Chapter 6

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE AND THE
RELATIVIZATION OF THE OLD COVENANT:
Mark 13:31 and Matthew 5:18

Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis

In this essay it is argued that the principal reference of 'heaven and earth' is the temple-centred cosmology of second-temple Judaism which included the belief that the temple is heaven and earth in microcosm. Mark 13 and Matthew 5:18 refer, then, to the destruction of the temple as a passing away of an old cosmology and also, in the latter case, to the establishment during Jesus' ministry and at His death and resurrection of a new temple cosmology—a new heaven and earth.

In the synoptic gospels there are two references to the passing away of heaven and earth. First, at Mark 13:31 (Mt. 24:35 and Lk. 21:33) Jesus predicts that 'heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away'. There is no substantial difference between the first three gospels in this saying. Secondly, Matthew and Luke both relate a similar saying: Matthew 5:18, '... until heaven and earth pass away not one jot or tittle will pass away from the Law; until all has happened'; Luke 16:17, 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle to fall from the Law.' The context of the first (Mark 13:31) is that of the Markan eschatological discourse, whilst that of the second is unclear at Luke 16:17 and certainly that of Jesus' attitude towards the Torah at Matthew 5:18. Until recently there was little cause for disagreement over the meaning of the first. However, both Matthew 5:17 and Luke 16:17 have been intensely debated and belong to passages about which there is still a good deal of scholarly disagreement and uncertainty.
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apocalyptic language. It remains to be seen whether their approach, in particular the dangerously reductionist understanding of apocalyptic language, does full justice to all the data, both Jewish and Christian.

There are a couple of weaknesses in this new reading. In particular Mark 13:31 presents something of a thorn in the flesh of the Cairo school. In his new book on Jesus, Wright’s reading of Mark’s thirteenth chapter is intelligible, and in the main persuasive, up to 13:30-32. However, his attempt to grapple with 13:31 significantly weakens his case. His reading is not entirely clear. He seems to take these words, on analogy with Isaiah 40:8 (‘the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand for ever’), as an affirmation of the security of the prophetic word. That is just possible, but in the present context, which has been dominated by the imagery of cosmic conflagration, however metaphorical that imagery may be, it is difficult to imagine that the language of 13:31 should not refer specifically to what has preceded. In that case, Wright would have to argue that Mark 13:31 also refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Yet about that literary connection he is significantly silent. Perhaps, given the difficulty of reading ‘heaven and earth shall pass away’ as a reference to the events of AD 70, he has chosen to avoid the obvious. However, given the clearly climactic nature of the whole discourse, his own claim, that ‘[i]t is like saying “Truly, truly, I say to you”, only magnified to the furthest degree’, is unpersuasive.

To the tradition of interpretation in which Borg and Wright stand, it has also been objected that Mark 13:24-27 does not explicitly refer to the destruction of Jerusalem or the temple; whilst their approach may well be right to read Mark 13:14-23 as a build-up which expects, but does not itself provide, the actual description of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is not entirely clear how Mark 13:24-31 provides that temple-focused climax. Even when the metaphorical language of Old Testament political historiography is granted, it is not clear why Mark 13:24-31 need, at any point, refer specifically to Jerusalem and temple, rather than the Mediterranean-wide turmoil of the years AD 66-73.

It is not our purpose to critique the basic thrust of this AD 70/temple-centred reading. I believe that here there is an assumption that rather then, and in what follows I hope that a modest remythologizing of the language of the synoptic eschatological discourse will tighten up weaknesses in their argument, in particular with respect to Mark 13:31 (Mt. 24:35).

Mark 13:31 also has one interpretative difficulty of its own. The second half of the two-part verse refers to the promise that Jesus’ words will not pass away. Which words are meant: the words of the discourse, or the totality of Jesus’ teaching? If there is here a promise that Jesus’ prophecy begun at Mark 13:2 will fail, then the language is a little odd: we might have expected οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου (or even οἱ δὲ λόγοι οὓς ὑμεῖς ἐκλέξασαν ‘my words [or ‘these words’] will not fail’). There is no verbal allusion to Isaiah 40:8 LXX, which might have been expected, had the force of that text been in mind. There is not, in any case, any cosmic scope in that Old Testament text. If, on the other hand, there is here a promise that Jesus’ teaching as a whole will endure the collapse of the space–time universe, then one has to wonder what role it will have beyond the end of history when His teaching quite clearly prescribes the lifestyle of the people of God within history.

Given that Mark 13:31 contrasts the passing away of heaven and earth with the endurance of Jesus’ words, there is a clear similarity, particularly to the Matthean form of the Q saying at Matthew 5:18 (Lk. 16:17). Not surprisingly, we find that problems of the former recur in the latter, to which we now turn.

The second saying (Matthew 5:18)
Matthew 5:18 is part of the Matthean heading (5:17-20) to Jesus’ teaching on the Torah at 5:21–7:27. These four verses are full of exegetical questions and interpretative difficulties: not the least of which is the apparently absolute denial of any change or relativization of the Torah implied by Jesus’ words in verse 18. As

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6Wright, Jesus and the Victory, 364-365.
7In Wright’s favour is the fact that nowhere do the Jewish texts supply a close parallel to Mark 13:31 which could be taken to demand the end of the space-time universe. At 1 Enoch 90:16 ‘the first heaven shall depart and pass away’, but there is no reference to the earth: history, albeit a utopian one, is assumed to follow (90:17).
8See e.g. D. Wenham, ‘ “This Generation Will Not Pass ...”’ A Study of Jesus’ Future Expectation in Mark 13’, in H. H. Rowden (ed.), Christ the Lord: Studies in

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Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982), 127-150, esp. 139, criticizing R. T. France, Jesus and the Old Testament, 227-239.
Emphasis is properly placed on the Temple School, where many of the ideas and themes have developed. The Temple School emphasizes the importance of the Temple in the Torah. In the Torah, the Temple is the center of Jewish life and worship. The Temple School focuses on understanding the role of the Temple in different contexts, such as in the Land of Israel, in the Diaspora, and in modern times. The Temple School also examines the relationship between the Temple and other religious institutions, such as the Synagogue and the Church. The Temple School encourages students to engage with the traditions and practices of the Temple in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

The Temple School's curriculum is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the Temple and its significance in Jewish history and practice. The curriculum includes coursework in Jewish history, religious studies, and related fields, as well as opportunities for practical experience, such as internships and study abroad programs. The Temple School also offers a range of extracurricular activities, including clubs, events, and workshops, to enhance students' learning and engagement.

The Temple School's approach to teaching is characterized by a commitment to integrating theoretical knowledge with practical experience. Students are encouraged to think critically about the role of the Temple in contemporary society and to explore ways in which the principles and values of the Temple can be applied to modern challenges. The Temple School believes that understanding the Temple is essential for fostering a deeper appreciation of Jewish culture and for promoting a more inclusive and compassionate world.
One other widely adopted strategy designed to avoid the problematic verse 18d, is what has been called the "critical explanation". According to this view, verse 18d refers to the interpretation of the law as it has been redefined to love God and others. However, this view is unwarranted by the statement of the passage that the judgement is not accomplished (rather than "to be accomplished"), for which there is no linguistic support. Secondly, the "got and title" of the text is not a solution to the question of the division between the Old and New Testaments, but rather a further emphasis on the defeat of sin and death. In general, this solution fails to appreciate the early Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus in particular, but also in the specific context of Matthew and Mark's Gospel in particular.

I submit that the problem is inescapable, whilst verse 18b is taken to refer to the collapse of the space-time universe. Consequently, we must consider the possibility that the meaning is figurative, i.e. it is not a literal event. In relation to this, I suggest the resurrection of Jesus was fully complete before the end of the Old Testament. This approach does not resolve the problem, but it does provide a framework within which we can begin to understand the meaning of verse 18d.

In 1962, W.D. Davies suggested that the whole of the Old Testament is to be understood as figurative. The approach adopted in this commentary is to understand the whole of the Old Testament as figurative, as well as the message of Jesus' death and resurrection. The approach is often referred to as the "figurative" approach and has been explored in the context of the Old Testament.

In conclusion, the message of Jesus' death and resurrection is given in the context of the Old Testament. The message is not a literal event, but rather a figurative one. The approach adopted in this commentary is to understand the whole of the Old Testament as figurative, as well as the message of Jesus' death and resurrection. The approach is often referred to as the "figurative" approach and has been explored in the context of the Old Testament.
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logically focused conceptual framework. When we have examined
the shape of the dominant second temple cosmology we will be in a
position to return to refine this approach in a way which, I think, will
satisfy its detractors.

The Temple as the Cosmos in Miniature

It used to be thought that second temple Judaism was free from
mythology. It was also thought that apocalyptic, whence the
language of ‘heaven and earth passing away’, was a social and
religious phenomenon which developed outside and in opposition to
the theology of the temple cult. Both these positions now seem
unlikely; there was a lively, if distinctively Jewish mythology, which
was in fact central on the temple cult. Apocalyptic, which was
closely bound up with that mythology, is increasingly seen as
priestly and cult-centred.

The implications of the appreciation of Judaism’s temple-
centred mythology for the description of its histories and teachings,
including that of early Christianity, are far reaching. That

32 See esp. P. D. Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Westminster,
1973).
33 See e.g. R. Patai, Man and Temple: In Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual (London:
Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1947); J. Z. Smith, ‘Earth and Gods’, in Map is not
Territory (SILA 23; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 104-128; Jon D. Levenson, Sinai and Zion: An
Entry into the Jewish Bible (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), esp. 102-184; idem,
Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence (San
(University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 35; Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1985) on the Choshkampf and Tabernacles; Margaret Barker, The
Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem (London:
SPCK, 1991); Ben F. Meyer, ‘The Temple at the Navel of the Earth’, Christus Faber:
The Master-builder and the House of God (Allison Park, Penn.: Pickwick
Publications, 1992), 217-279 and most recently C. R. Hayward, The Jewish
overview of an approach to apocalyptic as temple-centred see the
present author’s The High Priest as Divine Mediator in the Hebrew Bible: Dan 7:13 as a Test
Case, Society of Biblical Literature 1997 Seminar Papers (Atlanta: Scholars
Press, 1997).
34 We should note, for example, Martha Himmelfarb, Ascent to Heaven in Jewish
and Christian Apocalypses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 14-46; David
Bryan, Cosmos, Chaos and the Kosher Mentality (ISP 12; Sheffield: Sheffield
Academic Press, 1995); Stephen L. Cook, Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The
Postexilic Social Setting (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).
35 The work of Barker, Gate of Heaven and The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s
Second God (London: SPCK, 1992) and Meyer, ‘Navel of the Earth’, is a start.

36 Levenson, Zion, 138, cf Creation, 73-99; Patai, Temple, 105-138; Beate Ego. Im
Himmel wie auf Erden (WUNT 2.34; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1989), 20-23; Meyer,
‘Navel of the Earth’, 231.
37 As Wright, Jesus and the Victory, 205.
38 The tripartite division of the temple, which was already by the first century
expanded to a seven-fold division (cf Josephus War 1:26 with m. Kelim 1:8)
appears to have been closely related to three and seven storied cosmologies
familiar to students of apocalyptic literature (e.g. 1 Enoch 14:8-18; Apoc. Abr. 19:4).
39 See e.g. Craig R. Koester, The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old
Testament, Intertextual Jewish Literature, and the New Testament (CBQMS 22;
40 This is rightly perceived by Holladay, Thetos Aner in Hellenistic-Judaism: A
Critique of the Use of This Category in New Testament Christology (SBLDS 40;
The temple's importance is of enormous significance for our understanding of the old testament and the new testament. The temple is a symbol of the presence of God's presence and the presence of the presence of God's presence. In the light of this, it is essential for us to understand the role of the temple in the religious and cultural life of the ancient Israelites.

The temple was a significant place where the religious and cultural life of the ancient Israelites was centered. It was a place for religious rituals, worship, and offerings. The temple's architecture and design were also a reflection of the religious and cultural values of the ancient Israelites.

The temple was not only a place of worship but also a symbol of the kingdom of God and the presence of God's presence. It was a place where God's presence was manifested in the form of the Shekhinah, which was the visible manifestation of God's presence.

The temple was also a place of education and instruction. The priests and the Levites taught the laws of God and the ways of righteousness in the temple. The temple was a place where the religious and cultural values of the ancient Israelites were transmitted from one generation to the next.

The temple was also a place where the ancient Israelites sought to express their love and devotion to God. The offerings made in the temple were a symbol of the people's faith and commitment to God.

The temple was a place of pilgrimage for the ancient Israelites. It was a place where different tribes from different parts of the land came to offer their sacrifices and to participate in the religious activities.

The temple was a place of national unity and identity. It was a place where the ancient Israelites celebrated their national festivals and events.

The temple was a place of national power and authority. It was a place where the kings of Israel were crowned and the judgments of the people were pronounced.

The temple was also a place of national mourning and grief. It was a place where the ancient Israelites mourned for their nation and its leaders.

The temple was a place of national prosperity and blessing. It was a place where the ancient Israelites sought God's blessings and prosperity for their nation.

In summary, the temple was a place of great significance in the religious and cultural life of the ancient Israelites. It was a symbol of God's presence, a place of education and instruction, a place of pilgrimage, a place of national unity and identity, a place of national power and authority, a place of national mourning and grief, a place of national prosperity and blessing.
the temple-as-microcosm component is unsurprising. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that this ideology was as axiomatic for the second-century rabbis as it was for the fourth-century rabbis. This is not to say that the temple was never treated as a concept such as we now treat it; indeed, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it. However, the temple was probably treated as a concept such as we now treat it.
The heart of the early Christian belief that the Temple cosmology has lost is the conviction that the presence of the Temple, the earthly abode of God, was a symbol of the presence of God in the world. This belief is reflected in the New Testament in the visions of apocalypse, such as that of John in the Book of Revelation, where the Temple is described as the abode of God's glory.

The Temple is also seen as a symbol of the unity of the world, with the nations of the world represented in the various altars and shrines within the Temple. This idea is reflected in the New Testament, where the Temple is described as the meeting place of all nations.

The Temple is also seen as a symbol of the Law, with the priests and Levites who served in the Temple being seen as the custodians of the Law. This idea is reflected in the New Testament, where the Temple is described as the dwelling place of the Law.

The Temple is also seen as a symbol of the resurrection of the dead, with the priests and Levites who served in the Temple being seen as the custodians of the resurrection. This idea is reflected in the New Testament, where the Temple is described as the dwelling place of the resurrection.

The Temple is also seen as a symbol of the eschatological city, with the Temple being seen as the entrance to the city of God. This idea is reflected in the New Testament, where the Temple is described as the dwelling place of the city.

The Temple is also seen as a symbol of the cosmos, with the Temple being seen as the center of the universe. This idea is reflected in the New Testament, where the Temple is described as the dwelling place of the cosmos.
been fulfilled and replaced (with concomitant relativization of the Torah) in the Lord and Saviour.

We have already assessed the evidence discussed by W. D. Davies and John P. Meier for the crucifixion and resurrection as a passing away of heaven and earth at Matthew 5:18. We have seen that the main problem with their interpretation was the lack of any clear indication that the cosmic disturbances surrounding the crucifixion could be regarded as themselves the passing away of heaven and earth. However, in the light of our discussion of the cosmic temple mythology, that lacuna is readily filled. First, it is widely believed that the rending of the temple veil (Mt. 27:51a) symbolizes the destruction of the temple itself.61 That, of course, as we have just seen, would mean the inability to keep the Torah in all, if not most, of its details. If the temple’s destruction is symbolized and if the temple embodies heaven and earth, then a Jewish (Christian) reader of the synoptic crucifixion scene would naturally assume that at this point there is insinuated the passing away of heaven and earth.

Secondly, even if the rending of the veil does not intend an allusion to the temple’s destruction, the only entry of Jesus’ spirit into the Holy of Holies and the establishing of a new relationship between God and man, that is, between heaven and earth, then the veil-rending presents the reader with another reason to discern the passing away of heaven and earth. Both Philo and Josephus agree (War 5:212-213; Ant. 3:138-144; Quaest. Exod. 2:85, cf. Mos 2:88) that the veil, in its fourfold constituent parts ‘typified the universe’:

For the scarlet seemed emblematic of fire, the fine linen of the earth, the blue of the air, and the purple of the sea; the comparison in two cases being suggested by their colour, and in that of the fine linen and purple by their origin, as the one is produced by the earth and the other by the sea. On this tapestry was portrayed a panorama of the heavens, the signs of the Zodiac excepted (Josephus, War 5:212-213).

In that case, the destructive rending of the temple veil itself signifies the passing away of heaven and earth. Since this happens at exactly the same moment as Jesus breathes His last, there is clearly some correlation between Jesus’ death and the passing away of heaven and earth.62

I submit that, when read in the light of the contemporary temple mythology, one of the only two substantial objections to the Davies–Meier reading of Matthew 5:18 with reference to the cross and resurrection is removed. For all three synoptics this was the decisive moment at which heaven and earth passed away (and were recreated at resurrection).

The other objection to the Davies–Meier reading of Matthew 5:18 was the fact that the strongest indications of a Matthean relativization of the Torah refer not to the period after the death and resurrection, but the period of the ministry: already in the Sermon on the Mount some jots and títles have passed away. Matthew 5:18 therefore demands that there also be some reference to new creation within the life and ministry of Jesus, rather than solely at the cross and resurrection.

We are thus led to consider the third referent in Matthew 5:18b: the creation of a new heaven and earth during His ministry. This phenomenon has received little attention in Matthean scholarship. It deserves far more attention than the present juncture allows. In the present context a number of preliminary considerations are pertinent.63

First, Davies and Allison have recently adopted the minority position of commentators which reads Matthew’s opening words ‘Βιβλιον γενεσιν...’ (Mt. 1:1) as a title for the whole gospel recalling the title of the first book of the Hebrew Bible and the words at Genesis 2:4 and 5:1. As such, they argue, it should be translated ‘the book of the genesis’ or ‘... of the new creation’.64 Though their arguments have not been universally accepted,65 they rightly compare other passages in which Matthew associates Jesus’ birth and

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62The literary connection suggests a set of correspondences between Jesus, the temple and the cosmos, the foundation of which is to be found in the P account of creation and tabernacle, and which I will explore elsewhere.

63Beside a thoroughgoing demonstration of the importance of new creation for Matthew’s theology, further study would demonstrate the temple context of four of Matthew’s five other ‘heaven and earth’ references (5:34-35; 11:25; 16:19; 18:18-19), the other being 28:18.

64Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1. 150-153.

65Their suggestion is dismissed by G. Stanton, ‘Matthew: Βιβλιον, ευαγγελιον, or βιος?’, in F. V. Segbroeck, C. M. Tuckett, G. Van Belle and J. Verkuyten (eds.), The Four Gospels, 3 vols. (Festschrift for Frans Neirynck; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 2:1187-1202 on the grounds that the thought is lacking elsewhere in Matthew.

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In the Temple and the People of God, 396-398

Exodus 25:8 (Lev. 26:1, 26-27; Dn. 7:9; Mt. 9:17; Acts 7:42; 1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Jn. 3:18; 1 Thess. 5:10-11).

The Temple was a central symbol of God's presence among the Israelites, and its destruction was a symbol of their rejection of God. The New Testament often alludes to the Temple, and Jesus' teachings often revolve around the role of the Temple in Jewish life.
cosmos, there is in this passage a clear evocation of a similar Zion theology. N. T. Wright has now, rightly I believe, pointed out that a parable about a house built on a rock evokes the temple, which is widely described simply as a (or God's) 'house'.71 The warning that a house built on sand will fall under the tempest of the elements therefore looks forward to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70 which is the principal focus of Matthew 24.

Wright's reading is substantially reinforced by the temple mythology from the Old Testament through to the rabbis. As the point at which creation took place, Zion is inviolable against the forces of Chaos, represented archetypally by the flood waters which God had overcome in Genesis 1:1.72 Zion is a temple city built on the same foundation stone which God, and then David (y. Sanh. 29a; b. Sukk. 53b; b. Mak. 11a) had used to still the waters of Chaos. As such she is able to withstand the 'thunder and earthquake . . . whirlwind and tempest' (Is. 29:6 in context of 28:14–29:10; cf. e.g. Pss. 24; 46). Whilst Israel is set on her 'Rock, the mountain of the Lord', the Lord destroys 'with a cloudburst and tempest and hailstones' the enemies of His people (Is. 30:29-30).73 Whilst commentators regularly compare Matthew 7:24-27 with the flood account of Genesis 6–9, that passage itself is part of this larger mythology. In the biblical account, the ark in which Noah and his family were protected was related to the tabernacle.74

Of course, in the context of the gospel Jesus is reusing this temple mythology. The house no longer stands for the Jerusalem temple. It is individuated to the wise follower of Jesus who hears and follows His teaching (7:24). In the allusion to the future destruction of the Jerusalem temple – the 'passing away of heaven and earth' – Matthew's Jesus follows the prophetic model of subversive remythologizing set by, for example, Ezekiel 13:9-16:

My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. . . . Because in truth they have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace; and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets smear whitewash on it. . . . There will be a deluge of rain, great hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind will break out . . . there shall be a deluge of rain, and hailstones of wrath to destroy it (cf. Je. 7:10ff).

Read in this way Matthew 7:24-27 creates a neat inclusio with 5:13-16 around the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.75 These two scenes evoke two of the most fundamental components of the temple myths; the creation of the primal light and the construction of the cosmic mountain.76 They thus provide the hermeneutical lens through which the whole of the Sermon is to be read: this halakah is that of the new creation – its adherents belong to a new temple constitution, a new heaven and a new earth. Follow Jesus' words and the prerogatives of Jerusalem and the temple are yours.77 Ignore them and you will go the same way that Ezekiel's opponents went in 587 BC.

This inclusio thus provides an essential hermeneutical key to the interpretation of the whole Sermon. The halakah which it lays out is that of the new temple community for whom there is already dawning a new heaven and a new earth. The details of the Torah of the old covenant are thus in part relativized. The creation of the new community is understood in clearly cosmological terms and the (new) Torah is regarded as contingent upon that ecclesiologically focused cosmology.

I submit that the difficulties presented by the two variants of the same 'heaven and earth passing away' saying have now been substantially resolved. It must be admitted that new questions have been thrown up. What is the relationship between the three layers of meaning we have discerned at Matthew 5:18? Where else in Matthew do we find such a confluence of ecclesiology, Christology, cosmology and Torah ideology and what is the wider Jewish background to such thought? To an exploration of these and other questions I will return elsewhere.

72Of the storm passages regularly cited by commentators to Mt. 7:24-27, Is. 28:16-17; 29:6 are clearly part of the temple mythology tradition.
75The beatitudes (blessings) of Mt. 5:3-12 are coupled with the curses of Mt. 23:13-36.
76Reading e.g. Schäfer, 'Schöpfung', 125-129; Levenson, Zion, 132-136 one cannot fail to appreciate the symbolism of this inclusio.
77The logic is consistent with the return to paradise in Mt. 19:3-9. It is also, I would suggest, the key to understanding Mt. 12:1-8.