

Who Are the Elect in Christ's End Time Discourse?

By Robert I. Adams

Some interpreters assert that the term "the elect" in Christ's end time discourse are the Jewish people. Others say it means the church. Which one is correct? And why is this important?

Christ's end time discourse is found in Matthew 24 and 25. There, He spoke of the end time and the great tribulation followed by His own return. In Matthew 24:29 and 30, He said:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 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."

Concerning the preceding time of "the great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21), Jesus said, "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of *the elect* those days will be shortened" (Matt. 24:22). Here, Jesus states that the great tribulation will be short for the sake of "the elect." In other words, "the elect" will be present in the great tribulation. This is why it is important to identify who "the elect" are.

We find the expression, "the elect" also in verse 24 in Matthew 24, and then in verse 31, we encounter the phrase "His elect," which gives us further information about "the elect." The word "His" refers to "the Son of Man" (v.30), i.e. Christ. This tells us "the elect" are Christ's elect.

In Matthew 22:14, Jesus said to the Jews, "For many are called, but few are chosen [i.e. elected]." Jesus is implying here that only a part of the people of Israel are His elect. Then in Romans 11:7, it says, "What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but *the elect* did." Again, we see that only a part of the people of Israel constitutes "the elect." Christ's elect cannot therefore depict the Jewish people as a whole.

In Mark's version of Christ's end time discourse, we also find the expression "the elect" (Mark 13:20). They are defined in the same verse as those "whom He [the Lord] has chosen." This aligns with Christ's words to His disciples in John 15:19: "I have *chosen* you out of the world." Jesus chose His disciples from the people of Israel and they became His elect. Since then, every Jew who becomes a believer in Jesus is reckoned among Christ's elect, and is one of the "chosen" (Rev. 17:14).

However, the elect include all believers in Jesus, both Jew and Gentile. Romans 1:16 says that the gospel of Christ "is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." We are told it was Jesus "who has made both one" (Eph. 2:14). On this basis, Paul addressed believers as "the elect of God" (Col. 3:12), and in Romans 8:33, he calls them "God's elect." In the same way, Peter wrote to believers and called them "elect" (1 Pet. 1:2). Therefore, when Jesus spoke of His elect in Matthew 24 He

was referring to all the believers, whom He collectively calls "My church" in Matthew 16:18. Accordingly, the elect of Christ are synonymous with the church of Christ.

Some interpreters may object to this by pointing out the fact that Matthew wrote his gospel for Jews, and thereby assert that "the elect" are only Jews. However, as mentioned, Christ's end time discourse in Matthew 24 occurs in condensed form in Mark 13, where "the elect" are also mentioned (vv.20, 27). Since Mark wrote his gospel for Gentiles, this shows us "the elect" are comprised of both Jews and Gentiles united by faith in Christ.

A comparison between Matthew 24 and Matthew 10 also shows that Jesus spoke about His future disciples in His end time discourse, and not the whole of the Jewish people. In Matthew 10, Jesus gives His disciples instructions regarding their ministry, and He also reveals how people, including family members, would treat them. In verses 21 and 22, He says: "Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved." These words are virtually repeated in Matthew 24:9 & 13: "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.... But he who endures to the end shall be saved." We see therefore it is the followers of Jesus who were going to be hated by other family members (as well as by people from the nations). That the followers of Jesus would be hated and even killed by their own relatives shows us that Jesus did not have the whole Jewish people in mind when He mentioned His elect who believe on His name.

From what we have deduced, we can gain a clearer understanding of who Jesus had in mind when He said, "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of *the elect* those days will be shortened" (Matt. 24:22). Jesus is saying that the great tribulation will be short for the sake of His elect—those who constitute His church. This in turn means that the popular teaching of the church being in heaven during the great tribulation is erroneous.

What you have just read is based on an excerpt from a book/e-book I have written entitled "The Approaching Apocalypse". You are welcome to look at it at [Amazon](#).

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