen in Daniel 9 and Revelation 13.
 5. The three horns plucked up by the roots refer to three kingdoms which the Antichrist will subdue in his rise to power - Daniel 7:24.
 6. The little horn is undoubtedly a reference to the Antichrist.
 - a. He speaks great things - Daniel 7:8, 11, 24, Revelation 13:5-6.
 - b. He makes war with the saints - Daniel 7:25, Revelation 13:7.
 - c. He is slain by the Ancient of Days - Daniel 7:11, Revelation 19:20.
 - d. His destiny is the Lake of Fire - Daniel 7:11, Revelation 19:20.
- F. The Son of Man - Daniel 7:13.
1. Refers to the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.
 2. Is an everlasting kingdom.

The Backbone of Biblical Prophecy - Daniel 9:24-27

I. The Importance of This Prophecy

- A. Gives a panoramic view of the whole of Biblical prophecy.
- B. Concerns both the first and second advents of Christ.
- C. Gives an end point of the times of the Gentiles.

II. The Interpretation of This Prophecy

A. Its Sevens

1. The term “weeks” is the Hebrew word for “sevens”.
2. The “sevens” must be determined from the context, is it seven days, months, years, decades, or what?
3. By comparing Scripture, we find that “weeks” refer to units of seven years.
 - a. In Daniel 7:25 we read of a time, times, and the dividing of time which translates to 3-1/2. In this verse it is a period of 3-1/2 of something.
 - b. In Daniel 12:7 we read of a period of 1,260 days during which the Antichrist will scatter the people of God. That is 3-1/2 years of 360 days each (the prophetic year).
 - c. In Revelation 11:2 we read that the temple will be trodden down 42 months, or 3-1/2 years.
 - d. Thus we conclude that “week” must refer to years, since according to Daniel 9:27 Antichrist abominates the temple in the midst of the “week”, a period of seven years, 1,260 days, a time, times, and half a time, or 42 months.

B. Its Scope

1. To finish the transgression.
 - Literally means “to restrain firmly the transgression.”
 - Sin will one day be fully and ultimately restrained.
2. To make an end of sins.
 - Means to finally deal with sin, both individually and generally.
3. To make reconciliation for iniquity.

- “Reconciliation” is the Hebrew word *kephar*, which means to atone or cover.
 - This refers to Christ’s atoning work on the cross.
4. To bring in everlasting righteousness.
 - Refers to the eternal state.
 5. To seal up the vision and prophecy.
 - Indicates the cessation of visions and prophecies in the Millennial Kingdom and the eternal state.
 6. To anoint the most Holy
 - Refers to the establishment of the eternal temple.
- C. Its Start
1. The rebuilding of Jerusalem
 2. Three possible starting points
 - a. The decree of Cyrus in 536 B.C. - Ezra 1:1-4
 - This decree only referred to the rebuilding of the Temple, not the city walls.
 - b. The decree of Artaxerxes in 458 B.C. - Ezra 7:11-26
 - Again, this decree did not refer to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.
 - c. The second decree of Artaxerxes in 445 B.C. - Nehemiah 2:1.
 - This is the most likely candidate.
 - Exactly 483 years from this date, on the April 6, A.D. 32, Christ rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey to present himself as King.
 - Details of the calculations can be found in Sir Robert Anderson’s book, *The Coming Prince*.
- D. Its Suspension
1. An implied break between the first 69 weeks and the seventieth.
 - Implied in the phrase, “the Messiah shall be cut off.”
 - Implied in the destruction of Jerusalem.
 2. At the end of 69 weeks, Jerusalem will be destroyed.

- This was actually accomplished in A.D. 70 by the Romans.
- Hints that the Antichrist will come out of the people represented by the Roman Empire.

E. Its Settlement

1. The confirmation of the treaty
 - a. Antichrist will make a treaty with Israel to insure the peace for a period of seven years.
 - b. Israel will feel secure in this peace - Ezekiel 38.
 - c. This is the event that officially begins the Tribulation.
2. The cessation of the sacrifice
 - In the middle of the seven years, Antichrist will desecrate the temple and set himself up to be worshipped - 2 Thessalonians 2:4, Revelation 13:4-15.
 - This is the abomination of desolation mentioned in Matthew 24:15.
3. The consummation of the desolation
 - In the end, Antichrist will lose and no one will come to his aid - Daniel 7:26.

General Prophecies Regarding the Second Advent

Matthew 24:1-31

I. The Context of the Olivet Discourse

A. Cultural

1. The disciple's expectations regarding the Kingdom were at a fever pitch.

Luke 19:11 ff.
Matthew 24:1-3

2. The Jewish nation fully expected the Kingdom to be established soon.

3. The Apocryphal literature of that time reveals a great expectation of deliverance from foreign oppression.

B. Historical

1. It is day three of the last week of Christ's life.

Day 1 - Triumphal entry and cleansing of the temple (Monday)
Day 2 - Teaching in the temple (Tuesday)
Day 3 - Last visit to the temple, Olivet Discourse (Wednesday)
Day 4 - Last Supper in the evening (Thursday)
Day 5 - Trial and Crucifixion (Friday)
Day 6 - In the tomb (Saturday)
Day 7 - Resurrection (Sunday)

2. The temple, under construction for over 40 years, is one of the wonders of that time.

C. The Audience

1. We are told that it is to four of the disciples, Peter, John, James, and Andrew.

Mark 13:3

2. More broadly, it is to the Jewish people as a whole.

- a. The entire context is Jewish.
- b. It is in answer to the disciples questions of when the Jewish Kingdom will be established by the Messiah.
- c. It relates events that occur during the Tribulation.
- d. The events are followed immediately by the Judgment of the Living Nations which occurs immediately prior to the Millennium.

D. The Time

1. There are two basic views
 - a. It refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as inferred from Luke 21:22-24. This is the classical Amillennial view.
 - b. It refers to events which occur at the end of the Church Age. This is the Premillennial view.
 2. The case for the Amillennial view.
 - a. Luke 21:22-24.
 - b. Historical interpretation of the discourse.
 - c. Similarity of events described in the discourse with the events of A.D. 70.
 - d. Covenantal interpretation of Scripture.
 3. The case for the Premillennial view.
 - a. Many of the events described did not occur in A.D. 70. For example, the signs in the heavens, the establishment of the Kingdom, and the Judgment of the Nations.
 - b. Jesus is answering the disciples question regarding the establishment of the Kingdom, not regarding the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - c. The events describe are the same events as those which will occur during the Tribulation.
 - d. This interpretation best fits the context of the events described in the discourse.
- E. Three Keys Necessary for Proper Interpretation
1. The audience is Jewish.
 2. The prophetic context is Pre-Kingdom, not Pre-Rapture.
 3. The Discourse is given to answer the disciple's question regarding the time the Kingdom would be established.

II. The Prediction - Matthew 24:1-2

- A. The disciples were showing Christ the beauty of the temple.
- B. Christ predicted the utter destruction of the temple. He stated that one stone would not be left on another.
 1. This fit the Jewish idea that the first thing the Messiah would do would be to destroy and rebuild the temple.

2. Christ's prediction, however, is one of judgment. (Matthew 23:36-39)

III. The Question - Matthew 24:3

- A. The disciple's expected the immediate establishment of the Kingdom.
- B. They asked Christ what the specific sign would be that indicated the Kingdom was about to begin.
- C. Note the twofold aspect of this question.
 1. The sign of your coming.
 2. The sign of the end of the age.
- D. A proper understanding of the disciple's question is key to interpreting Christ's answer.

III. The Answer - Matthew 24:4-25:46

- A. Presigns
 1. Christ begins his answer with the presigns. These are signs that precede "the sign" of his coming mentioned in Matthew 24:29-31.
 2. Ten presigns are given. Note the following:
 - a. These signs were not historically fulfilled.
 - b. The conclusion, then, is that the fulfillment of these signs is yet future.
 3. The Presigns given.
 - a. Presign #1 - Deception of False Christs - Matthew 24:4-5
 - 1). There have always been false christs. However, just prior to the establishment of the Kingdom, false christs will proliferate.

2 Timothy 4:3-4
1 Timothy 4:1-3
 - 2). False Christs are of two different types.
 - a). Someone who claims to be "the Christ."
 - b). Someone who claims to be "the deliverer."
 - 3). The ultimate deceiver is the Antichrist.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
1 John 2:18-20
 - b. Presign #2 - The Signs of Conflict - Matthew 24:6-8

- 1). There have always been wars, but just prior to the second coming, wars will become more and more frequent.
 - 2). Famines
 - a). Ethiopia
 - b). India
 - 3). Earthquakes
 - a). China
 - b). United States
 - 4). Pestilences
 - a). AIDS
 - b). Disease
 - 5). All of these are only the beginning of sorrows just as labor pains start slow and increase in frequency until birth.
- c. Presign #3 - Persecution Promised - Matthew 24:9-10
- 1). This persecution is not against Christians, it is against Jews.
Revelation 12:1-17
 - 2). Although the Jew is the specific target of Antichrist's wrath, Christians will suffer as well.
 - 3). The persecution will be so great that people will betray one another for survival. Note the parallels to the Holocaust.
 - 4). As a footnote, we find that the inclusion/exclusion of the Gentiles from the Kingdom will be based on their treatment of the Jew during this time. Matthew 25:34ff.
- d. Presign #4 - False Prophets - Matthew 24:11
1. There have always been false prophets, but just prior to Christ's return, false prophets will abound.
 2. Paul warns about coming deceivers.
2 Timothy 3:1 ff.
1 Timothy 4:1 ff.
 3. Peter warns us about false prophets.
2 Peter 2:1 ff.

4. John warns us of false prophets.

1 John 4:1-3
1 John 2:18
5. In our modern day, false doctrine abounds.
 - i. New Age
 - ii. Prosperity gospel (see 2 Peter 2:1 ff.)
 - iii. Universalism
- e. Presign #5 - Lawlessness - Matthew 24:12
 1. This word literally means “without law” – *anomia*. It is used to speak of those who rebel against all authority.
 2. The Antichrist is called “the man of lawlessness” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.
 3. Lawlessness is closely related to disobedience. Note the following passages.

Romans 1:30
2 Timothy 3:2
2 Peter 2:10 ff.
- f. Presign #6 - The Reward of Perseverance - Matthew 24:13
 1. Perseverance implies severe persecution. The times immediately prior to Christ’s second coming will be times of intense persecution for both Jew and believer alike.
 2. The persecution will be so severe that 2/3 of Israel will be destroyed.

Zechariah 13:8.
 3. Note that perseverance is a mark of true believers.

Hebrews 3:6, 14
Hebrews 4:11
Hebrews 6:12
Hebrews 11:35
 4. On the other hand, apostasy is a mark of unbelievers.

1 John 2:19
Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23
- g. Presign #7 - Gospel Preached to All Nations - Matthew 24:14

- 1). Note that the word translated “gospel” literally means “good news.” It was used to refer to an official imperial proclamation from the emperor.
 - 2). Christians often use the word “gospel” to refer to the message of salvation (Romans 1:16), however, that is not its only meaning.
 - 3). In Mark 1:14-15 and Matthew 4:17 we see that the “gospel of the kingdom” is the proclamation that God's righteous rule is to begin. The Jews rejected the Messiah at the first proclamation, however, they will not reject him on the second.
 - 4). This gospel is also seen in Revelation 14:6-7.
 - 5). Thus, this gospel is not the message of salvation, but the message that God's righteous reign is about to begin. It *includes* the message of salvation, but it is not *only* the message of salvation.
- h. Presign # 8 - The Abomination of Desolation - Matthew 24:15-20
- 1). The abomination of desolation refers to the desecration of the temple by Antichrist.
 - 2). Daniel prophesied this in Daniel 9:27.
 - 3). Paul pictures this in 2 Thessalonians 2:4.
 - 4). This refers to the event that marks the midpoint of the tribulation when the Antichrist desecrates the temple, breaks his treaty with Israel, and sets himself up as God to be worshiped.
 - 5). Immediately after this event, Christ warns those alive at the time to flee into the wilderness where they will be protected for 3 1/2 years. (Revelation 12:13-17)
 - 6). The last half of the tribulation, also known as the “great tribulation”, is a time of God's judgment on men as well as Satan's last attempt at world dominion. Matthew 24:21 is used to give this period its name.
 - 7). Note that this event also marks the time that Satan is cast out of heaven. (compare this passage with Revelation 12:13-17.)

- i. Presign # 9 - Severe Persecution Promised - Matthew 24:21-22
 - 1). For the third time in this discourse, Christ gives warning regarding the tremendous persecution that will come at this time. (Matthew 24:9-10, 13, 21-22)
 - 2). The last half of the tribulation will be a time of intense persecution to the Jewish nation and believers because Satan knows he only has a short time. (Revelation 12:13-17)
 - 3). In fact, Christ says that if those days were not shortened by His return, no flesh would still be alive. However, because of his people, he will shorten those days. Compare his protection in 2 Peter 2:4-9 and also the story of Lot in Genesis 18:20-32.
 - 4). God will protect his own children even if he has to rearrange the universe to do so.

 - j. Presign # 10 - False Christ Will Abound - Matthew 24:23-28
 - 1). For the third time Christ predicts false Christs and false prophets will come. (Matthew 24:4-6, 11, 23-28)
 - 2). Because of the intense persecution, and the fact that those Jews alive will be looking for the Messiah, we have two possibilities here.
 - a). False christs will rise thinking they will bring deliverance.
 - b). Satan will raise up false christs to lure the Jews out of hiding to be destroyed.
 - 3). Probably the latter is intended. It best fits the context of the preceding verses as well as the passage itself.
 - 4). Christ's return will be something that will not be missed. It will be brilliant enough to be seen by the whole world. See Revelation 19.
- B. The Sign - Matthew 24:29-31
1. The Setting - Matthew 24:29
 - a. This takes place "immediately after the tribulation." The seven final years of God's dealing with Israel are over. It is now time for the unveiling of the King.
 - b. Just so no one will miss the return of the real Christ to earth, God turns out the lights of the heavens. The sun, moon, and stars are all darkened for this event.
 - c. The parallel passage in Luke 21:25-26 sheds additional light on this verse. See also the following Old Testament references to these events.

Isaiah 13:6-16
 Isaiah 34:1-4
 Joel 2
 Haggai 2:6-7

- d. These signs compare well with the judgments of the tribulation as found in Revelation.

Sixth Seal - Revelation 6:12-17
 Fourth Trumpet - Revelation 8:12-13
 Fifth Bowl - Revelation 16:10-11
 Seventh Bowl - Revelation 16:17-21

- e. We could liken these events as God dimming the theatre lights so that all attention can be focused on the lighted stage.

2. The Sign Appears - Matthew 24:30

- a. What the Sign is not.

- 1). It is not a blazing cross as pictured by Origen and other Church fathers. There is absolutely no Scriptural support for this.
- 2). It is not the *Shekinah* glory of God alone.

- b. What the Sign is.

- 1). It is Christ Himself in his unveiled glory.
 - a). The Greek sentence structure points to the identification of the Sign as Christ.
 - b). It could be translated "the sign *which is* the Son of Man."
- 2). We see Christ in his unveiled glory arriving at the Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 19.
- 3). The term "revelation" is derived from the Greek term *apokalupis*. This term literally means "to reveal or unveil." Christ's glory is unveiled at his Second Coming.

3. The Sequel - Matthew 24:31

- a. The time of God's grace is over. It is time for judgment.
- b. The angels, God's instruments of judgment, are sent to gather his elect. Those that have already believed on the Messiah will be gathered for entrance into the Kingdom.
- c. This idea is picked up again in Matthew 25:31. Matthew 24:32 to Matthew 25:30 is a parenthetical passage in which Christ stresses the imminency of his return.

- d. We see the angels as God's executors of judgment in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.
- e. Note as an aside that the trumpet was a common instrument used to call an assembly of people together.

Pictures of the Second Advent

Matthew 24:32-25:30

I. Warnings Regarding the Immediacy of Events

- Some background comments are in order at this point.

It is assumed by many that the time of Christ's second coming can be precisely known by adding seven years to the signing of the treaty between Israel and the Antichrist. This is not necessarily true for the following reasons:

- Christ continuously stressed this fact to his disciples, and hence to us, that no one knew the time of his coming. We call this the doctrine of the Immanency. Christ only tells us that we can know the general season, but never the specific time (Matthew 24:36).
- Note that Christ says in verse 29 “immediately *after* the tribulation of those days.” He stresses the fact that his return is *after* the tribulation, which places His return some time after the seven years of the tribulation.
- The illustrations in Matthew 24:32 - 25:30 are irrelevant if we could pinpoint the exact time of His return. Why warn people of His unexpected return if they could just add seven years to the signing of the peace treaty which starts the tribulation in the first place.
- Daniel, in Daniel 12: 11-13, gives us the number of days between the abomination of desolation and the establishment of the Kingdom. Two periods of time are given. The first is 1290 days which is 30 days greater than 1260 or 3-1/2 years. The second is 1335 days, or 75 days greater than 1260 days. This can look confusing at first, but is easily understood if we see that the first figure of 1290 days is to the establishment of the Kingdom. This gives us 30 days to “mop up” between the time the tribulation ends and the Kingdom begins. The second can be seen as the time required for all of the judgments to be completed, an additional 75 days. Thus we see that there is a little “slush time” between the end of the tribulation and the beginning of the Millennium.
- The doctrine of the Immanency always refers to the second coming, never to the rapture. We believe in the immanency of the rapture only as a by-product of the immanency of the second coming. Basically put, if we don't know the date of the end of the tribulation, and we don't know the exact length of time between the end of the tribulation and the start of the Millennium, then there is no way we can know the start of the tribulation.

II. Pictures of the Second Advent

A. The Parable of the Fig Tree - Matthew 24:32-35

1. This parable is one of the most misunderstood parables found in the New Testament. Interpretations have been:

- a. The fig tree is Israel and the generation is 40 years. The budding of the fig tree was the establishment of the Jewish state in A.D. 1948. This view has been popularized by Hal Lindsey in the *Late Great Planet Earth*.
 - b. The fig tree is Israel and the generation is the disciples. This view is maintained by Amillennialists who interpret the Olivet Discourse as referring to the destruction of Israel by Rome in A.D. 70.
 - c. The fig tree is Israel and the generation is those alive when the signs begin. That generation will not die until all of the prophecies regarding the Kingdom have been fulfilled.
2. Before interpreting this parable, we need to look at its general context within the Olivet Discourse. Specifically:
- a. This is the first of six examples which Christ gives to show the immediacy of his return at the time of the end. It cannot, therefore, refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
 - b. Christ is trying to emphasize the imminency of his return and the fact that those who are alive at that time need to be prepared.
3. Secondly, we need to look at the following general guidelines for interpreting scripture.
- a. Do not force esoteric or wild interpretations on scripture. For the most part, those who heard a particular message understood its meaning.
 - b. Examine the context very carefully. No interpretation will run counter to the context of the passage in which it is found.
 - c. Do not force symbols to have universal meaning unless there is evidence in support of doing so. In other words, do not force the fig tree to be Israel just because Israel is seen as a fig tree in other passages in the Bible.
 - d. Usually, the clearest and simplest interpretation is the correct one.
4. The interpretation.
- a. The fig tree does not refer to Israel, but is used as a symbol to show the immediacy of Christ's return. There is no evidence in this passage that Israel is the fig tree.
 - b. The "generation" is the generation that is alive when the presigns begin. This is seen by examining the context of the passage.
 - c. The "budding" of the fig tree is the start of the presigns. Those who see the start of the events, i.e. the budding of the fig tree, will be alive when the figs are brought forth, i.e. the Kingdom begins.
 - d. The "these things" is those things Christ has been talking about, i.e. the presigns given in the first part of the Chapter.

5. The meaning.
 - a. From this interpretation, we see that the meaning of this parable is that those who are alive when the signs begin are alive when the Kingdom begins. The process of establishing the Kingdom will not be drawn out over a long period of time.
 - b. Men must be ready when the signs start, so they will be ready when the Kingdom begins.

B. The Days of Noah - Matthew 24:36-41

1. This is the second of six illustrations Christ gives to describe the imminency of his return.
2. Christ begins this example by stating that the exact time of His return is only known to the Father. Most people have trouble with this because of one of the following assumed positions:
 - a. Christ did not know the time of his own return. He must therefore not be omniscient and therefore not be God.
 - b. Christ knew but did not tell anyone.
 - c. Christ purposely misled his disciples.

Actually, none of the above are satisfactory. What we need to understand is that Christ in his *humiliation* limited his omniscience to those things revealed to him by the Father. It is not that he *did not* know, but that he *chose* not to know.

3. The interpretation.

Many say that the days of Noah refer to the wickedness of men at that time. Although it is true that Noah's days were one of widespread wickedness, the context of this passage does not seem to emphasize that. In fact, it seems to emphasize the normal, everyday events of life.

Therefore, this illustration does not show the moral character of the days of Christ's return, but the suddenness of his return. The men alive at the time of Noah who had no contact with him were suddenly swept away in judgment. Their business-as-usual lifestyle was divinely interrupted.

4. The meaning.

Although the time immediately prior to Christ's return is a time of awful judgment, there will be those who do not see the spiritual significance of the events. Christ's coming will catch them totally unprepared just as the rains of Noah's day caught that generation unprepared.

5. The judgment.

Verses 40-41 have been interpreted in many different ways. Many say that this refers to the rapture where believers are caught away leaving the unbelievers for judgment. However, this runs counter to the entire context of this passage. We are not looking at pre-rapture events, but pre-revelation events.

What does seem to be in view here is that those taken are taken to judgment. In verse 39 we read that the flood *took away* the ungodly. It is most natural, then, to interpret verses 40-41 in the same way. Those taken are taken for judgment, those left are left to enter the Kingdom.

C. The Thief - Matthew 24:43-44

1. This is the third of six illustrations showing the immediacy of Christ's return. This particular illustration is given to show the unexpectedness of His return.
2. In those days, all of a person's wealth was stored in their home. There were no banks for the common people. Therefore, it was not uncommon for a thief to break into a home and steal the family treasures.
3. Christ uses this illustration to show that when He returns, men will not be ready. What seems to be in view here is that men may have a general idea that He could come, but do not prepare for it. I may have a general idea that a thief may break into my house, but I really do not prepare for it as I would if I knew the exact time.
4. The moral of this illustration is that men need to be ready at all times, so that when Christ does come, they will be prepared.

D. The Faithful and Unfaithful Servant - Matthew 24:45-51

1. This is another illustration showing the unexpectedness of Christ's return. Whereas the previous illustration of the thief described an event that is probable, but unlikely, this illustration describes an event that is certain. The servant knows that his lord is returning, a man does not know that his house will be broken into.
2. Christ is illustrating opportunity. This fits in well with the judgment of the nations found in chapter 25 in which inclusion or exclusion from the Kingdom is based on one's treatment of Israel.
3. That servant that took advantage of his opportunity for service and fulfilled it faithfully will be rewarded upon his lord's return. On the other hand, if that same opportunity is wasted, only judgment will be given at the time of reckoning.
4. Again, Christ's emphasis is on immanency. No one knows the exact day and hour of his return. When he does come, however, it will be forever too late to avert judgment if unready.

E. The Parable of the Ten Virgins - Matthew 25:1-13

1. As in all of the other parables given by our Lord to the disciples, this one is really not that hard to understand.
2. This parable, like the parable of the Fig Tree, has been greatly misunderstood. Many identify the bridegroom as Christ and the ten virgins representative of the Church. When Christ comes to take us to heaven, there will be some wise who are ready for his coming, and some unprepared. Those that are wise have the Holy Spirit, symbolized by the oil, and hence are true believers. The others appear to have the Spirit, but in reality do not.
3. Before interpreting this parable in its context, some notes about Jewish weddings are in order. Basically, the events of a Jewish wedding in those days were:
 - a. The parents of the bride and bridegroom would make a contract giving their children to each other in marriage. This occurred some time before the wedding and in fact may have occurred while the children were still babies.
 - b. At a predetermined time, the couple were engaged. At this point they were considered to be legally married. Any act of unfaithfulness on the part of one of the members was considered adultery, and punishable by death. Note the example of Mary and Joseph.
 - c. In the year or so after the betrothal, the bridegroom would prepare a house for his bride. Usually this was merely an extension to his father's house.
 - d. Towards the end of the year after the betrothal, the bride would prepare for the bridegroom's coming. She did not know exactly when this would be.
 - e. When all things were ready, the bridegroom would gather his friends and proceed to the house of the bride with much celebration. He would take his bride and parade back through the city to the house he had prepared for her.
 - f. When he reached his house, all of the bridal party would enter and celebrate for a period of time, sometimes up to several days. At the end of that time, the best man would take the hand of the bride and place it into the hand of the bridegroom and all would leave, hopefully. The couple was now together and the marriage would be consummated.
4. With the order of events in mind, we are now ready to interpret this parable. In doing so, we will interpret the major points and then support our interpretation.
 - a. The bridegroom is Christ.
 - 1). Throughout the Bible Christ is referred to as the bridegroom. (Eph 5:22ff, John 3:29, Matt 9:15)
 - 2). The context of the passage is about Christ's return.

- 3). The statement in verse 13 relates Christ to the bridegroom.
 - b. The virgins are the tribulation survivors.
 - 1). The virgins cannot be the Church because we are in heaven during the tribulation (Rev 19).
 - 2). We are seen as returning with Christ at his coming in Revelation 19.
 - 3). The Church is known as the bride of Christ (Eph 5:22ff, 2 Cor 11:2, Rev 21:2, 21:9, 22:17).
 - c. The wise virgins are those prepared for Christ's return.
 - 1). This is determined from the context of the whole passage.
 - 2). It is the prepared virgins that are allowed to enter the marriage feast.
 - d. The unwise virgins are those who are not prepared for Christ's return.
 - 1). They do not have sufficient oil (Holy Spirit).
 - 2). They are locked out of the marriage feast.
 - e. The marriage feast is the Millennial Kingdom.
 - 1). The unprepared at Christ's coming are excluded from the Kingdom. Those that are prepared are allowed to enter.
 - 2). In the Parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14:15ff), the Kingdom is likened to a great feast.
 - 3). In the Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son (Matthew 22:1ff), the Kingdom is likened to a great feast.
 - 4). It's the only interpretation that makes sense in the context.
 5. Application of the parable.
 - a. It is again emphasized by Christ in verse 13 that no one knows the day or hour of his coming. Men must be ready at all times, so they will be ready at the right time.
 - b. There will be men at the end of the tribulation that will outwardly appear to be ready, but when Christ finally arrives, it will be seen that they were not ready at all.
- F. The Parable of the Talents - Matthew 25:14-30
1. This parable is similar to the Parable of the Minas (Pounds) in Luke 19:11-27. However it is not the same for the following reasons:

Parable of the Talents	Parable of the Pounds
The first two servants each made a profit of 100%.	The first servant made a profit of 1000%, the second 500%.
The third servant put the talent in the ground	The third servant put the talent in a napkin.
The specific reward is not mentioned. The first two servants were told to “enter into the joy of the Lord.”	The reward for faithful service was rulership over cities.
The third servant loses his talent of money and his life.	The third servant loses his pound but no mention is made of further penalty.

2. This illustration, like the other five, is meant to emphasize Christ’s coming as being unexpected.
3. The interpretation of this parable is as follows:
 - a. The man is Christ.
 - 1). This fits the overall context of the parable.
 - 2). It is Christ, who at his second coming, rewards the faithful survivors of the tribulation.
 - 3). It is Christ who bestows divine opportunity for service, and it is He who holds men accountable for exercising that service to the best of their ability.
 - b. The first two servants represent those who take advantage of opportunities for service during the tribulation.
 - 1). They are permitted to enter the Kingdom.
 - 2). Their specific service is seen in Matthew 25:34-40.
 - c. The third servant represents those who do not take advantage of their opportunities.
 - 1). Those who do not take advantage of their opportunities during the tribulation will be denied entrance into the Kingdom (Matthew 25:41-46).
 - 2). Note that this servant is cast into outer darkness. This is an expression of hell found in Matthew. (See Matthew 8:12 and 22:13) Also “weeping and gnashing of teeth” is used to refer to

the torment of hell. (See Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30, and Luke 13:28).

- d. Talents refer to opportunities for service.
 - 1). This matches what is being taught in the Parable of the Pounds in Luke 19:11ff. The difference is that the Parable of the Pounds refers to believers during the Church age, the Parable of the Talents refer to men during the tribulation.
 - 2). This fits the context of the parable and the chapter.
- 4. Application of the parable.
 - a. Men will be responsible for their divine opportunities for service during the tribulation, which will be an indicator of their salvation.
 - b. Men who take advantage of these opportunities as mentioned in Matthew 25:34-40, will be invited into the Kingdom. Those who do not are denied entrance (Matthew 25:41-46).

The Rapture Question

I. Definition

The rapture is not mentioned in the Bible. But neither is the words “trinity”, “Bible”, “grandfather”, and “demon.”

The word is a Latin word which means to “carry from one place to another” or “to transport from one place to another.”

The Rapture is the time, prior to His second coming, in which the Lord returns to carry his bride back to heaven with Him. After the Rapture, His wrath is then poured out on an unbelieving world.

II. Passages Dealing With the Rapture

A. The Promise of the Rapture - John 14:1-3

John 14:1-3 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

B. The Pattern of the Rapture - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

C. The Purpose of the Rapture - 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Philippians 3:20-21 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

D. The Purification of the Rapture - 1 John 3:1-3

1 John 3:1-3 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

III. The Participants of the Rapture**A. For whom will Jesus Come?**

His Church. Believers who lived from Pentecost to the rapture - John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

B. Who is involved?

1. Christ - 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
2. The archangel (which may be Michael) - 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
3. The bodies of dead believers - 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.
4. The translated bodies of living believers - 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

IV. False views of the rapture.**A. No Rapture at all**

1. The Rapture is the same as the Second Coming.
2. Some refutations:
 - a. The Rapture is when the Lord comes for his people (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), the Second Coming is when the Lord comes with his people (1 Thessalonians 3:13, Revelation 19).
 - b. The Rapture is when Christ comes in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), the Second Coming is when Christ comes to earth (Zechariah 14:4).
 - c. The Rapture is identified with the Day of Christ (Philippians 1:6, 10), the Second Coming is identified with the Day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).
 - d. The Rapture involves the Church (John 14:1-3), the Second Coming involves Israel and the nations (Matthew 24:1, 25:46).

B. The Partial Rapture Viewpoint

1. The Rapture will include only spiritual Christians and/or those who are looking for Christ's return.
2. It uses the Parable of the Ten Virgins to supposedly prove its position.

3. Some refutations:
 - a. 1 Corinthians 15:51 refutes this belief (note all in 1 Corinthians 15:51).
 - b. It splits the Body of Christ into two pieces.
 - c. It confuses grace with rewards.
 - d. It misinterprets the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

C. Mid-Tribulational Viewpoint

1. The Rapture will not occur until the middle of the Tribulation.
2. The Church is supposedly raptured at the seventh trumpet (the last trump of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
3. Some refutations:
 - a. This is refuted on the grounds of 1 Thessalonians 5:9 where it says “God has not appointed us to wrath.”
 - b. It makes the timing of the Rapture possible. Just count the days from the start of the Tribulation.
 - c. It assumes that the last trump is the seventh trump. This is a very questionable interpretation.

D. The Pre-Wrath Rapture Position

1. Just a modified version of the Mid-Tribulational position.
2. Refutations can be found in the next chapter.

E. Post-Tribulational Viewpoint

1. The Rapture will not occur until the end of the tribulation.
2. See the following sections for some refutations.

F. Pre-Tribulational Viewpoint

1. Christ comes for the Church prior to the start of the Tribulation.
2. Some proofs for this viewpoint:
 - a. The Church is the bride of Christ. If part were left on earth, then there would be a divided bride.
 - b. The church is mentioned 32 times in Revelation 1-3, and then nothing until Revelation 19 at the Second Coming. Only two conclusions can be drawn, 1) the church failed and then disappeared, 2) the church is not on earth.

- c. God will call his ambassadors home before he declares war on the world (2 Corinthians 5:20).
- d. A clear distinction is made between Israel and the Church.
- e. The Tribulation is Daniel's Seventieth Week in which God turns again and deals with Israel.
- f. The Church will not be overtaken by the Day of the Lord, which includes the Tribulation (1 Thessalonians 5:1-9).
- g. The Church is told to look for Christ, not the Antichrist.
- h. In order for the Church to return with Christ at the end of the Tribulation, it must have joined Christ prior to the Tribulation.
- i. This viewpoint allows time for the *bema* seat judgement.
- j. If Christ came at the end of the Tribulation for all the saints, there would be none in human bodies to populate the Kingdom.

V. What is the believer to do because of the Rapture?

- A. Attend services regularly (Hebrews 10:25).
- B. Observe the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11:26).
- C. Love believers and all men (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13).
- D. Be patient (James 5:7).
- E. Live a separated life (1 John 3:1-4, Titus 2:11-13, 1 John 2:28).
- F. We should not judge another (1 Corinthians 4:5).
- G. Preach the word! (2 Timothy 4:1-2, 1 Peter 5:3-4).
- H. Comfort the bereaved (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
- I. Win souls (Jude 21-23).
- J. Be concerned with heaven (Colossians 3:1-2).

A Critique of the Pre-Wrath Rapture

I. Definition

Recently, a new view on the Rapture has been put forth and popularized by Marvin Rosenthal and Bob Van Kampen in their books, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*, and *The Sign*, respectively. The Pre-Wrath Rapture is a modified version of the Mid-Tribulational position with the following differences:

- A. The Rapture occurs not at the midpoint of the Tribulation, but sometime during the second half of the Tribulation (Marvin Rosenthal, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990, pp. 59-61).
- B. The Church is raptured prior to the start of the Day of the Lord, which according to this position starts during the last part of the Tribulation (*Pre-Wrath Rapture*, p. 60). A great deal of energy and effort goes into forcing the definition of the Day of the Lord to be the last quarter or so of the Tribulation.
- C. The Doctrine of Immanency (the teaching that Christ could come at any time) is a false doctrine and unsupported by Scripture. According to the Pre-Wrath position certain and specific events must take place prior to the Second Coming of the Lord for the Church. Thus the rapture cannot take place prior to these events.
- D. The Church is protected from Divine Wrath (starting with the sixth seal), but not from the wrath of men (seals one to five). In fact, the Pre-Wrath position takes a lot of time to distinguish man's wrath from God's wrath in the Tribulation.
- E. The Pre-Wrath position holds that the Scriptures teach clearly that the Day of the Lord starts with six specific events (the coming of Elijah, signs in the heavens, the sealing of the 144,000, the coming of God's wrath, the apostasy and the man of sin being revealed, and the blowing of the last trumpet), and since the Church is raptured immediately preceding the Day of the Lord, these events also mark the rapture of the Church.
- F. The Pre-Wrath position is very dogmatic in its interpretation of the prophetic future and attacks the Pre-Tribulational view with an uncharacteristic fervor. Those who are not assured of their Pre-Tribulational viewpoint may find themselves swayed by the rhetoric and dogmatism of the Pre-Wrath position.

Because of the extreme popularity of Marvin Rosenthal as a prior Pre-Tribulationist turned Pre-Wrath, and the effect of this new viewpoint on the Church as well as its possible divisive effect, it is important to take a further look at this position.

II. A Critique

A. The Definition of the Tribulation

1. The Pre-Wrath Definition

- a. The Pre-Wrath position divides the Tribulational Period into three distinct parts: The Beginning of Sorrows, the Great Tribulation, and the Day of the Lord.
 - b. The Pre-Wrath position also avoids the use of the term “Tribulation” as they affirm it is more accurate to use the phrase “70th Week of Daniel.” (*Pre-Wrath*, p. 103)
 - c. The Pre-Wrath position says that since the term “Tribulation” does not occur in the Bible, it is a technical term invented by the Pre-Tribulational position which is foreign to Scripture (*Pre-Wrath*, p. 105).
 - d. God’s wrath is only poured out on the earth during the last part of Daniel’s 70th week, the Day of the Lord.
2. The Pre-Tribulational Position
- a. The Tribulation period consists of two major parts, the Beginnings of Sorrows and the Great Tribulation.
 - b. The Tribulation is a term used to refer to the entire seven-year period known in the Old Testament as “the time of Jacob’s Trouble” or Daniel’s 70th week.
 - c. Although the term “Tribulation Period” does not occur in the Bible, neither does Grandfather, Trinity, Second Coming, Rapture, or Premillennial. This is a straw-man argument.
 - d. God’s wrath is poured out during the entire seven years of the Tribulation although it reaches its climax during the last half.
- B. The Nature of the Seven Seals
1. The Pre-Wrath Position
 - a. The first five seals are not outpourings of God’s wrath, but that of man’s wrath on other men (*Pre-Wrath*, pp. 106-107).
 - b. The sixth seal is the beginning of the outpouring of God’s wrath and signifies the start of the Day of the Lord.
 - c. The seventh seal, which encompasses the seven trumpet and bowl judgments are God’s wrath poured out on unredeemed mankind.
 - d. The seals are not indicative of God’s wrath, but his protection of the believer during the 70th week (*Pre-Wrath*, p. 145).
 2. The Pre-Tribulational Position
 - a. All seven seals are outpourings of God’s wrath which intensifies as the Tribulation progresses, reaching a climax just prior to the end.

- b. There is no justification for identifying the first five seals as man's wrath against man as each seal is indicative of God's judicial judgment elsewhere in Scripture (Ezekiel 14:21, Leviticus 26:22, 25, Deuteronomy 28:21-25). The division of seals 1-5 with 6-7 is artificial, arbitrary, and unsupported.

C. The Day of the Lord

1. The Pre-Wrath position

- a. The Day of the Lord is a technical term which refers to a period in which God pours out his wrath on unregenerate men.
- b. The Day of the Lord starts during the last half of Daniel's 70th Week and ends with the Second Coming of Christ.
- c. The church is raptured immediately prior to the start of the Day of the Lord, which would place the rapture 3/4 of the way through Daniel's 70th Week.

2. The Pre-Tribulational Position

- a. The Day of the Lord is a general phrase used to describe a period in which God deals directly with man.
- b. The eschatological Day of the Lord includes the Tribulation and the Millennium (2 Peter 3). Additionally, there have been past Days of the Lord, one such being the time God poured out his wrath on Babylon (Isaiah 13-14).
- b. The church is raptured prior to the start of the Day of the Lord, which includes all of the seven years of the Tribulational period.

D. The Start of the Day of the Lord

1. The Pre-Wrath position

Six events indicate the start of the Day of the Lord:

- a. Cosmic disturbances
- b. The coming of Elijah
- c. The day of God's Wrath
- d. The sealing of the 144,000
- e. The last trump
- f. The apostasy and the man of sin

2. The Pre-Tribulational Position

- a. The Day of the Lord starts with the rapture of the church and ends with the New Heavens and Earth.
- b. In answer to each of the Pre-Wrath's six events which start the Day of the Lord:
 - 1). Cosmic disturbances will be happening throughout the Tribulational period. There is nothing in the Bible to preclude their occurrence after the rapture of the Church and before the commencement of the Tribulation as it is not uncommon for a brief transitional time to exist between two great "dispensations."
 - 2). The coming of Elijah is prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6. Although there is great debate as to whether Elijah is one of the two witnesses during the Tribulation, we do know that Elijah came in a figurative sense in the form of John the Baptist (Matthew 11:14). In any case, there is nothing to preclude the understanding that Elijah does come during the Tribulation before the Day of the Lord is fully realized upon the earth.
 - 3). In Revelation 6:16 we read, "the great day of his wrath is come." The Pre-Wrath position says that this is a prophetic reference to the future Day of the Lord, which is about to start. However, the term "is come" is in the Greek aorist indicative tense which does not refer to an impending event, but to a past event. Thus a better rendering of the verse is "the great day of his wrath has come."
 - 4). In Revelation 7 we read of the 144,000 who are sealed by God for protection during the Tribulation. The Pre-Wrath position holds that this 144,000 are specially sealed believers who will be protected from man's wrath so as God would have a remnant on the earth during the first part of the Tribulation. They further state that since we see this number in heaven in Revelation 14, this is a proof that these specially-selected evangelists have been raptured sometime between chapter 7 and 14. The Pre-Tribulation position is that these are specially selected Jews who are sealed by God as his witnesses during the Tribulation.

The multitude under the altar, also in Revelation 7, refers to the just-raptured church. The problem is that the word "come" in Revelation 7:14 is in the Greek present tense, and literally means "continually come." The multitude under the altar are those who continually come out of the Tribulation as they are martyred for their faith.
 - 5). The last trump, according to the Pre-Wrath position, is the final outpouring of God's wrath during the Day of the Lord (*Pre-Wrath*, p. 193). The Pre-Tribulational view is that the last trump refers to the last in a series of trumpets which signal the rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
 - 6). The apostasy mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2 is taken by the Pre-Wrath position to refer to the abandonment of God by Israel during the Tribulation (*Pre-Wrath*, pp. 199-201). Pre-

Tribulationists interpret the apostasy as referring to a widespread abandonment of Biblical truth during the end-times immediately prior to the rapture and the Second Coming (1 Timothy 4:1-3, 2 Timothy 4:1-3, 2 Timothy 3:1-7).

- E. The Restrainer of 2 Thessalonians
1. The Pre-Wrath position
 - a. The Restrainer is Michael the Archangel who steps aside and no longer hinders the Antichrist in his persecution of Israel (*Pre-Wrath*, pp. 256-257).
 2. The Pre-Tribulational position
 - a. The Restrainer is some form of human law or government, or the restraining force of the Holy Spirit, which is removed thus allowing sin to have free reign.
 - b. Michael the Archangel is hardly the Restrainer since it is Michael who defends Israel during the Tribulation (Daniel 12:1, Revelation 12:7-16).
- F. The Nature of the Seven Churches in Revelation 2-3
1. The Pre-Wrath position
 - a. The seven churches refer to seven types of churches that will enter the Tribulation.
 - b. Only the true church of Philadelphia will experience the deliverance of the rapture (Revelation 3:10) and protection from the Anti-Christ (Bob Van-Kampen tape series on the Pre-Wrath Rapture).
 2. The Pre-Tribulational position
 - a. The seven churches refer to seven types of churches, all of which exist throughout the Church age.
 - b. In each church there are true believers and tares, except perhaps in the last church of Laodicea.
 - c. The believers in each of the seven churches do not enter the Tribulation.
- G. The "Blessed Hope"
1. The Pre-Wrath position
 - a. The "Blessed Hope" is deliverance from the Day of the Lord.
 - b. The "Blessed Hope" is to be protected from the Antichrist during the Day of the Lord.
 2. The Pre-Tribulational position

- a. The “Blessed Hope” is the rapture of the church prior to the start of the Tribulation.

The Future of the Church

I. The Bema Seat Judgment

- A. The Greek word *bema*, translated “judgment seat” in the Bible, originally referred to the judges stand at the ancient Olympic games. It was a place of reward, not condemnation.

The Christian life is often pictured as an athletic contest, racing in 1 Corinthians 9, and a wrestling match in Ephesians 6.

B. New Testament Passages

Romans 14:10-13 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

1 Corinthians 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

C. What is the purpose?

1. It is not to determine eternal destiny. That has already been determined.
2. It is not to punish believers for sins committed before or after salvation.

Psalms 103:9-12 He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

3. God deals with men in a three-fold way, sinners, sons, and servants. God dealt with us as a sinner at the time of our salvation, as a son in this life through chastening, and as a servant in the future. See 1 Corinthians 4:2 and 1 Peter 3:8 to see how God deals with us as servants.
4. The Bema seat is the time in which we give an account of ourselves and the way we have handled our opportunities for service after salvation and before death.

- D. What are the materials and how are we judged?
1. The Materials - 1 Corinthians 3:11-15
 - a. This passage does not teach purgatory.
 - b. Our works are gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, and stubble. This is the "building material."
 - c. There are two basic categories of works, good, and worthless. Fire will purify gold, silver, and precious stones, but will destroy wood, hay, and stubble.
 2. The Criteria for Judgement
 - a. How we treat other believers. Hebrews 10:32-34.
 - b. How we handle our authority over others. Hebrews 13:7.
 - c. How we handle or spiritual gift. 2 Timothy 1:6.
 - d. How we use our money.
 - e. How much we suffer for Jesus. Philippians 3:10. 1 Peter 4:12, Matthew 5:12, Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:17.
 - f. How we use our time. Ephesians 5:16, Colossians 4:5.
 - g. How we run our race. Philippians 3:11ff, Hebrews 12:1-2.
 - h. How effectively we control the old nature. 1 Corinthians 9:25ff.
 - i. How many souls we witness to and win for Christ. Daniel 12:1-2.
 - j. How we react to temptation. James 1:12ff.
 - k. How much the doctrine of the rapture means to us. 2 Timothy 4:8.
 - l. How faithful we are to the Word of God and our feeding of the flock of God. 1 Peter 5:4.
- E. What are the rewards?

Some Bible teachers envision the crowns of the New Testament as specific rewards given to various classes of believers. However, it is best to see these rewards as not just given to certain believers, but in fact given to all believers. The crown of life is not a specific crown, but the reward of eternal life, which is given to all believers.

1. The reward of incorruption given to those who master the old nature. 1 Corinthians 9:27.

1 Corinthians 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

2. **Rejoicing over others won to Christ. 1 Thessalonians 2:19.**

1 Thessalonians 2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

3. **Eternal life given to those who successfully endure temptation. James 1:12.**

James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

4. **Righteousness given to those who look for Christ's coming. 2 Timothy 4:8.**

2 Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

5. **Glory given to under-shepherds. 1 Peter 5:4.**

1 Peter 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

6. **However, some will suffer loss. 1 Corinthians 3:15.**

1 Corinthians 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

II. **The Parable of the Pounds - Luke 19:11-27**

A. **The Central Point of the Parable**

God has given specific opportunities to his people during the Interim Kingdom. Their use of these opportunities determines the award they will receive when he comes again.

B. **Significant Elements of the Parable**

1. **The Man**

Luke 19:12 introduces us to the main character of this parable, a nobleman. When we are first introduced, we are told that this man as of yet did not have a kingdom. This was common in Jesus' day as the Romans would certify various men to serve as indigenous rulers from time to time. In fact, Herod Antipas was one of those certified by Rome to rule over part of Palestine. Until a man had been personally commissioned by Rome, he was not considered a ruler even though he might have the right to rule. Some Bible scholars think that Christ was referring to Herod Antipas, although the validity of this is not certain. It is probably best not to make this identification based on the scanty information given to us here.

2. **The Servants**

We are introduced to ten servants in Luke 19:13. We are not told specifically what position these servants held nor what their abilities were. It is safe to say that these are not the only servants this man had. If he was going away to receive a kingdom, he must have been a very wealthy and powerful individual. In any case, he chose ten of his servants for this particular stewardship test. Probably he was quite certain of receiving the kingdom and as a result he chose these ten servants to test them for possible places of leadership. It hardly seems that he would give rulership of ten cities on the spur of the moment. Undoubtedly, he planned this exercise to test the faithfulness and abilities of these ten servants before placing them in leadership roles.

3. The Pounds

The word translated “pound” is the Greek word *mina*. It was a unit of money equivalent to about 100 days wages in that time. Its modern value would be anywhere from 8,000 to 10,000 dollars.

Note that the nobleman gave the same amount of money to each of the ten servants. This is one of the main elements that differ between this parable, and the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30.

The word translated “occupy” in verse 13 is the Greek word *pragmateuomai*. It is used to refer to the act of trading for a profit. It occurs again in another form in verse 15 as *diapragmateuomai*. What the nobleman was actually telling his servants was to take the resource he had given them and trade with it to gain a profit.

4. The Citizens

The citizens are those who lived in this particular region who did not wish to have the nobleman made king. Whenever a prospective king would travel to Rome he would take along witnesses who would testify as to his abilities to rule. Many times, another delegation would go in order to dissuade Rome to grant the Kingdom. In any case, these citizens, for one reason or another, did not want this nobleman to become king.

5. The Reckoning

Verses 15 to 26 give us a description of the reckoning. Contrary to the wishes of the citizens, he was granted the kingdom. When he returned, the first logical thing he would do would be to set up his government. This would of necessity entail finding faithful men to serve under him as rulers of various cities or regions. Because of the importance of these positions, he would want to be very careful in selecting the right men for the job.

We are only given the account of three of the servants in this parable. We should be careful to understand that Jesus is only taking necessary elements of the parable to explain the point he is trying to make. Since the point of the parable is to explain the necessity of being good stewards of God's riches, he only needs to draw on a subset of the ten servants. It is reasonable to assume that all ten were examined and all ten were either commended by the nobleman or condemned.

Note that the position each of these servants were given depended on the faithfulness of each man. Those who were the most faithful received the highest positions.

6. The Judgment

We find the judgment on the rebellious citizens in verse 27. Note, interestingly enough, that they are no longer citizens, but enemies. More will be said on this in the following section.

Because of the citizens' refusal to accept the nobleman as their king, he had them killed.

C. Insignificant Elements of the Parable

None

D. Interpretation of the Parable

In order to interpret this parable correctly, it is essential to understand why it was given.

In Luke 19:11 we find Jesus on his way to the cross. In verse 1 of this same chapter we find Jesus passing through Jericho on his way up to Jerusalem. Verses 2-10 give us the account of Jesus meeting Zacchaeus and the subsequent salvation of Zacchaeus and his house.

It is at this point that Jesus relates this parable to try and get the message through to the disciples regarding the coming crucifixion and the postponement of the kingdom. This is explicitly stated in verse 11.

Therefore, the underlying theme of this parable is the postponement of the Kingdom, the activities of true believers in the meantime, and the coming time of reckoning each believer will make regarding the use of God's resources during the interim period.

1. The Nobleman

From the above contextual setting, it should be obvious that the nobleman refers to Christ himself. If that is not evident, note the following reasons:

- Jesus "went away" in a sense during the Church Age in order to receive a Kingdom.
- The citizens, Jews (see below), hated Christ and refused to have him as their ruler. They summarily rejected Christ as the Messiah.
- Christ will receive the Kingdom from God just as the nobleman received his kingdom.
- Christ will judge the faithfulness of each believer at the bema seat (1 Corinthians 3) just as the nobleman judged the faithfulness of his servants.

- Christ will condemn those who refuse his rule since God has committed all judgment to the Son just as the nobleman condemned those who refused his rule.
- No other identification makes sense given the context of the parable.

2. The Servants

The servants represent true believers. Evidence for this is as follows:

- Just as each of the servants received the same amount of money even so also does each believer receive the same Holy Spirit and the same capacity to be faithful with what God has given him.
- Each of these servants did not produce the same return on the money just as each believer does not produce the same amount of fruit. However, the servant who gained five pounds received the commendation of his lord just as the one who had gained ten pounds. The idea is faithfulness.
- Even the servant who did not do anything with his pound was not killed along with the citizens. This is one of the main differences between this parable and the Parable of the Talents.
- Each of these servants were called to give an account of their activities while the nobleman was gone just as each believer will give an account to God for their faithfulness while alive.
- Just as the time of the reckoning was upon the Lord's return, even so the time of our reckoning is at the Second Coming of Christ.

Note that these servants all did not produce the same amount of return. Not all believers will produce the same amount of fruit, but all are accountable for some. God's reward to the believer is not based on amount, but faithfulness.

Note the following about the third servant:

- He was unduly afraid of the nobleman. The construct of verses 20-21 give the idea that the man was searching for an excuse for his unfaithfulness.
- In verse 23 the above point is made even clearer by the fact that he could have deposited his money with the bankers. This would entail little, if any, risk and would have at least provided some return.
- If his comments regarding the nobleman were true, it should have prompted him to be even more diligent with his money. The knowledge that we will stand before God and give an account of ourselves ought to prompt us to more faithfulness, not less.
- No mention is given of this servant being cast into prison or killed as we find in the Parable of the Talents. The reason for this is that this parable deals only with true believers whereas the Parable of the Talents is dealing with true and false believers.

- Because of his sloth, the money that he had was taken away and given to the most faithful servant. Implied in this is that each of the men were allowed to keep the money they had gained.

In verse 26 we find one of the moral laws of God. Simply put, it teaches that whenever we turn from the truth, what little truth we had will be taken away. On the other hand, when we respond to the truth, we will be given more. Romans 1:18-32 elaborates on this principle to show that all men are guilty before God. When men reject the light, no matter how dim, God is not obligated to give them more. Conversely, when a man responds to the light, dim as it may be, God will give more light.

3. The Pounds

The pound refers to the package of talents and abilities which God gives to every believer. An equally valid interpretation would be that the pound refers to opportunities.

One major difference between God's evaluation of men and our evaluation of men is that God judges the heart whereas we judge results.

The above principle is found in the story of the Widow's Mite found in Luke 21:1-4. Jesus told his disciples that the two mites given by the widow were more precious in God's sight than the large sums of money given by the wealthy.

One of the most important lessons we can learn is that God calls us to faithfully use what he has given us. The results are up to him.

4. The Citizens

The citizens can only refer to the Jews who had rejected Jesus as their Messiah. This should be so obvious it hardly needs support. (However, in a more general sense, the citizens in this parable refer to all men who have rejected Christ as their ruler, whether they be Jew or Gentile).

- These citizens hated the nobleman just as the world hated Christ (John 15:18-25).
- We find that Christ will destroy all of the rebellious Jews at his second coming. (Zechariah 13:8-9)
- We find that Christ will also judge the nations at his second coming. (Matthew 25)

In a sense, all men who have ever lived are "citizens" of God's Kingdom for this simple reason that everything that exists is part of God's Kingdom.

5. The Reckoning

The reckoning referred to here is the Judgment Seat of Christ at which each true believer will be rewarded for his faithfulness while on earth.

Time does not permit a full development of this theme, however, note the following main points: (Scripture references can be found in 1 Corinthians 3, Romans 14, and Revelations 21).

- Our reward is based on our faithful service.
- The amount of the reward we each will receive differs depending upon the various levels of faithfulness each of us exhibited.
- A person can receive no reward because of slothfulness or indifference.
- Our eternal reward refers to the place we will occupy in God's Kingdom during eternity. Although each of us will receive the same eternal life and the same ability to enjoy heaven, we will all serve God in different capacities depending on our service in this life.

6. The Judgment

The judgment on the wicked mentioned in Luke 19:27 refers to God's judgment on those who have rejected his rule. The results of this judgment are of eternal consequence to those who have rejected God.

E. Application of the Parable

1. God has given every believer specific talents and opportunities for service. As a result, each believer is responsible for making the most of what God has given.
2. Each believer will someday give an account of how they have made use of the resource given them of God. Their eternal reward is based on the results of that accounting.
3. Men who reject Christ as King will be ultimately destroyed in an eternal Lake of Fire.
4. The time between Christ's leaving to receive the Kingdom and the time he actually receives it is an indeterminable period of time. During that time each believer is called to faithful service.

III. The Marriage of the Lamb

- A. The picture of a marriage is a common metaphor. See Matthew 22:2ff, Matthew 25:1ff, Revelation 19:1ff.
- B. The Father is the divine host who gives the marriage.
- C. The bridegroom is the Father's beloved Son, the Lord Jesus.
- D. The bride is the true Church composed of all believers. Ephesians 5:22ff.
- E. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul tells us that we have been espoused to one husband.
- G. The guests are Israel. Revelation 19, Matthew 25:1ff.
- F. The pattern of marriage.
 - 1. The betrothal. Could have taken place before the children were born.
 - a. The bride was selected.
 - b. The dowry was paid. 1 Peter 1:18.
 - c. A good example of this in the Bible is Mary and Joseph.
 - 2. The presentation.
 - a. At the appointed time, the bridegroom would send his friends to the home of the bride. The father of the bride would then release the bride. The bride would then be taken to the home of the bridegroom.
 - b. When Jesus comes, however, he will be coming himself. He will be coming for his bride.
 - 3. The Celebration
 - a. The service would be private, the dinner public. We do it the other way around.
 - 4. It seems that the wedding service will be a private ceremony in heaven, the public celebration will occur on the earth for 1,000 years.
- E. The certainty of this marriage.

There will be no postponement or cancellation of this marriage. Romans 8:35ff. There will be no legal problem, death, or other reason this marriage will never take place.

IV. The Parable of the Marriage Feast - Matthew 22:1-14

A. The Central Point of the Parable

The original recipients of God's invitation for entrance into the Kingdom, Israel, were not interested. As a result, God had to turn to others, Gentiles, in order that his Kingdom be filled.

Note that this parable closely parallels the Parable of the Great Supper found in Luke 14:15-24.

B. Significant Elements of the Parable

1. The King

This particular King made a marriage feast for his son. In those days the most joyous occasions were marriages. Even the poorest of people went to great lengths to celebrate these times. As a result, it is not unlikely that this King would go to great lengths to provide one of the most elaborate feasts possible.

As a side note, most wedding feasts in New Testament times lasted for several days. Note the marriage and Cana found in John 2 for an example.

For a modern day analogy consider the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana.

2. The Wedding Feast

The feast is the main element of this parable. It is the feast that people were invited to attend, and it is the feast that they refused. The other elements of the parable only serve to add color to this main element.

Note that we have equated the marriage feast with the event of the marriage itself. The wedding would last only a few hours whereas the feast would often last several days.

3. The Son

The reason for this gala occasion was the wedding of the heir to the throne. It is not an understatement to say that this would have been the social event of the decade for those invited.

4. The Invitation

After everything had been prepared for this feast, the King sent his servants to notify those previously invited to attend.

It is interesting to note that according to the social customs of the day, two invitations were issued for events such as this. The first invitation would take place some time before the event so that those invited would be able to schedule their activities. Later, and just before the event itself, a final invitation was issued to those originally invited. This invitation was the

official notice that the event was ready to start and for those who were invited to come and attend.

5. The Servants

The servants are the agents in this parable who serve as the ones issuing the invitations. They are the ones sent out by the king to notify those invited that all things are ready.

6. The Invited

These are the people to whom the initial invitation was given. Unfortunately, instead of scheduling their activities so that they would be able to attend this feast, they ignored the invitation. As a result they were unprepared to attend when the second, and final, invitation was given.

However, what was the most detestable thing about these men is that they only did not refuse to come, but they molested and killed some of the servants who were sent by the King. This is so wicked as to almost be beyond belief. The subsequent actions of the king show the reprehensible character of these men.

7. The Armies

Because of the shameful treatment of the King's messengers by the original invited guests, the King sent his armies to wipe out the ungrateful and their cities. This is a most deserving action to say the least.

8. The Others

These are the people who were invited by the king to attend the feast as a result of the refusal of those originally invited. It is of importance to note two things about this group of people. One, they had no idea that they would be invited and therefore had no time to plan their attendance. Secondly, these people are the ones that would have hardly been invited since they represent the social outcasts of that society.

9. The Man Without the Garment

It was the custom in an event such as this that the attenders would have been provided a wedding garment. This was usually an outer garment that would be worn over their clothes. Furthermore, it was considered bad manners to attend a feast such as this without one.

Somehow, this particular man made it into the feast without such a garment. As a result, the king ordered him removed and cast into prison.

C. Insignificant Elements of the Parable

1. The Excuses

Many scholars try to make the excuses be representative of the various kinds of reasons people refuse God's offer of salvation. However, this kind of reasoning ignores the context of the parable. The real reason Christ uses

these excuses is to 1), show that the invitation was refused by those who should have attended, and 2) to show the utter foolishness of the kinds of excuses made.

The specific excuses serve to only color the context of the parable, they are not specific points that need to be interpreted. To do so is to force meaning into the passage, a very definite no-no in Biblical interpretation.

D. Interpretation of the Parable

Before looking at each of the elements of the parable, it is essential that we understand the context in which it is given.

The events of Matthew 22 are given Wednesday of the passion week. On Friday Christ will have been crucified.

This parable is given in the temple to the crowds gathered around Christ. As he is giving this parable, he is referring to the false religious leaders of Israel who have rejected him as the Messiah. Because of this rejection, the manifestation of the Millennial Kingdom will be postponed.

When the above context is examined, several points make themselves evident.

- i. The Kingdom referred to is obviously the Millennial Kingdom. Any other interpretation reads a meaning into the text that would have been incomprehensible to those present. However, although the Millennial Kingdom is what is primarily in view here, an extension to the eternal kingdom cannot be discounted.
- ii. The main questions answered by the parable is “Who are the ones who are allowed to participate in the Kingdom?”

1. The King

In the parable, it is the king that prepares the wedding feast and it is the king that issues the invitation. As a result, it should be obvious to all that the king refers to God himself.

2. The Wedding Feast

Again, from an examination of the context, it should be clear that the feast symbolizes the Kingdom of God. The reasons for this are listed as follows:

- The giving of this parable serves to answer the the question about who participates in the Kingdom.
- Christ wants to clear up the misunderstanding held by all of the Pharisees that the only ones to partake in the Kingdom would be righteous Jews. This concept must be destroyed if the true nature of God's offer of salvation is to be understood and accepted. In fact, Paul spends all of Romans 9-11 explaining why the Jews misunderstood the promises of God and why the Gentiles have been made recipients of the blessings of God.

- The Jews believed that the first thing God would do when the Kingdom was established would be to have a great feast in which all of those allowed to enter the Kingdom would participate.
- There is no other definition of the feast that makes any sense given the context of this passage.
- Christ uses the concept of a supper in Luke in the Parable of the Great Supper. In that parable, the supper clearly represents the Kingdom. Although that does not mean that the feast must be the Kingdom here, it does lend weight to that argument since the two parables closely parallel one another.

3. The Son

The Son refers to Christ. The only Son that God is stated as having is Christ. No further comment needs to be made.

4. The Invitation

The invitation refers to the call of God to become recipients of the Kingdom promises. The original invitation was made to Israel in the Old Testament. In fact, a cursory reading of the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and the other prophetic books should be enough to convince anyone that God was serious when he gave the Kingdom promises to Israel.

The saddest thing about the invitation, however, is that it was rejected just before the event. As we have noted in the discussion of this point in the first section, there were usually two invitations given to big events. The first invitation would give those invited a chance to plan ahead. The second invitation, given just before the event, would notify those invited that the event was ready to begin.

Throughout the Old Testament we find occurrences of the first invitation. John the Baptist and Christ heralded the second. (See Mark 1:14-15, Matthew 3:2, and Matthew 4:17).

5. The Servants

The servants in this parable refers to the herald(s) of the Kingdom.

The servants in this parable are a beautiful picture of how we should herald the message of salvation. In verse 9 we find the king telling the servants to go and find anyone who could attend.

6. The Invited

Those invited originally to the supper refer to Israel. As we have already noted above, the entire Old Testament is full of promises regarding the coming Kingdom.

Some additional evidence for the above is:

- An examination of this parable with the Parable of the Great Supper in Luke 14:15-24 will show that in both cases those who rejected the invitation refer to Israel. It is important to note at this point that Christ gave this parable after the final rejection of Israel. Therefore, the main theme is that the original recipients of the Kingdom promises were unworthy and other recipients had to be found. (This does NOT teach that Israel is forever set aside).
- Again, Christ is giving this parable to contrast the perceptions of the Pharisees with reality. The Pharisees understood the Kingdom promises as being applicable to them alone. Christ needs to show them the error of this thinking while there is still time for repentance.
- This interpretation fits in with the entire message of the Gospels, that being the rejection of the true King by Israel.
- This interpretation fits in with the more developed theology of the setting aside of Israel and the place of the Gentile in God's plan as presented by Paul in Romans 9-11.
- No other interpretation makes sense.

Note at this point that the excuses given to the original recipients of the invitation are ridiculous. They only serve to show the attitude of those invited towards the King.

We find that Christ was basically rejected as the King because he did not deliver the kind of kingdom desired by Israel. They were merely interested in physical and political deliverance from Rome, not in eternal salvation. Because they rejected the requirements of the Kingdom, repentance, they were rejected by God.

7. The Armies

This element of the parable serves to color the parable as it shows the attitude of the King towards those who rejected his invitations as well as their subsequent faith. To state that the armies refer directly to Rome is not a good interpretation. It is probably best to see the armies as representing God's judgment on the original recipients of the kingdom, that judgment being destruction by Rome as well as the rejection of Israel and their subsequent setting aside. For more on this see Romans 9-11.

8. The Others

The other people mentioned in this parable refer to the Gentiles who have become partakers of God's blessing. Since the original recipients of the Kingdom were not interested in heeding the invitation, God turned to another people.

Additional evidence for the above interpretation is:

- It fits the context of this parable. Christ is explaining who the recipients of the Kingdom will be as opposed to who the Pharisees understood as being the recipients.
- It fits the context of the Gospels where we find Christ being rejected by his own people. As a result of this rejection, God turned to the Gentiles.
- It fits the context of the other parables given during the Passion week, the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, and the Parable of the Fig Tree.
- It fits in beautifully with Romans 9-11 in which Paul shows the reasons for Israel's rejection of the Messiah and the place of the Gentile in God's plan.
- It is the only interpretation which makes sense with the interpretation of the original recipients being Israel.

9. The Man Without the Wedding Garment

This man is used to represent those who attempt to enter the Kingdom without God's righteousness. Evidence for this is as follows:

- The wedding garments were provided by the King just as the robes of righteousness are provided by God.
- The only righteousness which will enable us to enter the Kingdom is God's righteousness, not ours. See Philippians 3:3-13 on this.
- This man was cast into outer darkness, a reference used by Christ on several occasions to refer to eternal hell. Anyone who attempts to enter the Kingdom of God on their own merit will be sent to eternal hell instead.
- This man had no excuse. The wedding garments were free. In the same way, those who are lost have no excuse, God's forgiveness is free.
- Wedding garments are usually white. When the church is pictured as returning with Christ to establish his kingdom in Revelations 19, they are wearing white robes. Throughout the Bible, white robes are a symbol of God's imputed righteousness.

E. Application of the Parable

1. Because Israel rejected the Messiah, they forfeited the immediate start of the Kingdom. As a result, God opened up the invitation to others, namely the Gentiles.
2. This parable DOES NOT teach that Israel is forever set aside. A study of Romans 9-11 will answer any questions in respect to this assertion.

3. Israel's rejection was based on trivial reasons. Since they refused to submit to the internal requirement, a repentant heart, God refused the external Kingdom. In fact, the external Kingdom will not start until Israel is repentant.