

The Parables of Jesus

- The Fig Tree

- Matthew 24:32-35, Mark 13:28-19,
Luke 21:29-31

Jesus concludes His official time with the religious leaders and the people. As we see in Matthew 23:1-33, Jesus gives a scathing rebuke to the Pharisees, as well as all of the Jewish religious leaders. In Matthew 23:34-39, Jesus then prophesies about the coming destruction of Jerusalem. He also prophesies that Jerusalem will rise up

again in time to see His second coming and declare, "*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*" This was a vital statement given by Jesus. As He declares this, Jesus is literally prophesying His return.

In Matthew 24:1-3, Mark 13:1-3, and Luke 21:5-6, Jesus concludes His time with the Pharisees and the other people that were there within the Temple area. This would be His final teaching and messages to the religious leaders as well as the people before His crucifixion and ultimate resurrection.

As He was leaving the Temple Mount, the disciples began "marveling" at the beautiful stones of the Temple and mentioned it to Jesus. This was just after Jesus had prophesied that Jerusalem would ultimately come to destruction. The disciples were not sure if that meant the Temple would be spared or not. They "nonchalantly" brought up the subject of the Temple by saying how beautiful it was.

Jesus abruptly tells them that all these "stones" (of the Temple) will fall without one being able to stand upon the other. Jesus was speaking prophetically concerning both the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 AD as well as He was speaking prophetically concerning the "stones" of the Temple as representing the "stones" of Jewish tradition that will soon come down, as well. Jesus then went with the disciples to the Mount of Olives also known as Mount Olivet. This was directly across from the Eastern Gate of the Temple.

In Matthew 24:3, Mark 13:3 and Luke 21:7, we see while on the Mount of Olives, Jesus was asked by His disciples, "*...when shall these things be and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*" In their thoughts this would have included when Jerusalem's destruction would be and then when would it be raised up take place? When would the destruction of the Temple take place? When would Jesus' coming and His taking your place as King of Israel happen?

In Matthew 24:4-28; Mark 13:4-27 and Luke 21:6-28, Jesus goes into a dissertation of the "signs of those times." We must take note that Jesus is not necessarily giving these things in any kind of "order of events." He is simply telling of some of the events that will take place that will mark the signs of those times. Below is a brief review of His remarks.

- There will be wars, rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes, all of which are just the "birth pangs" of the end of the age.
- There will be persecutions of the followers of Christ (Christians) that will happen before the end of the age.
- There will be great tribulations in those days.
- There will be false Christs /messiahs and rumors of Christ being "here and there."
- In those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light..." (Matthew 24:29) and basically the Son of Man (Himself) will be "coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30).

Jesus then proceeds to use the "Parable of the Fig Tree." Remember, in its context within this teaching setting with His disciples, Jesus is using this parable to answer their question of "...when shall these things be?" Below is the "Parable of the Fig Tree" as found in each of the three Gospel accounts.

- Matthew 24:32-35 - *"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."*
- Mark 13:28-31 - *"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."*
- Luke 21:29-36 - *"And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."*

There is a very obvious lesson of the parable given by Jesus. In the Middle East the fig tree is dormant in the winter. Towards the very end of winter it begins to blossom and then sprout its leaves. The fig tree's peculiarity is that the blossoms of the fruit appear **before** the leaves. To any farmer and to most of the people, they would know that this definitely meant that summer, the time of warmth and fruit is not just near but it is imminent.

Jesus, in using this parable, was saying the same thing. He was teaching that as soon as you see these things He had just mentioned – the things referred to previously - it should be obvious to you that the end of the age is near, just like it is obvious when summer is near - when the fig tree begins to blossom.

What Jesus was also saying to His disciples was that it should not take anyone by surprise. It should not take any of Jesus' disciples by surprise because they should always be watching and be prepared for His return at any and all times just as He taught in many of His other parables. In reality, it should not take any of His disciples by surprise because He has just told them what the "signs" would be. There would be no excuse in knowing and understanding what would be taking place.

We must also take note that the "fig tree" in the scriptures is always used as a "symbol" for the nation of Israel. In Luke 13:6-8, Jesus, in the parable of the "Unfruitful Fig Tree," told of a fig tree that was planted in a vineyard. However, after three years it had not produced fruit. The owner of the vineyard (representative of God, the Father) wanted to cut it down. The steward (representative of Jesus) asked to give it "more time." This was showing us that Jesus was asking the Father to be even more longsuffering with His people, Israel. The Father agreed to give them more time to "bear fruit."

In Matthew 21: 18-20, we see that Jesus had "cursed" a fig tree (representative of Israel and its religious leaders) because it had leaves but had no "fruit." The "extra time" that was given as revealed in Luke 13:6-8 was about to be over.

Here, in this short parable, we see that the natural "fig tree" will begin to blossom as a sign that summer will come. Jesus was letting His disciples know that Israel and the Jewish people will one day accept the One they rejected. This again shows God's tremendous grace and mercy towards His people, Israel.

This would be the fulfillment of Hosea 1:9, 10; Hosea 2:23 as well as what was written by the Apostle Paul in Romans 9:25, 26, "... *I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.*"

Jesus, in Matthew 23:39, says that Israel will someday say, "*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*" Jesus expressly says in that same scripture that **we will not see Him until this happens**. In other words, prior to Jesus' return there will be a time when the Jewish people in general, will recognize Jesus as Messiah. God is longsuffering with them. They will have the opportunity and many will accept and receive the Good News of salvation through Jesus. That will be another "sign" of the end times.

In Matthew 24:34 as well as in Mark 13:30 and Luke 21:32 we read, "*Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.*" Within its context, the term "this generation" is referring to the generation that will be experiencing these "signs." Who that "generation" of believers/disciples is and when the time for these signs will begin to occur is left up to the Father, just as the day and time of Jesus' return is only known by the Father.

We, as His people but most importantly, as His believers, are not called to know the exact time that all these things will take place. However, we, as His people, are called to be watchful and to be alert of the "season" for Jesus' return. Just as the "blossoming fig tree" is a sure sign that will herald the inevitable coming of summer, these events foretold by Jesus will herald the inevitable Second Coming of Jesus.

It is very interesting to note, that as we read these last parables of Jesus, we must see that Jesus is telling His disciples as well as His true believers today to look forward to but most importantly, to be ready for His "second" coming. We must remember that the entire concept of "a second coming" was strange and very radical for the listeners of Jesus to truly grasp. This was never truly understood by the Jewish people or literally by anyone.

Everyone thought, who truly believed, only believed in their Messiah's first and only coming. Jesus was reiterating the truth of the Word of God given throughout the Jewish scriptures (the Old Testament) in which the Jewish scholars had missed. They only believed in their Messiah's coming and "setting things straight" for the Jewish people on this earth. They had missed the point that there would be two comings of Messiah. The first coming would be to bring salvation to any Jewish person and then any Gentile who would believe in Him.

Then there would be a second coming of Messiah (Jesus). It would be at His second coming that the end of this world as they knew it would happen. It would be at this second coming that their Messiah (Jesus) would rule from the Temple Mount, the entire earth for one thousand years.

As we read these last few parables of Jesus, we must keep in mind that He is now truly steadfast in His mission of coming first to set the captives free from their sin and their separation from their God. However, He is also letting His true disciples know that there is much, much more. They must be looking for the coming of Messiah in His first coming to set them free from their sin and to give them new life in and through Him and restore their relationship back unto the Father.

However, the radical but yet truthful teaching of Jesus was also revealing that there would be a “second coming” of Himself. This second coming would be the time of truly establishing His rule and reign upon this earth. The one thousand years of His rule and reign would then usher in the true Kingdom of God upon a “new earth” where only those who truly looked forward to and believed with all their heart, in the Words of both Jesus the Messiah and the Father, would dwell forever and ever.

This was where Jesus was teaching from in these last few parables. The last of His parables were intended to let His true disciples, both then and now, know what to expect concerning the end times. It is imperative for the true disciple of Jesus to take every word that is found within both the New and Old Testament as God’s uninterrupted plan and full truth that will unfold in these last days. We must listen and listen well!!!