

THE SIGN OF HIS COMING

The Parable of the Fig Tree

Matthew 24:32-35

In the previous portion of this passage ([vs. 4-31](#)), Jesus has spoken directly about His return to earth. The theme of Christ's second coming permeates the New Testament and is...or should be...the anticipated reality of every Christian.

- There are **1,845 biblical references** to the second coming.
- References to Jesus' *second coming* in the bible *outnumber* references to His *first coming*...**8 to 1**.
- There are **260 chapters** in the New Testament...the second coming is mentioned **321 times** in those chapters.
- Jesus' return is emphasized in no less than **17 Old Testament book**.
- The New Testament authors mentions His *second coming* in **23** of their **27 books**.
- **1 out of every 30 verses** in the New Testament teaches of Christ's return.
- Jesus, Himself referred to His return **21 times**.
- The **second coming** is *second* only to **salvation** as the most dominant subject in the New Testament.

The Lord's return will be as real and historical of an event as was His first coming. Believers should always be looking *back* to the moment of their saving faith in Christ...when their souls were redeemed. But we must also look *forward* with anxious anticipation towards the return of Christ...when our bodies will be redeemed and we will enter into the promised fullness of our salvation. In that day *Satan will be defeated... the cursed lifted...Christ worshiped...creation restored...sin and death conquered...and all the saints glorified*.

Among the many passages in Scripture that describes the Lord's return, [Matthew 24-25](#) is unique and special because it's the message that comes directly from Jesus Himself about His return.

I. THE ANSWER: ([vs. 3](#))

As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" ([vs. 3](#))...Jesus spends the rest of [chapter 24](#) and all of

[chapter 25](#)...in what is known as the **Olivet Discourse**...answering this one question.

II. THE ANALOGY: ([vs. 32](#))

Parables had a *two-fold purpose* in Jesus' ministry. When *unexplained*...they *concealed* truth. When *explained*...they *revealed* truth.

When Jesus gave a parable to the multitudes or to the religious leaders in Israel without also giving them an explanation...it always remained a *mystery* to them. But when He gave a parable to His disciples and explained it...it was a vivid illustration that made a *truth* clear and understandable.

Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near ([vs. 32](#))...

Learn...Gk. *manthano*, means to *genuinely understand and accept a teaching*...to *accept it as true* and to *apply it in one's life* ...to *engraft it into one's life to where it becomes part of their character*.

This sort of learning is *much more than mere head knowledge*...it involves *genuine acceptance of a truth* and a determination to *live a life consistent with it*. Jesus wanted His disciples to **learn** in their innermost being what He was teaching, and to understand and receive it with regard to its great importance.

This is the same word **Paul** used when he declared...

*"...I have **learned** to be content in whatever circumstances I am."*
~Philippians 4:11

Parable from the fig tree...Jews were accustomed to a **fig tree** being used as an illustration. **Palestine** had an abundance of **fig trees** which were not only grown commercially, but were found in many of the peoples' yards for the sake of providing fruit, as well as, for the shade they provided during the hot summer months. Few figures would have been better known to the disciples than that of the **fig tree**.

Jesus Himself had used the **fig tree** on numerous other occasions as a teaching aid ([Matthew 7:16](#); [Matthew 21:19](#); [Luke 13:6-9](#)).

When its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near...The use of the fig tree was so basic that even young children knew that a budding fig tree meant it was spring and that summer would soon follow.

III. THE APPLICATION: (vs. 33-34)

So, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door (vs. 33)...

All these things...refers to everything that Jesus has been talking about...the *birth pains* (vs. 4-14)...the *abomination of desolation* (vs. 15)...the *need to flee because of the impending dangers* (vs. 16-28)...and the *catastrophic chaos of the universe* (vs. 29). Those things will indicate that He is near...just as the budding of the fig tree indicates that summer and harvest time is near.

He is near...He, Gk. *estin*, literally means *it is*. He is near...*It is near*...different version of the Bible translate it both ways...but the meaning is the same. The time when the Lord is coming to establish His kingdom is near.

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place (vs. 34)...

This generation...Obviously this wasn't referring to the disciples' generation because He didn't return during their life time. And Jesus wasn't specifying a specific time in history that He will come. What He is revealing are the *events* that will identify His coming...not the *time*. This generation simply is referring to the generation of people who will be living at the end time and those who will view the signs of His coming...and ultimately see Him as He returns.

Just as the budding of the fig leaves means it isn't long until summer...so the generation alive when these signs occur will not have long to wait for Christ's appearance. Those who witness the *birth pains* will witness the *birth*.

As the books of Daniel and Revelation make clear...the total time of the Tribulation will be but *seven years*...and the period of the Great Tribulation, in which these signs will appear, will only be *three and a half hours* (Daniel 12:7; Revelation 11:2-3; Revelation 12:6).

IV. THE ANNOUNCEMENT: (vs. 35)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away (vs. 35)...

Heaven and earth will pass away...The universe may be falling apart...but what Jesus has just said will not fail to come to complete fulfillment.

Both the Old and New Testaments clearly predict that the universe will dramatically and catastrophically be affected when the divine judgment of God comes.

But My words will not pass away...On another occasion Jesus said...

"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail."

~Luke 16:17

Whatever is touched by sin must pass away...die. The Word of God is untouched! It is living and active! It is like silver refined seven times in a furnace of fire...utterly pure.

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

~Hebrews 4:12

"The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times."

~Psalm 12:6

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **Jesus is going to return some day.** Every sign that is given in Scripture is given to warn and prepare that generation for His return.
- Every sign that is given in Scripture pointing to the return of Christ **can be seen today.**
- You need to be **prepared** for the day when Christ returns...and you should do everything within your power to **tell others** how they too can be **prepared** for the day of Christ's return.