

*A Questionable Inversion  
Jesus' Corrective Answer to the Disciples' Questions in  
Matthew 24:3–25:46*

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**Abstract:**

This article explores the interrogatory relationship between the disciples' two questions in Matt 24:3 and Jesus' twofold answer in Matt 24:4–25:46 (divided 24:4–35 and 24:36–25:46). First, concerning how these questions and answers relate, Jesus answers inverted forms of their questions that imply the form, “what will be the signs of these things?” and “when will your coming and the consummation of the age happen?” Second, concerning why they relate in this way, Jesus does this to correct the disciples' wrong views about the destruction of the temple and eschatology. Lastly, the article offers a corrective to the various eschatological positions which are often superimposed upon Matt 24–25.

**Key Words:** olivet discourse, Matthew 24–25, eschatology, synoptic gospels, parousia, end of the age

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## Introduction

The complexities regarding the Olivet Discourse know no end. One such dispute in Matthew's account in Matt 24-25 regards whether or not Jesus precisely answers the disciples' questions of 24:3 within his response that follows in 24:4-25:46. Some scholars hold that Jesus only answers one of the questions with some asserting only the first question<sup>1</sup> — “when will these things be?”— and others only the second<sup>2</sup> — “what will be the sign of your coming and of the consummation of the age?” Others maintain that Jesus answers both questions with some insisting that he alternates back and forth throughout only 24:4-35,<sup>3</sup> while others view him as answering

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1. See N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 346.

2. See Anthony Buzzard, “The Olivet Discourse: Mostly Fulfilled or Mostly Unfulfilled?” *Journal from the Radical Reformation* 12 (2004): 11-22; Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, WBC 33B (Dallas: Word, 1995); John F. Walvoord, “Christ's Olivet Discourse on the End of the Age,” *BSac* 128 (1971): 109-116; John F. Walvoord, “Christ's Olivet Discourse on the End of the Age: Signs of the End of the Age,” *BSac* 128 (1971): 316-26; John F. Walvoord, “Christ's Olivet Discourse on the Time of the End: Prophecies Fulfilled in the Present Age,” *BSac* 128 (1971): 206-14; John F. Walvoord, “Is a Posttribulational Rapture Revealed in Matthew 24?” *GTJ* 6 (1985): 257-66; and Ray M. Wenger, “Hermeneutical Keys to the Olivet Discourse: Part 3: Matthean Eschatology (Matt 24-25),” *Journal of Dispensational Theology* (Summer/Fall 2014): 127-58.

Walvoord asserts, “Matthew does not record Christ's answer to the first question but does record the answer to questions (2) and (3) which both deal with the second coming of Christ” (“Posttribulational Rapture,” 260). Similarly, Hagner states, “Remarkably, the first question, concerning ‘when’ (πότε) these things were to occur, is not answered in the discourse” (*Matthew*, 688). Buzzard also coincides, “If there is no future identifiable crisis, then the entire point of the discourse is lost. Jesus will have given no certain sign of his impending arrival and the disciples' question will remain unanswered” (“Olivet Discourse,” 22).

3. See John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); and David L. Turner, “The Structure and Sequence of Matthew 24:1-41: Interaction with Evangelical Treatments,” *GTJ* 10 (1989): 3-27.

Turner says, “since neither Matthew nor the other synoptists supply an explicit outline of Jesus' answer with the two events neatly divided. Rather, both events are evidently so intricately interwoven that no consensus has been reached in the attempt to sort them out from each other” (“Structure and Sequence,” 3).

one at a time,<sup>4</sup> the first question in 24:4-35 and the second in 24:36-25:46 respectively.<sup>5</sup> Still others argue that Jesus answers neither of the disciples' questions, but rather that his discourse rejects their questions outright.<sup>6</sup> The latter two proposals are most plausible and convincing though they seem to be at odds with each other. On the one hand, R. T. France contends for a one-to-one correlation between the first question of the disciples and the first part of Jesus' response in 24:4-35, and between the second question and the second part of Jesus' response in 24:36-25:46. On the other hand, Ulrich Luz highlights that there is in fact a sense in which Jesus does not directly answer their posed questions and in some senses rejects them through his response in the discourse. The present study will attempt to reconcile these two divergent and persuasive accounts of France and Luz, namely, that there is a direct connection between the two

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4. See William David Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988); R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Craig S. Keener, *Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993); Ernie V. Lassman, "Matthew 24: Its Structure and Interpretation," (MSTh thesis, Concordia Theological Seminary, 1991); and Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), though he makes the division at 24:29. France divides the discourse into three sections: "the disciples' double question (24:3), Jesus' answer to the first part of that question (24:4-35), and his answer to the second part of that question (24:36-25:46)" (*Matthew*, 893-94). In addition, Lassman comments upon 24:36 saying, "Jesus is finished with His discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem and now addresses the question about His return" ("Matthew 24," 62).

5. Lassman captures the difficulty of this "both" approach when he asks, "Does Jesus answer the questions of the disciples by taking them up one at a time or does he alternate back and forth?" ("Matthew 24," 2). He affirms, "Jesus answers both of these questions" ("Matthew 24," 2).

6. See Fred W. Burnett, "Prolegomenon to Reading Matthew's Eschatological Discourse: Redundancy and the Education of the Reader in Matthew," *Semeia* 31 (1985): 91-109; and Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005). Luz opines, "In my judgment, both of the questions of the disciples asked – not just the first one – are in a sense rejected by Jesus' discourse that follows" (*Matthew*, 191). Furthermore, he clarifies, "Jesus does not precisely answer the question about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, even though he says much in vv. 15-22 about the destruction of Jerusalem and also often (vaguely) refers to time ('then' seven times). He also answers the question about the sign only by speaking in v. 30 of a sign that in reality is no sign" (*Matthew*, 191). Burnett comments, "Jesus, however, never explicitly answers the question, unless verses 14 and 29-30 could be indirect and ambiguous answers" ("Prolegomenon," 100).

questions in 24:3 and the two part response in 24:4-35 and 24:36–25:46, while simultaneously exhibiting a disconnection between these. As such, this paper will argue that Jesus does not precisely answer the disciples' two questions in 24:3, but rather two inverted forms of their questions — namely, “*what* will be the *signs* (plural) of these things [i.e. the destruction of the temple]?” in 24:4-35 and “*when* will the **παρουσία** and **συντέλεια** of the age happen?” in 24:36–25:46—which is a radical transformation of their questions that serves as a corrective to their unseemly assumptions about Jesus.

## Preliminary Matters

Before addressing the primary concerns of the present study, two preliminary matters must first be addressed: (1) the number of questions posed by the disciples in 24:3 and (2) the structure of Jesus' response in 24:4—25:46.

### *The Number of Questions (Matt 24:3)*

First, with regard to the number of questions, most scholars underscore the vitality of understanding the disciples' questions in 24:3 for the interpretation of the whole discourse. Jason S. Longstreth says, “This entire discourse was initiated by the disciples' question and therefore its interpretation rests on that question.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Luz comments, “Much depends on the interpretation of this double question, since in the opinion of most exegetes it determines the interpretation of the entire chapter.”<sup>8</sup> Now while scholars agree that the questions are critical, the difficulty arises, however, when it comes to interpreting them and how many there are. Some very ancient witnesses suggest as many as three: (1) “when will these things be?”, (2) “what will be the sign of your coming?”, and (3) “what will be the sign ... of the end of the age?”<sup>9</sup> Even some scholars today argue in the same vein.<sup>10</sup> Others however contend that there is really only one question, though there are two interpretative camps regarding its substance. One group argues for an appositional reading suggesting that these two questions are one and the same referring to the destruction of

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7. Jason S. Longstreth, “Matthew 24: The Destruction of Jerusalem or the End of History?” (MA thesis, Johnson Bible College, 2009), 20.

8. Luz, *Matthew*, 190.

9. Luz cites both Augustine and Jerome (*Matthew*, 190).

10. Walvoord, “Posttribulational Rapture,” 260.

the temple (a preterist view),<sup>11</sup> while the other insists upon an exegetical reading proposing that the second question explains the first one (a futurist view).<sup>12</sup> However, the majority of scholars today suggest that the disciples only ask two questions, and this is much to be preferred.<sup>13</sup> First and foremost, the grammar of 24:3 only allows two questions. Those who argue for three questions are forgetting the Granville Sharp rule which states:

When the copulative **καί** connects two nouns of the same case, [viz. nouns (either substantive or adjective, or participles) of personal description, respecting office, dignity, affinity, or connexion, and attributes, properties, or qualities, good or ill], if the article, ὁ, or any of its cases, precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle.<sup>14</sup>

With the exception of it being impersonal, the question τί τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας καὶ συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος; fits Sharp's rule. As such, Daniel B. Wallace identifies 24:3 as an exegetically and theologically significant text that is an "ambiguous impersonal TSKS" construction. Therefore, from a grammatical standpoint, the sign σῆς παρουσίας and συντελείας τοῦ

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11. Wright says, "The question ... must be read to mean: When will you come in your kingdom? When will the evil age, symbolized by the present Jerusalem regime, be over?" (*Jesus and the victory of God*, 346).

12. Burnett, "Prolegomenon," 100.

13. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 331; France, *Matthew*, 894-96; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 476; Hagner, *Matthew*, 688; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 563; Luz, *Matthew*, 181-89; Morris, *Matthew*, 596; Nolland, *Matthew*, 956; and Turner, *Matthew*, 565.

14. Granville Sharp, *Remarks on the Uses of the Definite Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament* (Atlanta: Original Word, 1995), 2. Stanley E. Porter summarizes the rule as such: "if a single article links two or more singular substantives (excluding personal names), the second and subsequent substantives are related to or further describe the first" (*Idioms of the Greek New Testament* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2004], 110). For a full treatment of Sharp's Rule, see also D. B. Wallace, "The Article with Multiple Substantives Connected by Καί in the New Testament: Semantics and Significance" (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1995).

αἰῶνος are governed by the definite article τῆς and thus this constitutes a single question.<sup>15</sup> Thus, this question along with the first (“when will these things be?”) comprises only two questions; a “when” (πότε) and a “what” (τί). Next, N. T. Wright’s appositional interpretation is based upon a faulty assumption that only the Graeco-Roman meaning for παρουσία bears any weight upon the questions. In fact, as R. T. France points out (another preterist), Matthew “has introduced the term parousia, which he alone uses among the gospel writers but which was already established in Christian usage by the time he wrote ... to highlight the climactic event which will be the theme of the second part of the discourse.”<sup>16</sup> Perhaps apposition works for the questions in Mark 13:4, but not so in Matthew as he redacts it to fit his own version of the discourse, not Mark’s.<sup>17</sup> Also, those who espouse an exegetical reading do so to no avail as Luz demonstrates that an exegetical understanding of καί in 24:3 is not the most natural reading and “there is nothing else in the text to support it.”<sup>18</sup>

So then, from grammatical and redactional standpoints, not to mention the majority of Matthean scholarship, the disciples’ questions in 24:3 comprise two questions: (1) “when will these things be?” and (2) “what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”<sup>19</sup>

#### *The Structure of the Answer (Matt 24:4–25:46)*

The second preliminary matter concerns the structure of Jesus’ answer in 24:4–25:46. Unfortunately, some scholarly treatments of the Olivet Discourse do not examine the Matthean account in its entirety.<sup>20</sup>

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15. Hagner, *Matthew*, 688. Morris says, “they are parts of a connected whole” (*Matthew*, 596).

16. France, *Matthew*, 895.

17. Ben Witherington III insists that “the redactional character [of parousia] in Matthew 24 must be considered virtually certain” (*Jesus, Paul, and the End of the World: A Comparative Study in New Testament Eschatology* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992], 171).

18. Luz, *Matthew*, 191.

19. From here on, Question One will refer to “when will these things be?” and Question Two will refer to “what will be the sign of your coming and of the consummation of the age?”

20. Longstreth only covers 24:1-31; Lassman only covers chapter 24; Turner only covers 24:1-41 (“Structure and Sequence”); Buzzard only covers 24:1-35; Walvoord only covers 24:1-42 (“Posttribulational Rapture”); and Watchel only covers 24:1-31.

Conversely, in order to understand it, scholars need to examine the whole of Matt 24-25, not just parts of it since it is in fact a literary unit. For those that do, while most agree on the divisions of pericopae, nearly every interpreter has a different macro structure to the Olivet Discourse.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, some even prefer to include Matt 23.<sup>22</sup> While there is no consensus, two interpretive camps emerge with some structuring it with three parts and others with two. The former sees the three parts as such: (1) 24:4-35, (2) 24:36-25:30, and (3) 25:31-46.<sup>23</sup> Luz actually argues that the three part division of Matt 24-25 is nearly universal; however, this is quite an overstatement.<sup>24</sup> The latter disagrees about where the two-part division actually occurs. Donald A. Hagner distinguishes the two parts by their “types of material: exposition in 24:4-36 and parables of exhortation in the remainder of the discourse (24:37-25:46).”<sup>25</sup> David L. Turner and France both make the division between 24:4-35 and 24:36-25:46, and this reading is preferred for several reasons.<sup>26</sup>

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21. The pericopae are typically divided as such: 24:4-14, 15-28, 29-31, 32-35, 36-44, 45-51; 25:1-13, 14-30, 31-46.

22. There is much value in doing so for literary purposes. However, Matt 24:4-25:46 is a self-contained unit in response to the questions of 24:3. Also, Matt 23 and Matt 24-25 are interrupted with a brief narration in 24:1-2 which is a transition that ends ch. 23 and begins chs. 24-25. See Jason Hood, “Matthew 23-25: The Extent of Jesus’ Fifth Discourse,” *JBL* 128 (2009): 527-43. Gundry also argues along the same lines: “the transition in 24:1-3 unites rather than divides” (*Matthew*, 474).

23. V. K. Agbanou, *Le discours eschatologique de Matthieu 24-25: Tradition et redaction* (Paris: Gabalda, 1983); Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 326-435; Nolland, *Matthew*, 954-1037. Agbanou deviates from this a bit in creating the divisions as 24:1-36; 24:37-25:30; and 25:31-46.

24. Luz, *Matthew*, 179. He only cites one exception: F. W. Beare, “The Synoptic Apocalypse: Matthean Version,” in John Reumann, ed., *Understanding the Sacred Text: Essays in Honor of Morton S. Enslin on the Hebrew Bible and Christian Beginnings* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1972) 117-33 at 118-19. Beare divides it into two parts (24:1-42; 24:43-25:46), but Luz obviously has not read widely enough concerning this.

25. Hagner, *Matthew*, 684.

26. See France, *Matthew*, 936; and Turner, *Matthew*, 565. Turner says, “Jesus’ final discourse answers the disciples’ questions (24:1-3) with an initial didactic section (24:4-35) followed by exhortations (24:36-25:46) on alertness (24:36-25:13), trustworthiness (25:14-30), and compassion (25:31-46)” (*Matthew*, 565). Even though he does not discuss the macro structure, Gundry recognizes that 24:36 marks a new development about the παρουσία (*Matthew*, 491-92). Moreover,



First, there is a clear break at 24:36. Turner illumines, “At 24:36 the tone becomes more paraenetic with the stress shifting from ‘What will happen?’ to ‘So what?’”<sup>27</sup> Moreover, not only does the tone change, but *περὶ δέ* marks a new development or topic.<sup>28</sup> France rightly notes that *περὶ δέ* “is the rhetorical formula for a new beginning,” and “the phrase marks the transition from the first of the two questions asked in v. 3 to the second.”<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, a new theme is introduced in 24:36, namely, the unknown timing of the *παρουσία* which then recurs in each of the pericopae throughout 24:36–25:46. A further confirmation of this division is the fact that many scholars who view the structure as tripartite agree that 24:36 is the division marker between the first and second sections.<sup>30</sup>

Regrettably, some scholars confuse 24:32–35 as the opening of the second section.<sup>31</sup> Matthew 24:32–35, however, concludes 24:4–31 in a general and summative manner. The generalized “all these things (*πάντα*

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Lassman identifies 24:35 as a transitional verse and 24:36 as introducing the new topic (“Matthew 24,” 61–62).

27. Turner, *Matthew*, 565.

28. Cf. Matt 22:31; Mark 12:26; 13:32; John 16:11; Acts 21:25; 1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12; 1 Thess 4:9; 5:1. The only exceptions of *περὶ δέ* not marking a new subject in the NT are Matt 20:6 and 27:46.

29. France, *Matthew*, 936–37. He also references *Did.* 6:3; 7:1; 9:1; 11:3 which uses *περὶ δέ* “to introduce a new subject” (*Matthew*, 937). Lassman confirms: “the presence of *περὶ δέ* indicates that Jesus is beginning a new subject in this verse” (“Matthew 24,” 63).

30. Davies and Allison call v. 36 “the introduction” for the three following parables which are concerned with “the delay of the *parousia*, preparedness for the end, and recompense at the great assize” (*Matthew*, 374). Further, they say, “This verse . . . both brings to a close the previous section . . . and introduces verses which unfold the practical implications of Jesus’ eschatological utterances” (*Matthew*, 377). Nolland also makes the division at 24:36: “Jesus’ extended discourse here divides into three major sections: 24:4–35 give Jesus’ response to the question of v. 3; 24:36–25:30 take their point of departure from the note of uncertainty about the timing of the coming of the Son of Man, introduced in v. 36; and 25:31–46 portray the decisive separation of people carried out at the final judgment by the Son of Man, and the basis on which it will take place” (*Matthew*, 956).

31. Keener does this because 24:32 begins seven consecutive parables (*Matthew*, 588). Luz argues for a style change moving from Jesus’ third person predictions to directly addressing “his hearers” (*Matthew*, 207). Morris goes so far as to suggest that the break is at 24:29 on the basis of the *παρουσία* language there that continues throughout the rest of the discourse (*Matthew*, 608–9). Hagner does something similar and sees 24:29–36 as a unit (*Matthew*, 708–10).



ταῦτα) in 24:33-34 point backwards to the particulars of 24:4-31 and even more so echo the generic sense of the disciples' first question, "when will these things (ταῦτα) be?" (24:3).<sup>32</sup>

Contra the tripartite advocates, 25:31-46 actually concludes the second section more than beginning a new one. As France argues, the theme of the παρουσία stretches all the way until the end of 25:46, and even finds its "majestic climax" in 25:31-46.<sup>33</sup> The problem, of course, is that παρουσία does not occur in this pericope, which argues against the case that it climaxes the theme of the unknown timing of Jesus' coming. However, France acknowledges this and responds by saying, "it is the context rather than the wording of this passage which allows the reader to associate this judgment scene with the time of the parousia."<sup>34</sup> For these reasons, therefore, it is best to follow France, Turner, and Lassman's two-fold structure.<sup>35</sup>

## A Questionable Inversion

Now that we have presented our case for two questions in 24:3 and a dually structured response, the discussion will now turn to explore France's and Luz's positions, and my own proposed solution to their variances.

### *The Connection between 24:3 and 24:4–25:46 (France)*

First, in accordance with France, the primary topic of Section One (24:4-35) is the destruction of the temple. This connects directly to the disciples' first question, "when will these things be?" The "these things" (ταῦτα) is an anaphoric demonstrative pronoun pointing back to Jesus' prediction in 24:2 that "Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down." What follows, then, focuses primarily upon the events that would surround the temple's destruction, and this is made most evident in 24:15-28.<sup>36</sup> However, the primary topic shifts in Section Two (24:36–25:46) to the unknown timing of the παρουσία: "that day and hour no one knows" (24:36), "you do not know on what day" (42),

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32. France, *Matthew*, 928-31.

33. France, *Matthew*, 957.

34. France, *Matthew*, 960.

35. From here on, Section One will refer to 24:4-35 and Section Two will refer to 24:36–25:46.

36. Keener, *Bible Background*, 111-15.

“an unexpected hour” (44), “when he arrives” (46), “on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour the he does not know” (50), “the bridegroom came” (25:10), “you know neither the day nor the hour” (13), “the master of those slaves came” (19), and “When the Son of Man comes” (31). France explicates this even further:

The first part of the question posed by the disciples was “*When* will these things happen?” and the answer is accordingly structured around a series of time indicators which lead up to the climax of the destruction of the temple within the current generation. This is in sharp contrast to the new section which will begin in 24:36, and which will answer the second half of the disciples’ question: in that section there are no specific time indicators, and indeed the starting point for the whole section is that the day and hour of the *parousia* cannot be predicted, and that it will come without any “sign” or prior warning, so that one must always be ready for it. Thus one event (the destruction of the temple) falls within defined and predictable history, and those who know what to look for can see it coming, while the other (the *parousia*) cannot be tied down to a time frame, and even Jesus does not know when it will be and so will offer no “sign.”<sup>37</sup>

However, even though the major topics are the temple’s destruction in Section One and the *παρουσία* in Section Two, that does not necessarily mean that timing and the interrogative “when” govern Section One or that signs and the interrogative “what” governs Section Two.<sup>38</sup>

*The Disconnect between 24:3 and 24:4–25:46 (Luz)*

Second, in accordance with Luz, it is not apparent that Jesus answers the disciples’ questions, that is to say, there is a disconnection between

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37. France, *Matthew*, 899.

38. Turner argues similarly to France and myself, but thinks that the whole discourse is centered upon ethics rather than “what” or “when”: “Jesus gives a two-part answer to the disciples’ two-part question, albeit the two parts of their question and his answer do not match. The disciples are concerned with the impending destruction of the temple and Jesus’s age-ending coming. Jesus is concerned not so much with the ‘when?’ and the ‘what?’ of these events as he is with the ‘so what?’” (*Matthew*, 570).

the question of 24:3 and the answer in 24:4–25:46. In other words, the relationship between the question and answer is somewhat ambiguous and unclear. Luz’s argument is that,

Both of the questions the disciples asked – not just the first one – are in a sense rejected by Jesus’ discourse that follows. Jesus does not precisely answer the question about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, even though he says much in vv. 15-22 about the destruction of Jerusalem and also often (vaguely) refers to time (“then” seven times). He also answers the question about the sign only by speaking in v. 30 of a sign that in reality is no sign.<sup>39</sup>

What is more, there is hardly any timing language or themes about “when” these things will happen in 24:4-35. While “whenever” (ὅταν) appears twice in Section One (24:15, 33), this is not the same as “when” (πότε) from Question One (24:3). Moreover, both Question One and Section One have more to do with signs and instructions thereabout than they do with temporality.

In addition, there is hardly any “sign” language describing the παρουσία and consummation in 24:36–25:46. While both France and Luz suggest that Jesus’ point is that there is no sign, one would expect Jesus to say something similar to what he spoke in 12:39 and 16:4 — “no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah” – if that were the case.<sup>40</sup>

In some ways, then, Jesus rejects the questions of 24:3, particularly in that Section One does not possess much time language and Section Two does not have much sign language. As such, a solution must be sought to this dilemma.

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39. Luz, *Matthew*, 191. Later he adds, “The first of the two questions of the disciples in 24:3 (‘When will this be?’) has not been answered in vv. 4-28” (*Matthew*, 207).

40. France says, “But no such answer can be offered to the second part, because the events of which it speaks are not part of predictable history. And so there can be no ‘sign’ of Jesus’ *parousia* and the end of the age” (*Matthew*, 936). Luz says, “He also answers the question about the sign only by speaking in v. 30 of a sign that in reality is no sign” (*Matthew*, 191). He does not even think that signs of the παρουσία come up in Section Two. Lassman argues as well that Jesus cannot provide signs for the παρουσία because its coming will be unexpected and on a day no one knows (“Matthew 24,” 17-40).

*The “What” of Section One (24:4-35)*

By and large, while Section One (24:4-35) deals primarily with the temple’s destruction, it does so in a manner of “what” instead of “when.” In this way, Matthew places his emphasis here upon describing “signs” (plural not singular), not the temporal. In many ways, 24:4-35 possesses the qualities of a list and Luz says this is so much so that he identifies these verses as “a chronological sequence.”<sup>41</sup> Craig S. Keener too mentions that these listings of signs were quite common in Jewish antiquity.<sup>42</sup> These are the listed signs in Section One: deception (4), false messiahs (5), wars and rumors of wars (6), nation against nation (7), kingdom against kingdom (7), famines (7), earthquakes (7), persecution via torture and death (9), large apostasy (10), betrayal (10), false prophets (11), deception (11), increase of lawlessness (12), lack of love (12), global evangelization (14), the desolating sacrilege (15), great tribulation (21), false messiahs (24), false prophets (24), great signs and omens (24), deception (24), sun darkened (29), moon darkened (29), falling stars (29), heavens shaken (29), and finally “the sign of the Son of Man” (30).

This is hardly the tale of timing the destruction of the temple, but rather a list of signs and portents describing the conditions about the destruction of the temple.<sup>43</sup> As such, Matt 24:4-35 is dealing with the “what” during the temple’s destruction, not the “when” of it. Thus, Jesus seems to answer a question here closer to “what will be the signs of these things [the temple’s destruction]?” than “when will these things be?” In this way, then, Jesus is responding to an inverted form of Question One, replacing “when” (πότε) with “what sign” (τί τὸ σημεῖον) from Question Two and transforming “sign” into the plural “signs.” Thus, the question that Jesus seems to answer in 24:4-35 is “what will be the signs of these things?” (τί τὰ σημεῖα τούτων ἔσται;).

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41. Luz, *Matthew*, 181.

42. Keener, *Matthew*, 566-70. Keener lists a plethora of citations of ancient sources that list signs and portents.

43. The repeated use of τότε in 24:4-35 is in fact an element of timing and constitutes some aspects of “when” in this section. BDAG states that this is used “to introduce that which follows in time.” However, it notes that τότε is a favorite of Matthew (90 occurrences; used 17 times in Matt 24-25, 8 times in Section One and 9 times in Section Two). Perhaps, then, it can be attributed more to Matthew’s style than to him focusing upon time in 24:4-35.

*The “When” of Section Two (24:36–25:46)*

Lastly, while Section Two (24:36–25:46) deals mainly with the *παρουσία* and *συντέλεια*, it does so in a manner of “when” instead of “what.” As such, it emphasizes the timing, not description of signs. The repetitious theme throughout this section concerns the “when” of the *παρουσία*. Jesus’ answer of course is that it is unknown and unexpected: “that day and hour no one knows” (24:36), “you do not know on what day” (42), “an unexpected hour” (44), “when he arrives” (46), “My master is delayed” (48), “on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour the he does not know” (50), “the bridegroom was delayed” (25:5), “you know neither the day nor the hour” (13), “after a long time the master of those slaves came” (19), and “when the Son of Man comes in his glory” (31).<sup>44</sup> This recurring literary theme hammers the point home that Section Two is dealing with the “when” of the *παρουσία* and consummation of the age, not the “what” or sign of it.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, Jesus seems to answer a question closer to “when will your coming and the consummation of the age happen?” than to “what will be the sign of your coming and of the consummation of the age?” In this way, then, Jesus is responding to an inverted form of Question Two, trading “what sign” (τί τὸ σημεῖον) with “when” (πότε) from Question One. Thus, the question that Jesus seems to answer in 24:36–25:46 is “when will your coming and the consummation of the age happen?” (πότε ἢ σὴ παρουσία καὶ συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος ἔστα;).

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44. Nearly every commentator notes this theme. E.g., Hagner, says, “Beginning already in v. 36, the predominant note of the parables that follow (through 25:13) is the unknowable time of the parousia” (*Matthew*, 684); Luz also comments: “with ‘day and hour’ a new theme is introduced – the uncertainty of the time” (*Matthew*, 212); Davies and Allison add, “V. 36 is the introduction. Its declaration of eschatological ignorance grounds the entire section” (*Matthew*, 374).

45. While there is plenty of “coming” and *παρουσία* language referring to its unknown timing, there is very little mention of the consummation of the age in 24:36–25:46. Perhaps the closest resemblance is in 25:31–46 concerning the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. This final passage wraps up Matt 24–25 and does so in a consummative way by juxtaposing “eternal punishment” with “eternal life” (25:46). But in fact, the only other cognates of *συντέλεια* in Matt 24–25 are in Section One (τέλος in 24:6, 13, 14).

## Summary

In sum, the chart below represents the argument and thought flow of this study.

Reason 1	Reason 2	Reason 3	Reason 4
Connection between questions and answers (France).	Disconnection between questions and answers (Luz).	Section One deals with the temple's destruction in the manner of "what" not "when."	Section Two deals with the παρουσία and end in the manner of "when" not "what."
Evidence 1	Evidence 2	Evidence 3	Evidence 4
Like Question One, Section One is about the destruction of the temple. Like Question Two, Section Two is about the παρουσία and end.	Section One has little timing language about the temple's destruction. Section Two has little sign language about the παρουσία and end.	Matt 24:4-35 possesses list-like qualities which describes the signs of the temple's destruction. Section One then is characterized by "what" not "when."	Matt 24:36—25:46 contains a repeated theme about the unknown timing of the παρουσία and end. Section Two then is characterized by "when" not "what."

## A Corrective Function: Answering the "Why?"

While this proposal provides an interpretive solution to France and Luz's discrepancies, the question of *why* Jesus responds to inverted questions still remains unanswered. The best explanation for this is that Jesus was correcting the disciples' wrong assumptions about the temple and the παρουσία, that is, about history and eschatology. Put simply, Jesus' response inverts their questions to correct their faulty assumptions and presuppositions about the temple. Of course, for any good Jews like Jesus' disciples, it would have been quite shocking for Jesus to declare the destruction of their beloved temple. Already at the onset of the discourse, Matt 24:1-2 hints that a correction is in order with regard to the disciples' thinking about the temple.<sup>46</sup> While the disciples were eager to show Jesus

46. This is contra Buzzard who purports, "It is a mistake to charge the disciples with ignorance or misunderstanding unless the text does this. The question therefore, as also their final question about the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6), was a well-informed question which is nowhere corrected by Jesus" ("Olivet Discourse," 17). The text of Matt 24:1-2 does in fact indicate that a corrective is in order for the disciples. Gundry claims in a similar fashion, "This

the buildings of the temple (τὰς οἰκοδομὰς τοῦ ἱεροῦ), Jesus responds with a declaration that it will be destroyed. Concerning this, Luz asserts that “Matthew may want to suggest that the disciples lack understanding.”<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, France notes,

The disciples have been in a position to admire [the buildings of the temple] for a few days already, of course, but perhaps we are meant to understand this latest approach as a response to what Jesus has just said in 23:38: can he really mean that such a splendid complex is to be abandoned? At any rate, their superficial admiration for the buildings forms a powerful foil to Jesus’ negative verdict.<sup>48</sup>

So then, even the outset of the Olivet Discourse in 24:1-2 indicates that the disciples need a corrective concerning their views of the temple.

#### *Examples of Jesus Correcting by Not Answering Questions*

Elsewhere in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus corrects people by not answering their questions. Forty times in the First Gospel people question Jesus.<sup>49</sup> Of these, there are several instances where Jesus does not answer the questions precisely as they are asked of him, and often times the result of this is corrective. Even more so, it is noteworthy that this happens many times near the context of Matt 24-25, particularly in Matt 21-22.

In 21:23-27, “the chief priests and the elders” ask Jesus, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” (23). Luz comments that “Jesus poses a counterquestion in the style of a controversy story and makes his willingness to answer dependent on how

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tailoring of the request to the response has the purpose of portraying the disciples as already having some understanding about Jesus’ coming and the consummation of the age and as gaining further understanding,” and elsewhere that “Matthew is simply tailoring the disciples’ request [in 24:3] to the contents of Jesus’ reply in order to portray the disciples as having understanding” (*Matthew*, 476-77). While this tends to be Matthew’s redaction of Mark in a general sense, this is not always the case, and certainly not here.

47. Luz, *Matthew*, 166.

48. France, *Matthew*, 887.

49. Cf. Matt 3:14; 8:29; 9:11, 14; 11:3; 12:10; 13:10, 36, 54-56; 15:2, 12, 33; 16:1; 17:10, 19; 18:1, 21; 19:3, 7, 16, 18, 20, 25, 27; 20:20; 21:16, 20, 23; 22:17, 28, 36, 46; 24:3; 26:17, 22, 25, 62; 27:11, 13.



they answer.”<sup>50</sup> Ultimately, since they do not answer Jesus, neither does Jesus answer them: “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things” (27). Luz concludes, “Therefore Jesus also refuses to answer their question.”<sup>51</sup>

In 22:15-22, the Pharisees ask a yes-or-no question – “Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” (17) – to which Jesus responds immediately with two questions of his own: “Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites?” (18), and “Whose head is this, and whose title?” (20). Their purpose of course was to entrap him with this yes-or-no question, but his answer eludes this snare. France comments:

Jesus’ answer famously avoids either of those dangerous alternatives. Is it then simply a clever evasion? As with his non-answer to the authorities in 21:23-27, there is more to it than that. In two ways it undercuts his questioners’ position, and in so doing provides an answer in principle which has much wider application than simply to their trick question.<sup>52</sup>

So then, Jesus here does not directly respond with a yes-or-no, because “If [he] had merely responded to them with a simple, positive answer, he would not have seen through the malice of his opponents’ trick question.”<sup>53</sup>

In 2:23-33, the Sadducees scoff and ask Jesus: “In the resurrection, then, whose wife of the seven will she be? For all of them had married her” (28). Jesus’ response makes no mention of this scenario that the Sadducees set regarding the wife and her seven husbands, but instead corrects their error by clarifying that there are no marriages in the resurrection (29-30). Luz concurs: “Jesus does not respond to their false question but turns immediately to a frontal attack: the opponents understand neither the Scriptures nor the power of God!”<sup>54</sup> To further this, the second part of his response addresses something that they did not even ask about, namely, the

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50. Luz, *Matthew*, 29.

51. Luz, *Matthew*, 30. France also argues in a similar line of thought: “[Jesus’ counterquestion] answers the question more obliquely where a direct pronouncement might have been used against him” (*Matthew*, 799).

52. France, *Matthew*, 830.

53. Luz, *Matthew*, 66.

54. Luz, *Matthew*, 70.

truth of the resurrection of the dead.<sup>55</sup>

In 22:34-40, while Jesus in fact answers the Pharisees' question about which commandment in the law is the greatest (36), he does not merely stop there but addresses another related matter which the Pharisees' did not inquire about – the second greatest commandment. France stresses, "Jesus goes beyond the scope of the original question to assert that 'a second' must be placed alongside it."<sup>56</sup>

So then, Jesus does not always accept questions asked of him and answers them in a prim and straitlaced manner. All of these examples above not only demonstrate Jesus' propensity to reject questions, but also their function as correctives to those who inquired. It is no coincidence, then, that this section of Matthew ends with the emphatic statement in 22:46, "No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions," since the next question asked of Jesus is by the disciples in 24:3 — a further example of Jesus correcting those who ask him wrong questions by answering different questions than those asked of him.

### *Examples of Jesus Correcting His Disciples*

What is even more pertinent to the discussion, although from a redactional standpoint Matthew tends to present the disciples in a more positive light than Mark, there are multiple occasions throughout the First Gospel where Jesus corrects his disciples, especially with regard to important matters such as the kingdom of heaven and their expectations of the Messiah. Here we will survey only two examples.

First, in 16:21-23, Jesus corrects Peter regarding his messianic ministry. After declaring just moments before "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16:16), Peter rebukes Jesus for saying that he will suffer, be killed, and then raised from the dead (16:21): "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you" (16:22). Jesus responds with the strong corrective in 16:23, "Get behind me, Satan!"<sup>57</sup> Hagner describes Peter's mistaken focus to be "on the triumphant aspects of the Messiah and the

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55. France notes that just like 24:36 marks a new topic with *περὶ δέ*, so also it "signals a change of subject" here in 22:31 (*Matthew*, 840).

56. France, *Matthew*, 846. Luz also says, "Since [Jesus cites the commandment of the love of neighbor from Lev 19:19 as the second basic commandment] without being asked, it is important" (*Matthew*, 83).

57. France notes, "Jesus' counterrebuke of Peter is remarkably severe" (*Matthew*, 634).

messianic kingdom.”<sup>58</sup> The essence of Jesus’ correction here, then, is that Peter must “make room for the necessity of the suffering and death of Jesus.”<sup>59</sup> After this, Jesus speaks to all of his disciples in 16:24-28 clarifying that they all must take up their crosses and follow Jesus.

Second, in 18:21-22, Jesus corrects Peter’s suggestion of forgiving as many as seven times. Jesus’ response is “seventy-seven times” (22). Morris notes, “Jesus is not concerned with a petty forgiveness that calculates how many offenses can be disregarded before retaliation becomes acceptable. For him forgiveness is wholehearted and constant. He rejects Peter’s seven times with decision.”<sup>60</sup> After this emendation, Jesus then “underlines his teaching with a parable” in 18:23-35.<sup>61</sup>

In sum, given that Jesus already corrected his disciples in Matt 24:1-2, that Jesus corrected people by not precisely answering their questions elsewhere in Matthew, and that Jesus corrected his disciples elsewhere in Matthew, it follows therefore that the best explanation as to why Jesus inverted the disciples’ questions in 24:3 is because they needed correction concerning their presuppositions about the temple’s destruction and the παρουσία.

## Conclusions

Jesus’ correction of the disciples in the Olivet Discourse reveals several aspects of the disciples’ presuppositions concerning eschatology and history. First, it seems clear from Question One that they assumed that they needed to know the timing of the destruction of the temple. Second, from Question Two, they assumed that a sign would accompany the παρουσία and συντέλεια. The problem of course, as Jesus reproved, is that what needs to be known about all this is (1) that signs would accompany the destruction of the temple, and (2) the timing of the παρουσία and συντέλεια would remain unknown. In short, the disciples assumed the inverse of each of these events.

However, it is notable that Jesus does not correct the disciples’ apparent distinguishing between the temple’s destruction and the παρουσία and συντέλεια. Rather, he affirms their assumptions that these are separate events, not one and the same. His response shows that the temple’s destruction was

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58. Hagner, *Matthew*, 480.

59. Hagner, *Matthew*, 480.

60. Morris, *Matthew*, 471.

61. Morris, *Matthew*, 472.

historical (i.e. by the time of Matthew's writing, it had already taken place in A.D. 70), while the *παρουσία* and *συντέλεια* is eschatological (i.e. it had not happened yet and will happen at some unknown time in the future). What is more, he does not correct their apparent linking of the *παρουσία* and *συντέλεια* as the same event, or at least two events closely related to each other. As such, he affirms their assumptions that the *παρουσία* and *συντέλεια* are closely related eschatological or events.

Ultimately, Jesus corrected the disciples because it was imperative for his disciples (and Matthew's community) to understand clearly two very important events to early Christianity: (1) that the Jerusalem temple was going to be destroyed and this would be accompanied by signs which were vital for the survival of Christians during this time of great tribulation; and (2) that the timing of Jesus' *παρουσία* and *συντέλεια* would never be known, thus creating an urgency and constant readiness for all Christians (and particularly Matthew's community).

In this way, then, Jesus is redirecting his disciples (and Matthew his community) to the vital issues, the important matters that should consume their attention. The ultimate goal of Matthew here is to portray Jesus as a prophet who correctly prophesied the temple's destruction a generation before it happened, for the purpose to show how much more accurate he will be concerning his *παρουσία* and *συντέλεια*. If Jesus was right about the lesser matter of the temple (which is no small matter at all), how much more correct is he about the larger matter — his *παρουσία* and *συντέλεια*?

To recapitulate, the disciples first asked, "When will these things happen?" but Jesus answered, "These will be the signs of this destruction of the temple," thus answering a different question: "What will be the signs of these things?" Secondly, the disciples asked, "What will be the sign of your coming and of the consummation of the age?" to which Jesus answered, "The timing of the *παρουσία* and *συντέλεια* is unknown, even to me," thus again answering a different question: "When will your coming and the consummation of the age happen?" All of this points to the conclusion that Jesus responds to inverted questions posed by the disciples, and serves as a corrective to their faulty presuppositions concerning these matters.

## Implications

With regard to the implications of this study, one major problem concerning the interpretation of the Olivet Discourse in Matt 24-25 is the overdependence upon theological commitments and presuppositions. There are in fact four interpretive camps: (1) futurist, (2) preterist, (3) traditional

preterist-futurist, and (4) revised preterist-futurist.<sup>62</sup> Proponents of the first view tend to be Dispensationals and interpret nearly everything in the Olivet Discourse to be about a future, end-time great tribulation that had no fulfillment within the first century AD.<sup>63</sup> Advocates of the second view take the exact opposite position, namely, that nearly everything in Matt 24-25 occurred in the first century pertaining to the destruction of the temple by the Romans in AD 70.<sup>64</sup> Adherents to the third view share features of the previous two and understand the eschatology in Matt

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62. Turner provides the best summary of these views, especially over against those who see only three views combining the two preterist-futurist groups, (“Structure and Sequence,” 3-27).

63. Turner cites these futurists (“Structure and Sequence,” 4): Louis A. Barbieri Jr., “Matthew,” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, NT ed., ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor, 1983); John F. Hart, “A Chronology of Matthew 24:1-44,” (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1986); Walter K. Price, *Jesus’ Prophetic Sermon* (Chicago: Moody, 1972); James F. Rand, “The Eschatology of the Olivet Discourse,” (Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1954); James F. Rand, “A Survey of the Eschatology of the Olivet Discourse,” *BSac* 113 (1956): 162-73, 200-13; Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1980); John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom come* (Chicago: Moody, 1974); and George C. Fuller, “The Structure of the Olivet Discourse,” (Th.D. Dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1964).

See also some other futurist sources that I have found: Buzzard, “Olivet Discourse,” 11-22; Daniel J. Harrington, “Polemical Parables in Matthew 24-25,” *USQR* 44 (1991): 287-98; Larry D. Pettegrew, “Interpretive Flaws in the Olivet Discourse,” *MSJ* 13 (2002): 173-90; Eugene W. Pond, “Who Are ‘the Least’ of Jesus’ Brothers in Matthew 25:40?” *BSac* 159 (2002): 436-48; Eugene W. Pond, “Who Are the Sheep and Goats in Matthew 25:31-46?” *BSac* 159 (2002): 288-301; Walvoord, “End of the Age,” 109-16; Walvoord, “Signs of the End of the Age,” 316-326; Walvoord, “Time of the End,” 206-14; Walvoord, “Posttribulational Rapture,” 257-66; Bruce A. Ware, “Is the Church in View in Matthew 24-25?” *BSac* 138 (1981): 158-72; and Wenger, “Hermeneutical Keys,” 127-58.

64. Turner cites these preterists (“Structure and Sequence,” 4): Harold Fowler, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 4 vols (Joplin, MO: College, 1985); R. T. France, *The Gospel according to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Leicester/Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity/Eerdmans, 1985); J. Marcellus Kik, *Matthew Twenty-four: An Exposition* (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1948); R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961). See also some other preterist sources that I have found: France, *Matthew*; Longstreth, “Matthew 24;” R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days according to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); Michael P. Theophilos, *The Abomination of Desolation in Matthew 24:15* (Library of New Testament Studies 437; New York: T&T Clark, 2012); and Wright, *Jesus and the victory of God*.

24-25 to hold a tension between the “already, not yet,” that is, some aspects were already fulfilled in AD 70, while others have not yet been fulfilled and await a final, eschatological consummation.<sup>65</sup> As such, they argue that several facets of Matt 24-25 have a “double reference,” one to the historical events of AD 66-73 and one to the final, eschatological events right before the second coming of Jesus. This position sees the situation here as a “both-and” scenario, not “either-or” like the first two. Affiliates of the fourth view modify the third ever so slightly in that they think the various pericopae in Matt 24-25 alternate between references to the church age, the destruction of the temple, and the second coming of Jesus.<sup>66</sup>

Now of course the problem is not that there are multiple positions and lack of consensus. Rather, the problem lies in the fact that whichever of the four views one holds to a large degree will determine the outcome of that interpreter’s stance on whether or not Jesus answers the disciples’ questions in 24:3 and how many of them he answers in 24:4–25:46. For example, for futurists, they interpret Jesus as only answering Question Two and actually avoiding Question One altogether.<sup>67</sup> This is due to their presuppositions

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65. Turner cites these traditional preterist-futurists (“Structure and Sequence,” 4): Gundry, *Matthew*; William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973); Anthony T. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979); and George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

See also some other traditional preterist-futurist sources that I have found: G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days: The Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993); Davies and Allison, *Matthew*; Hagner, *Matthew*; Keener, *Matthew*; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); Lassman, “Matthew 24”; Luz, *Matthew*; Benjamin L. Merkle, “Who Will Be Left Behind? Rethinking the Meaning of Matthew 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-35,” *WTJ* 72 (2010): 169-79; Morris, *Matthew*; C. Marvin Pate, “Revelation 6: An Early Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse,” *CTR* 8 (2011): 45-55; Turner, *Matthew*; Turner, “Structure and Sequence;” and Dan O. Via, “Ethical Responsibility and Human Wholeness in Matthew 25:31-46,” *HTR* 80 (1987): 79-100.

66. Turner cites these revised preterist-futurists (“Structure and Sequence,” 4): D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984); David Wenham, “‘This Generation Will Not Pass...’: A Study of Jesus’ Future Expectation in Mark 13” in *Christ the Lord*, ed. H. H. Rowdon (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1982), 127-50. See also William M. Wachtel, “Understanding the Olivet Discourse,” *Journal from the Radical Reformation* 12 (2004): 3-10.

67. Walvoord says, “Matthew does not record Christ’s answer to the first



that everything here is about future eschatological events and not about historical happenings of the first century.<sup>68</sup> For preterists, they construe Jesus as only answering Question One and avoiding Question Two altogether. This is due to their deductions that everything here is about the historical events that transpired from AD 66-73 and culminated in the destruction of the Jerusalem temple by the Romans. For both of the preterist-futurist groups, they deduce that Jesus responds to both questions in some form or fashion (either answering or rejecting them) addressing both the historical destruction of the temple and the eschatological *παρουσία* and *συντέλεια*. This is because of their assumptions that Matt 24-25 is both historical and eschatological with “already, not yet” elements. There are, of course, exceptions. For instance, France (a preterist) views Jesus answering both questions one at a time, while Anthony Buzzard (a futurist) views Jesus answering both questions “beautifully.”<sup>69</sup> However, this is not the rule.

In response to this problem, the present study offers a corrective to these various approaches. Instead of theological presuppositions guiding interpretation, the text itself and its structure should lead one’s exegesis of Matt 24-25. In light of the present study, since Jesus answers inverted questions and corrects the disciples, perhaps this could also serve to correct scholars and disciples today who might also be asking wrong questions of Matt 24-25 concerning eschatology and history and be presuming notions thereof that are foreign to Jesus and the Olivet Discourse. Presuppositions aside, the dual structure of Matt 24:4-25:46 and its correlation to the two questions of 24:3 inform us that Jesus answers one historical question in Section One—the destruction of the temple—and one eschatological question in Section Two—the *παρουσία* and *συντέλεια*.<sup>70</sup> Among the four

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question but does record the answer to questions (2) and (3) which both deal with the second coming of Christ...What they were really questioning was, what were the signs of the approaching kingdom?” (“Postributional Rapture,” 260). Elsewhere, he says, “In this discourse, Christ answered their questions concerning the signs of the end of the age and of His second coming” (“End of the Age,” 110).

68. For Dispensationals, Matt 24-25 describes Israel in the great tribulation and the instructions therein have nothing to do with the church.

69. Buzzard says, “Jesus’ answer corresponds beautifully to the question posed” (“Olivet Discourse,” 16).

70. I am not suggesting that the destruction of the temple was not viewed as an eschatological event; rather that it is something that already took place in history which is in contrast to the *παρουσία* which is still yet to happen. In this way, “historical” here simply means what has already happened and “eschatological” what is yet to happen.



views, the preterist-futurist positions are in closest resemblance to this due to their allowances for both history and eschatology in the Olivet Discourse. Perhaps, then, these “both-and” approaches of the traditional and revised preterist-futurists should be taken more seriously than the “either-or” approaches of the futurists and preterists. However, none of these positions are without fault and without need of correction; the point is that none of them should be used as dogma superimposed upon the text as is too often the case. The best way forward, then, would be to allow Jesus’ corrective to his disciples in 24:4–25:46 to shape and correct our own theological commitments and presuppositions regardless of whichever one of the four views we may find ourselves favoring.

