About a year ago, I publically renounced my adherence to the Full-Preterism. Like many hyper-preterists (and even futurists), I had been convinced that Matthew chapters 24-25 dealt with the Second Coming of Christ to judge the living and the dead. However, hyper-preterist views generally hold that the Second Coming has already happened. Immediately after my announcement, I was questioned by many Full-Preterists how I (being once convinced of past-fulfillment, could exegetically deal with Matthew 24-25). At the time, I had a lot of groundwork to cover before I could commence to present any serious exegetical work on texts like Matthew 24-25. In this article, I give a brief exegesis of key portions of the text in simple terms in an effort to explain my reading of the passage so that I may on Scriptural grounds justify my break with hyper-preterism re the interpretation of this passage.

This article is not intended to hash through all the well known intricacies of Preterist polemics on this passage. There are already several recognized Preterist expository commentaries available. I will summarize the predominant themes of the text, and deal with the key verses relevant to my thesis from orthodox Preterist presuppositions. I intend to demonstrate that Matthew 24-25 does not centrally refer to the Second Coming. Thereby, I will have justified my belief that the text has been fulfilled without compromising my hope in a future Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The disciples prompt the Lord’s sermon with the two part question,

1.) When will these things, when every stone of the buildings of the temple are thrown down, be?
2.) What will be the sign of this coming and the end of the age?

A summary of the Lord’s answer can be stated as, *that no one knows precisely when the Lord shall come with respect to the destruction of the Temple and the end of the age.* However, since it would be soon, within their own contemporary generation (Matthew 24:34), they are exhorted to watch faithfully. The coming is precipitated by wars (v. 6-7), tribulation (v. 7-10), the deceiving of many (v. 5, 11, 23-24ff), the preaching of the
Gospel in all the world (v. 14), and the seeing of the “abomination of desolation” standing in the Holy Place (v. 15). These serve as preparatory warnings for the elect so that they would know (1) to resist deception (v. 24-25), and (2) when the time would be at hand (v. 32-33) that they might flee from God’s vengeance (v. 16-20) if they escape the tribulation of the world (Matthew 23:34, 24:8-13, 22, 24).

Although they knew these things would happen to them in their own contemporary generation, the Lord did not reveal precisely when they would happen (Matthew 24:36). In the text, He instead exhorts them to keep guard and remain vigilant (Matthew 24:37-25:13) because of the coming duress in the events precipitating His coming.

The second part of the disciples question is concerned with (1) the sign of Christ’s coming and (2) the end of the age. It is commonly supposed that the sign of His coming refers to events precipitating the coming as an indicator of what was about to happen. Yet, although Christ indeed refers to signs exhibited during the tribulation which logically anticipate His coming (v. 15, 28, etc.), He distinguishes the tribulation of those days from the sign of the Son of Man by prophesying that the anomalies in the heavens would transpire “immediately after” (de meta) the tribulation (v. 29). It is “then” (tote), after the events of the tribulation, when the powers of heavenly places were to lose their authority, when the sign of the Son of Man was to appear.

It is verse 30 which has been a stumbling-block for both hyper-preterists and futurists who gloss over the text and abstract it into a prediction of the Second Coming. Yet with adequate exegetical consideration, the verse can be understood as a reference to the appearance of the sign of the Son of Man which manifests in a coming of judgment.

“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Matthew 24:30; NKJV)

As mentioned (v.s.), the conjunctive adverb “then” (tote) limits these things to events to be realized after the tribulation. The definite article before the subject of the first clause implies that there are not other unmentioned signs. The simple subject is the “sign” (semeion) which is modified by the prepositional phrase “of the Son of Man.” Therefore, because the Son of Man is not the acting subject appearing [of the first clause], it can be inferred that the Son of Man is not to appear Himself, but rather the sign of Him is rendered in His coming. Thus, the first clause is concerned with the second tier of the disciples’ original question re the sign of His coming and the end of the age.

The appearance of the sign is in the future tense indicated in English by the auxiliary verb “will.” So far the clause shows that the sign will appear, but the predicate must be completed to establish the meaning of the entire proposition. The preposition “in” (epi) indicates that the sign will appear in a location identified by the object of the preposition. That is, the actual appearing of the sign will be an appearance in heaven. The conjunctive

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2 Indeed this could be the thrust of Luke’s account; see Luke 21:7. Evidently, some of the disciples were concerned about this also.
adverb at the beginning of the clause conveys the logical continuity of verse 30 with verse 29’s apocalyptic imagery of celestial cataclysm, which is a prophetic allusion of national judgment issued from heaven, whereby God’s wrath is poured upon the earth.\(^3\) The sign is then not an earthly phenomenon; the coming was truly as a thief in the night. Thus, there would have been no visible sign given unto that generation except that of judgment (Matthew 16:1-4 c.f. 24:37-39).

“…and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn…”

The coordinating conjunction “and” (kai) introduces the second independent clause of verse 30’s three part compound sentence. The conjunctive adverb “then” (tote) shows logical continuity with the first clause of the verse. As a logical result of the sign’s appearance in heaven, all the tribes of the earth will mourn. Although the tribes are of the earth, and even though the sign’s appearance seems transcendental (in heaven), the reality of Christ’s Parousia on earth while seated in heaven (Matthew 26:64; Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 18, Q & A 47) is correlated with the mourning of the tribes. Exactly how this is correlated is not specified.

“…and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

The third independent clause is introduced with the coordinating conjunction “and” (kai) which does not function to explain the second clause but is added to show a shared continuity with the first independent clause. That is, the last clause is not subordinate to the second, but the last two are discursive propositions with the first. Therefore the tribes of the earth do not mourn because they see the Son of Man, but they mourn and see the Parousia because the sign appears in heaven. The sign is probably the token for us of the Lord’s raised body [a sacrifice and pledge],\(^4\) come into His kingdom whereby He rules over all principalities and powers.\(^5\) Yet the central theme does not specify these things.

The third clause’s subject is “they” (an explicative implied and understood by the verb) referring to the subject already named in the previous clause: all the tribes of the earth. The repeated use of the future tense and verb form strikes as a parallelism indicating continuity of when these things would happen. These are not arbitrarily referring to isolated events far removed in temporal sequence, but rather they show an ordered relationship of ideas.

The main verb “see” (optanomai) proves that no matter how transcendental the sign is—no matter how far removed it be from that generation—the realization of the exemplar in heaven would be rendered visible, contextually, by the Lord’s coming in judgment upon them and the destruction of the temple. The direct object of the verb is the remainder of the predicate containing several prepositional phrases. The Son of Man is only part of the

\(^3\) E.g. Revelation 16:1.
\(^4\) Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 18-19, Q & A 48-50
\(^5\) The usage of the word in this context could even be idiomatic, conveying authority, legitimacy, or perhaps something else.
direct object. The text does not evince that the tribes will see Christ in His humanity; rather, it is His Parousia they witness. Because this “coming” (erchomai) is a present participle, it functions as a noun to make it part of the direct object. The phrase “of the Son of Man” modifies whose coming it is as much as it indicates the divine activity of Christ. But because the coming is a verbal, the tribes of the earth are not witnesses of Christ doing something; they are witnesses of His action.

The prepositional phrase “on the clouds of heaven” modifies the coming. Although on the clouds has the idiomatic sense of divine judgment, the imagery also suggests the transcendental and heavenly majesty of the Parousia. For the reason that this verse does not describe an actual earthly advent of Christ in His humanity, this coming does not meet the criterion of what would be doctrinally permissible to refer to as the Second Coming. Therefore, Preterist-Realism does not accept the futurist and hyper-preterist interpretations which hold that Matthew 24:30 teaches of the Second Coming of Christ to judge the living and the dead.

The last prepositional phrase of verse 30 completes the predicate of the third clause by describing how (in what way) the instance of the Son of Man’s coming on the clouds would be. “With power and great glory” is annexed to the direct object, modifying the seen coming and not the subject of the clause. Indeed, the Parousia is with power and great glory. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches,

...with respect to His human nature, He is no more on earth; but with respect to His Godhead, majesty, grace and spirit, His is at no time absent from us.

He comes with power because He sits at the right hand of Power (Matthew 26:64). He comes with great glory because He has entered into His Father’s glory (Matthew 16:27, John 17, etc.)

In conclusion, Matthew 24:30 does not teach of the Second Coming, but rather of another category of presence that the tribes of the earth, perhaps the deuteronomic covenant tribes of Israel, witnessed during the events associated with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem circa AD 70. The passage is in the apocalyptic because it mentions (but does not explain in detail) the relationship between the spiritual realities in the heavenlies and the earthly events associated with the seizure of Jerusalem in the first century. Christ speaks here chiefly of spiritual realities which inexplicably influence the order of affairs on earth in the conventional language of the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament.

It is entirely possible for the events of Matthew 24 to be fulfilled and for there to still be a future Second Coming. Hyper-preterists commonly suppose that verse 31 is a reference to the resurrection at the Last Day. Given its contextual association with the coming of

6 E.g. Acts 1:11ff.
7 Lord’s Day 18, Q & A 47
verse 30, it would in such a case be reasonable then to suppose that verse 30 refers to the Second Coming of Christ to judge the living and the dead. Matthew 24:31,

*And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

Full-Preterists commonly attempt to demonstrate that verse 31 could be understood as a parallel to 1 Thessalonians 4:17ff. They commonly argue that if 1 Thessalonians 4:17ff teaches of the resurrection of the dead, and Matthew 24:31 speaks of the same event, then the resurrection and the Second Coming of Christ occurred in the first-century (Matthew 24:34).

Yet verse 31 says nothing about the dead, or a resurrection. In contrast to 1 Thessalonians 4:17ff, Matthew 24:31 has Christ send His angels to gather His scattered children, instead of descending Himself to meet them. The indefinite article identifying the trumpet in Matthew 24:31 cannot be attributed as the trumpet of God of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 with certainty because there are many symbolic trumpets used differently in the Scriptures. Therefore it cannot be inferred that Matthew 24:31 refers to the general resurrection. A more probable explanation is the gathering of the lost sheep of covenant Israel into the kingdom of God at the close of the Old Covenant age. (Isaiah 11:10-13, 40:10-11, 43:5-7, 49:5-12, Ezekiel 11:17-20ff, Zechariah 10:8-10, Matthew 23:37-39ff, 24:3, 13:40-43, Romans 11:1-6, 11:26-27, etc.)

But the text itself does not give enough internal supporting evidence for any conclusive determination of what category of gathering it is because it is not a central idea in the sermon’s theme. Thus, to move far beyond the apocalyptic speech concerning heavenly things and abstract it to another idea—by which the interpretation of the entire passage would be subject—would require some established precedent in the central theme.

Full-Preterists commonly criticize Partial-Preterists who irrationally accept only *part* of Matthew 24 as fulfilled prophecy (haphazardly dividing the rest of the discourse to relegate it to the future). The approach of Preterist-Realism accepts that all of the things mentioned in Matthew 24 have past historical fulfillment but also holds the end of the chapter’s parables to be relevant to the expressed themes of the chapter as fulfilled practical applications. *The parable of the days of Noah* (v. 37-41) reinforces the idea that

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there would be no sign of warning (cf. Matthew 16:1-4) for the impending judgment. The disciples are exhorted to watch because they do not know the hour of His coming (v. 42). *The parable of the master of the house* (v. 43) reinforces the idea that the coming would be like a thief’s coming without forewarning. Again, they are exhorted to be ready (v. 44). They are implored to be as faithful and wise servants who keep to their duties until their Master returns (v. 45-51).

Chapter 25 resounds on these themes; it is part of the same sermon. Yet the two parables of chapter 25 have a broader application than those in the preceding chapter because they speak of the kingdom of heaven (v. 1, 14), and not only the end of the Old Covenant age. The foremost application is contextually dealing with the end of the Old Covenant age because (1) the sermon is prompted by the disciples’ original question (Matthew 24:3), (2) the text continues to mention the same coming (25:13), and (3) the theme of reprobation unto perdition (Matthew 24:51 cf. 25:10-12, 25:24-30) extends through both chapters.

*The parable of the ten virgins* implored the disciples to watch faithfully for the Church’s Bridegroom to appear because they would not know the day of the hour of His coming (25:1-13). The text outlines sanctions for Christians and also recapitulates the theme of perdition for the unfaithful. Similarly, *the parable of the Lord and His servants* (25:14-30) resounds on these themes and also expounds on them further to reintroduce the theme of rewarding works. Believers are saved to the utmost by no work of their own, but God also has reserved rewards for good works and faithfulness through covenant blessing as they wait for glory.

Yet as for the reprobates, *from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath, and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* (Matthew 25:29-30). The same idea is found in Matthew 13:12. The context is the Lord Jesus’ explanation and justification for speaking in parables (13:10-17ff, 13:35). He explains that the reprobates are so hardened that they cannot hear nor understand the Word of God. To further illustrate this point He tells *the parable of the Sower* and *the parable of the tares of the field* (Matthew 13:18-30). At the request of the disciples, the Lord Jesus explains to them the meaning of *the parable of the tares of the field*. During Christ’s advent, God sowed good seed (v. 37) who are the children of the kingdom in this world (v. 38). The elect of the House of God are pictured as wheat growing among the tares. The tares are the work of the devil. This explains how apostasy would corrupt some of the house of Israel because the tares were reserved to be uprooted at the harvest-time—the end of the age. The “end of the age” mentioned in the Olivet Discourse is associated with the coming of the Son of Man which is correlated with the destruction of the temple in that generation. Therefore the *harvest* at the end of the age likely refers principally to the Lord’s coming upon Jerusalem in the first century. The text explains (Matthew 13:39b-43),
the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

In the quoted passage (v.s.), the Son of Man sends out His angels to gather the unwanted things—the apostate—from the gathering of the whole bunch. Christ is separating the remnant from the tares. This text parallels with themes in Matthew 24:31, fulfilling a great many Old Testament expectations concerning the destiny of the natural tribes of Israel. The Old Testament spoke of the Day of the Lord upon the kingdoms of Israel as a great day of judgment and wrath. Yet the Old Testament also suggests that the Lord would preserve a remnant under His gracious mercy—a time of Salvation for the elect as God has saved His servants from the nations throughout the ages. If the coming in AD 70 were local, then the closing of the Old Covenant age is the separation of the sheep from the goats from within the Jewish economy to fulfill the promises to the saints of the Old Covenant administration so that they could inherit the kingdom they were still faithfully waiting for.

Matthew 25 continues,

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world…

The phrase “when the Son of Man comes in His Glory” is commonly taken to mean the Second Coming. Yet Christ’s coming into His Father’s glory predates AD 70. When the Son of Man comes in His glory introduces an adverb clause with the subordinating

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The phrase “when” (de). Therefore the purpose of this phrase is to indicate the correlative timing and circumstances of the independent clause.\footnote{The phrase “and the holy angels with Him” is part of this dependent clause annexed by the coordinating conjunction. The time when the holy angels are with Him can be determined by identifying when the Son of Man comes in His glory.}

The first clause cannot describe the Lord’s coming in AD 70. The verb “comes” (erchomai) is in the third-person singular in the present tense. Grammatically, it must follow this tense sequence because the independent clause’s main verb is in the future tense to show that both events occur at the same time. This coming is modified by the prepositional phrase “in His glory” to distinguish it from the coming mentioned before which is with glory. The glory He assumes when He comes in it is the glory He thereby comes with thereafter. This is the glory the Son was given of the Father (Matthew 16:27, John 17:1-2, 5, 22, 24, etc.). It becomes His own glory to give to the angels by the Father who gives it to Him (Mark 16:19-20, Luke 22:29-30, John 17:22-26, Romans 6:4, 8:18-30, 9:23, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 3:16). Therefore, this clause addresses the timing of when the glory would be assumed, not a description of the Son when He comes. The preposition modifies the action to describe the resulting ends of the coming, not how He comes.

In this text, “all the holy angels with Him” is added by the coordinating conjunction “and” (kai) to grammatically unite to the word “glory” (doxa). Christ is not saying the Son of Man and angels will come in glory independently. The text is likely stating that He is come in His glory, and in the angels who are with Him (cf. Luke 9:26).\footnote{It is possible that this non-restrictive noun phrase of the text implies only that ministering spirits will accompany Him in His coming (cf. Deuteronomy 33:2, Daniel 7:9-10, Hebrews 1:6, 1 Peter 3:22, Jude 1:14), or that it is a hyperbaton, but this would not drastically change the interpretation.} This may seem unusual, and needs some explanation. The angels who are with Him (perhaps saints baptized in Him, or those asleep in Jesus, or maybe heavenly creatures) have Christ in them. Idiomatically speaking, when the archangel wars against the dragon, it is with the spirit and power of Christ (Revelation 12:7-11 cf. Matthew 13:41, Hebrews 1:7, 2:19-10, Jude 1:9). The Lord is the first cause who uses the means of second causes to work in history from His heavenly throne (cf. Mark 13:27). This is how He can be both sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matthew 26:64). When the angels reap the earth and are sent to separate the wheat and the tares, Christ is dividing the sheep and the goats.\footnote{It was asserted (v.s.) that the events of Matthew 24:31 can be categorically distinguished from 1 Thessalonians 4:17ff. The objection could possibly be raised that Christ could gather His elect through the secondary cause of the sent angels; therefore, the two passages could be describing the same events. Yet 1 Thessalonians 4:16 explicitly stresses that the Lord Himself will descend from heaven.} This is a forensically representational presence, whereby Christ delegates positional authority unto the saints of His kingdom (Ephesians 2:6, Revelation 3:21, etc.) and rules controls all the heavenly hosts (Matthew 28:18, Hebrews 1:7-8, etc.).

The independent clause “then He will sit on the throne of His glory” occurs at the same time as the realization of its subordinating conditions. Therefore it follows that if this coming in glory were still future, then Christ has not yet sat on the throne of His glory. If that coming in glory was realized in AD 70, then it follows that Christ did not assume the
throne until then. The prepositional phrase “of His glory” modifies “the throne” to describe the throne as part of His glory. The conjunctive adverb “then” (tote) further expresses this logical relationship. Thus, when He enters glory, He thereby enters into His kingdom reign to rule with power and glory. In summary thus far, the coming in Matthew 25:31 cannot specifically refer to the Second Coming, or to the historical events of circa AD 70; Christ assumed the throne of His glory in the ascension (Mark 16:19, Acts 2:33-36, Ephesians 1:20-21, Hebrews 1:3, 8:1, 10:12-13, 12:2, 1 Peter 3:22, etc.).

The next clause beginning in verse 25:32 states, “all nations will be gathered before Him…” All the nations is commonly believed to be all nations universally of all ages. If so, the absence of the coordinating conjunction “and” (the textual skeleton of this sermon) could indicate logical sequence without strictly limiting it to the time of the ascension. Thus, if this reality occurs outside of time—beyond this temporal sphere, or annexed to time but realized in time over many ages, then the universal picture is plausible without accepting the futurist approach. The definite article “the” (an explicative rendered in the New King James Version) of all the nations could indicate that a specific set of all the nations is implied, restricting the reference to all the nations contemporary to that age, or more likely all the scattered nations of Israel.

Regardless of who “all the nations” precisely refers to, the idiomatic significance of this clause should not go unnoticed. The gathering of all nations before Him is a demonstration of Christ’s supreme sovereignty, a picture of His divine hegemony (e.g. Isaiah 45:20, Joel 3:1-2). The clause all nations will be gathered before Him is notably in the passive voice. The gatherers are not as important as to whom the nations are gathered before. This is because (1) the gatherers are sent by the Son (Matthew 24:31) and (2) because the focus of this clause is the Son to show His sovereign preeminence. The clause probably was not stated in the active voice because (1) the syntax of this phrase is idiomatic, (2) and to express a marked contrast in the subordination of the nations to Christ in the next clause by the shift in voice.

“And He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.”

The next clause is connected by the coordinating conjunction “and” (kai) to show the logical relationship to Christ’s assumption of His throne along with the gathering of nations before Him. Verses 32-46 are thereby not necessarily ordered by temporal sequence on earth in time (although the realizations of their fulfillment do indeed resemble a sequential chronology in history), but are logical realities commenced outside of time since Christ ascended [which had consummation for covenant Israel at the end of the Old Covenant age]. Yet the duties Christ assumed in dividing the sheep from the goats were not terminated at the completion of the Old Covenant administration because some of His sheep were not of the Old Covenant administration. Logically the realization of the separation of them transpires progressively in history as souls leave the bounds of time after their physical death in time. Therefore Christ outside of time divides the sheep from the goats of all ages through a definitive separating operation that is progressively realized in history. The sheep and the goats are in time generated throughout the ages, but
Christ outside of time beholds them all comprehensively, whereby, His definitive separation of mankind is logically after the ascension. The last of the Jews of the Old Covenant were separated by the time that former age ended. Since the close of the Old Covenant age, there has been no more covenant Jews under its administration. The same dispensation which the saints of old were gathered into remains the same Eternal Covenant whereby the Church enters into until the end of history. It is the same Covenant, only a change in its administration.

The Westminster Confession of Faith teaches that the souls of believers will go on to be with the Lord after death and that a great gulf is betwixt them and the souls of the condemned (WCF 32.1). Although the souls of individuals are rewarded separately at the intermediate state (where the souls of the righteous behold the face of God in light and glory and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell where they remain in torments and utter darkness), they are still reserved to the Judgment of the great day (WCF 32.1, 33.1-2) which logically (not temporally) follows after. Therefore the saints “wait”—not in time—but proceed through real and successive events in heaven with Christ until the last of the elect waiting on earth have received the full redemption of their body at the Last Day. Although spiritual events in heaven are not measured temporally in time, they are nonetheless objectively real. Thus, believers enjoy their earned wages fully and the reprobates actually suffer from their torments.

In Matthew 25 the sheep are divided from the goats (v. 32-33) and logically thereafter the blessed inherit the kingdom prepared for them (v. 34) into eternal life (v. 46) and the cursed are cast into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels (v. 41, 46). In summary, the approach of Preterist-Realism distinguishes between the gathering of individuals into the intermediate state and the final Judgment whereby the just and the unjust are judged in separate groups.

A common objection to this is that the continuity of these events in the text does not allow for an arbitrary gap of thousands of years (from the ascension until the Last Day). Yet the events described in heaven at the throne of Christ occur objectively outside of

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16 We cannot therefore truthfully refer to the operation of mankind’s separation as past, or present progressive, or future because His activity is transcendent of time although time is subordinately annexed to it. Therefore, as the nations are described as being gathered in the passive voice, people may only truthfully speak of their relationship to His operation. Thus, before the ascension His activity was described in the third-person as future, but now His dividing of the sheep from the goats is fulfilled but not past in its realization in time. Thus, when referred to in verb form, His activity should be spoken of as a present participle or gerund as His coming is commonly described in the Scriptures. For example, one could truthfully refer to His separating activity as “His dividing of the sheep from the goats” but cannot accurately say “He will divide,” or “He is dividing,” or “He has been dividing,” or “He has divided” in the normal sense. However, since the number of the elect from the Old Covenant age has been completed in time past, one could refer to their gathering and segregation in the past tense.

17 This approach of Preterist-Realism is presupposed in the Reformed Standards and the Ecumenical Creeds, which is extrapolated from the Scriptures which teach (1) heaven is a place, (2) there are ordered events in heaven, (3) events in heaven are causal and logical, (4) events in heaven are describable or notable in written propositions, (5) the heavenly events of the Scriptures are true accounts, (6) symbols and motifs in heavenly accounts resemble or represent real exemplars, (7) spiritual things are nonetheless things.
time. Therefore it is untrue to say the approach of Preterist-Realism introduces any arbitrary time inferences, since the reality of such events are exemplars not subject to our experience of time.

In conclusion, the Olivet Discourse does not directly refer to the resurrection at the Last Day or to the Second Coming of Christ, but rather deals with Christ’s coming judgment at the end of the age which discursively is related to the transpiring of events in heaven that are realized throughout history. Matthew 25:31 was exegetically considered to demonstrate that Christ’s coming in His glory is not the same coming as His coming with glory upon Jerusalem (cf. 24:30ff). The verse in chapter 25 has more to do with Christ’s assumption of sovereign power and glory wherefrom He nevertheless comes in the Day of the Lord upon His enemies, rules over the kingdoms of the world, comes upon individuals (Revelation 3:3), and rewards them according to their works (Matthew 25:35-45).

Addendum on Matthew 16:27-28

With any discussion of these themes, it is fitting to mention this passage from Matthew 16:27-28,

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

This text addresses the re-compensation of the sacrifices of the faithful (cf. Matthew 16:23-26ff). There is nothing to gain in this world which is worth the eternal cost of one’s own soul. Jesus assures His disciples that He must be killed and raised, and that they must mind this operation of God because He will be made King and will thereby reward them according to their faithfulness and loyalty. Christ is teaching them that the Gospel will benefit them if they accept it and follow Him. He assures them also of the nearness of the realization of His kingship.

The phrase beginning with the preposition “with” (meta) depicts either that the angels are with the Father or that they will accompany the Son of Man’s coming. Because the personal pronoun “His” (hautou) refers to the antecedent “the Son of Man,” the angels are with the Son where the Father is. The syntactic structure of the phrase suggests the angels are less important that the subject (cf. Hebrews 2:5-10), but their idiomatic reference serves an apocalyptic function to address the heavenly majesty of Christ’s rule. The angels of the Son are never said to come in to glory in the active voice as the Son, who they are glorified with, is depicted. Rather, they are pictured as a company of invited guests or perhaps an army under command. In Matthew 24-25ff, the Son is said to come in glory and in the angels who are with Him (Mark 8:38). Yet Matthew 16:27 deals not
with their positional glorification, rather it deals with their collective union with Christ whereby He rewards individuals.

“…and then He will reward each according to his works.”

The second clause is coordinated with the first to show the logical correlation of events and timing. If the Son of Man’s entering into glory was realized at the ascension, then in aeviternity Christ’s rewarding is fulfilled. His operation was then not fulfilled because in all reality He had not yet entered into His kingdom to perform His duties granted unto Him. Thus, Christ speaks in the text of a future fulfillment whereby He has since accomplished from aeviternity. Because His operation outside of time is not spoken of in the progressive tense, it is prophesied as a definitive act. Yet for the elect who are scattered throughout all ages in history, the realization of their going to be with Christ is progressive in time.

The actual work of rewarding is fulfilled from aeviternity; the reception of rewards in the intermediate state is immediate upon physical death and lasting. There is virtually no way to determine precisely what the nature of the rewards for the just are, nor how they are enjoyed. The text simply does not entertain the idea, reserving such knowledge for the elect in the rewards themselves. Yet the Bible does indicate that they will be proportional in some regards to the work they sanction. This is enough to satisfy a meditation on the central theme to formulate doctrinal principles to govern practice and instruction. Yet this text is also commonly appealed to by hyper-preterists to support their claim that this text teaches that Christ’s Second Coming and final Judgment occurred in that contemporary generation before some of the disciples died physically.

“…in the glory of His Father…”

Like Matthew 25:31, the preposition “in” (ἐν) modifies His coming to express what the Son of Man does. It expresses the same theme: that Christ assumes glory. In the commentary above on Matthew 25:31, it was noted that the Son of Man comes in His glory which was given to Him by the Father. The text of Matthew 16:27 reveals from whom the glory is and Matthew 25:31 reveals who has assumed the glory. The same glory is unto God: unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Spirit; but the Son’s glory proceeds from the Father (John 17:5, 2 Peter 1:17).

“…He will reward each according to his works.”

18 The rewards are immediate- the Scriptures teach that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. The rewards are lasting- the Scriptures teach that some of the elect still alive and remaining unto the Second Coming of the Lord will be caught up. Therefore, the completion of the intermediate state does not terminate [nor prevent] the enjoyment of rewards because those raised-up before physically dying are due their full reward just as the rest of the body are blessed. For our crown is an incorruptible crown.

19 Full-Preterist Michael Fenemore notes “Jesus knew the approximate time of his return and the judgment. He guaranteed they would occur within the lifetime of his contemporaries…” Jesus Predicted a First-Century Return Copyright © 2008-2010 Revised: 2010 Jun 22 http://www.preterism.info/pdf/Jesus%20Predicted%20a%20First-Century%20Return.pdf
“He” refers to the antecedent “the Son of Man” which is the subject of the previous clause. Thus, it is not the Father who personally does the rewarding, but Christ. The Lord is speaking in the third person singular to depict what He will accomplish. Although rewards could be positive or negative, rewards in this usage refers to the sanctions of the Covenant in the blessing of the faithful.

Article 24 of the Belgic Confession states,

When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do. In the meantime, we do not deny that God rewards our good works, but it is through His grace that He crowns His gifts.

Because the measure of the reward is in some respect proportional to the works of each one, the reward’s benefit is dependent on the receiver’s conduct and faithfulness. “Each” (hekastos) could grammatically refer to each of the angels, but more likely the understood “man” (ei tis) of the previous verse is understood to be the antecedent of which “each” modifies. Therefore, the normal reading of this text in context depicts Christ’s rewarding to every individual of people in general.

“Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

In verse 16:28, Jesus declares to His disciples (v. 24) that they can be assured by His testimony that some would even live to witness Him come in glory. The immediate audience is firmly established by the clause s (1)“I say unto you” and (2) “there are some standing here”. The crux of their assurance is that Christ personally and directly spoke to them of things that were not remote and abstract, but of things that would soon be realized in history.

The disciples did not see Christ come in His kingdom while they were living on earth, for His kingdom is not of this world. Nonetheless, some saw His coming in some sense. The word “coming” (erchomai) functions as an object of the verb “see” (eido). It is a present participle to describe the Son of Man who will come. The disciples may not have lived to see the Son of Man reward all the souls of men from His kingdom while they were on earth, but they did see Him assume glory at the right hand of God when He ascended into heaven.

20 According to the central theme in verses 16:25-26, which accounts for the loss and gain of individuals according to their own works, the possessive pronoun “his” of the last clause of verse 16:27 would make no relevant application if it refered to Christ or the Father.
Matthew 16:27 is commonly and mistakenly thought to depict the Second Coming and the final Judgment. Hyper-Preterists generally go further, holding that this verse teaches that the Second Coming and final Judgment were fulfilled in the first century, circa AD 70. Although hyper-preterists are generally correct that some of the disciples indeed saw the Lord coming in His kingdom, they nevertheless categorically misappropriate the themes and the terms described in the text.