

AN INTERPRETATION OF MATTHEW 24—25

Part XXVIII
by Thomas Ice

“And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”

—Matthew 24:31

We have seen that the return of Jesus to planet earth is said to be “on the clouds of the sky” and will be accompanied “with power and great glory.” In the process of that return, apparently as our Lord descends, He will then send out His angelic company to gather in the Jewish, believing remnant that He will rescue from the danger of all the world’s armies who have gathered by the anti-Christ in an attack upon Israel and Jerusalem. The passage before us now, Matthew 24:31, describes this event.

AN ANGELIC GATHERING

In Matthew 23:37 Jesus weeps over Jerusalem as He pronounces the A.D. 70 judgment and declares, “How I wanted to *gather* your children together, the way a hen *gathers* her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.” Now in chapter 24, this same Jesus is returning after at least a couple thousand years at a future time when Jerusalem is again in peril. But this time the Jews respond positively to the Messiahship of Jesus, so our Lord sends out his angels to *gather* His elect (saved Jews at the end of the tribulation) from around the world and bring them to Jerusalem, instead of scattering them as in A.D. 70 (Luke 21:24). Just such a regathering was predicted in the Old Testament.

“So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back.” (Deuteronomy 30:1–4)

And He will lift up a standard for the nations, and will assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:12)

The only thing missing from the Old Testament that our Lord expands upon in His Discourse is that He will use the agency of angels to bring Jews to Israel, instead of El Al airline as they come and go today from the modern state of Israel. Deuteronomy 30:1–4 reveals an important covenantal promise made by the Lord to His people Israel. Matthew 24:31 reveals that our Lord, the same One who made the promise in Deuteronomy will fulfill His promises in history, even if it requires a miraculous solution.

Surely no one would object to the supernatural implications of angels gathering human beings and returning them to Israel! We know that Elijah was translated to heaven without dying. 2 Kings 2 records this interesting event with an emphasis upon the mode of Elijah's transportation to heaven. 2 Kings 2:1 says he was taken "by a whirlwind to heaven." In 2:11 the whirlwind is further described as "a chariot of fire and horses of fire." No doubt this was an appearance of the Shechinah glory of God since Hebrews 1:7 says, "and of the angels He says, 'Who makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire.'" An individual, Elijah, was taken to heaven by angels (mere human messengers could not accomplish such a task), why not have a group operation? This is exactly what we find in conjunction with an important event like Christ's second advent.

The Deuteronomy passage also provides an answer for why our Lord used the term "elect" in Matthew 24:31 to characterize His people. It is because at this pivotal point in history, the Jews will fulfill the requirements of Deuteronomy 30:2 and will turn "to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today." This was also our Lord's own requirement for the second coming in Matthew 23:39. The passage makes great sense with such a futuristic interpretation and is also in harmony with clear Old Testament teaching about Israel and that wonderful day when they will be converted to Messiah and receive in history their long awaited blessing. Fruchtenbaum says,

In the New Testament, the final regathering revealed by the Old Testament prophets is summarized in Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27. In this passage, Jesus stated that the angels will be involved in the final regathering and they will bring the Jews back into the land. As to locality, the emphasis is on the world-wide regathering. The two passages are a simple summary of all that the prophets had to say about the second facet of Israel's final restoration. The Matthew passage is based on Isaiah 27:12-13 and the Mark passage is based on Deuteronomy 30:4. Its purpose was to make clear that the world-wide regathering predicted by the prophets will be fulfilled only after the second coming.¹

Isaiah 27:12-13 teaches exactly what Fruchtenbaum says and it is clear that Christ had it in mind in Matthew 24:31. It reads as follows:

And it will come about in that day, that the LORD will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel. It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown; and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

The Isaiah passage has emphasis upon a regathering of the Jewish remnant that is not in the land of Israel and restoring them back to their homeland. This is one of the reasons why Matthew 24:31 emphasizes a global regather of saved Jews in conjunction with the return of Jesus to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

Fruchtenbaum tells us the following:

The Matthew passage is a rather simple summary of all that the prophets had to say about the second facet of Israel's final restoration. Its purpose was to make clear that the world-wide regathering predicted by the prophets will be fulfilled only after the Second Coming.²

THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS

Dr. Renald Showers has done an excellent job collecting evidence and arguing for this view.³ After noting that "from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" means that "the elect will be gathered from all over the world at Christ's coming,"⁴ Dr. Showers provides three lines of proof for his view as follows:

First, because of Israel's persistent rebellion against God, He declared that He would scatter the Jews "into all the winds" (Ezek. 5:10, 12) or "toward all winds" (Ezek. 17:21). In Zechariah 2:6 God stated that He did scatter them abroad "as four winds of the heavens." . . . God did scatter the Jews all over the world.

Next, God also declared that in the future Israel would be gathered from the east, west, north, and south, "from the ends of the earth" (Isa. 43:5-7). We should note that in the context of this promise, God called Israel His "chosen" (vv. 10, 20).

. . . Just as Jesus indicated that the gathering of His elect from the four directions of the world will take place in conjunction with "a great trumpet" (literal translation of the Greek text of Mt. 24:21), so Isaiah 27:13 teaches that the scattered children of Israel will be gathered to their homeland in conjunction with the blowing of "a great trumpet" (literal translation of the Hebrew). . . .

Gerhard Friedrich wrote that in that future eschatological day "a great horn shall be blown (Is. 27:13)" and the exiled will be brought back by that signal. Again he asserted that in conjunction with the blowing of the great trumpet of Isaiah 27:13, "There follows the gathering of Israel and the return of the dispersed to Zion."

It is significant to note that Isaiah 27:13, which foretells this future regathering of Israel, is the only specific reference in the Old Testament to a "great" trumpet.

Although Isaiah 11:11-12 does not refer to a great trumpet, it is parallel to Isaiah 27:13 because it refers to the same regathering of Israel. In its context, this passage indicates that when the Messiah (a root of Jesse, vv. 1, 10) comes to rule and transform the world as an "ensign" (a banner), He will gather together the scattered remnant of His people Israel "from the four corners of the earth."⁵

What Jesus describes in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 is the Jewish ingathering that will fulfill the prophetic aspects of the Feast of Trumpets for the nation of Israel. In fact, a prayer for this regathering of the children of Israel appears to this day in the Jewish Daily Prayer Book.⁶

THE ELECT

The term "elect" in Matthew 24:31 refers to those Jewish individuals who will become believers in the Messiahship of Jesus by the time the second advent occurs. As

a reference to Jewish individuals who are destined to become believers is the same way that the term is used in the previous two references in Matthew 24 (verses 22, 24). In fact, when you look at Daniel 12:1, which is set within the same context of the tribulation period and reads as follows:

“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.”

This passage in Daniel uses the phrase “everyone who is found written in the book,” to refer to Jewish individuals who will come to faith in Christ during the tribulation period, which is the context of this passage. Christ, who apparently has this passage from Daniel in mind shortens the phrase “everyone who is found written in the book,” to “the elect.” So elect is an excellent term that refers to an individual, in this context a Jewish person, whom the Lord knows will come to faith in Christ. That this is not just any individual who will come to faith in Christ during the tribulation is noted by the context in which it is clear that they are Jewish people. This is supported in Daniel 12:1 by the modifier “your people” that appears just before “everyone who is found written in the book.” Who are “your people?” In the context it can only refer to Daniel’s people, the Jewish people.

We see that this passage teaches that in conjunction with Christ’s return to planet earth, He will have His angels gather all saved Jews (the remnant) and bring them to Israel. This will be so that they will be back in their homeland in preparation to dwell there during the one thousand year reign of Christ upon earth. Maranatha!

(To Be Continued . . .)

ENDNOTES

¹Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link In Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (Tustin, Calif.: Ariel Ministries Press, 1992), pp. 798–99.

² Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 2nd edition (San Antonio: Ariel Press, 2003), p. 425.

³ For more information supporting this view see Renald Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord, Come!* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel, 1995), pp. 181-84.

⁴ Showers, *Maranatha*, p. 182.

⁵ Showers, *Maranatha*, pp. 182-83.

⁶ For this prayer see Showers, *Maranatha*, p. 183.