

Jesus' Olivet Discourse

Matthew 24 & 25



Matthew 24:32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near.

Matthew 24:33 So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near - at the doors!

Matthew 24:34 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Nature follows its inevitable cycles. The budding of a fig tree is just one example. When you see its leaves appearing then summer is just around the corner.

The events Jesus has been describing regarding the Tribulation are as inevitable as the cycles of nature. Once, for example, the abomination of desolation is set up in the future Temple there are only three and one half years left before the Second Coming of Jesus. In some ways these prophetic events are more certain than the cycles we observe in nature.

When Jesus said **learn this parable from the fig tree** His followers knew He was also talking about the nation of Israel. Figs were identified with the nation of Israel by the prophets. Hosea wrote: "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness, I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree in her first time" (Hosea 9:10). Jeremiah received the vision of two baskets of figs, which represented Israel: "Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah" (Jeremiah 24:5).

Simply put, Jesus was letting them (and us) know that God's plan for Israel is set in the cycle of prophetic events and will unfold just as written in the Bible.

It seems obvious to us these things will occur just as written. Many nonbelievers and even professing Christians don't see it that way. They don't accept the Bible as inspired, inerrant, and infallible. They think it points to trends that we can change if we "give peace a chance" or grow an environmental conscience.

Matthew 24:33 So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near - at the doors!

All these things are the signs just given to them in the previous verses - the abomination of desolation, followed by great tribulation, followed by signs in the heavens.

Once the seven year Tribulation begins it is 'on' until it is over. It will follow the description given in the Revelation seal after seal, trumpet after trumpet, bowl of wrath after bowl of wrath.

Matthew 24:34 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

This verse has caused a great deal of controversy and even more sensationalism. It has to do with what Jesus meant when He said **this generation**. I remember as a baby believer hearing that, since the fig tree represents Israel, Jesus meant that the **generation** alive when Israel was reborn would definitely see His Second Coming.

How long is a generation? Some say it is forty years. So if Israel was reborn as a nation on May 14, 1948, and a biblical generation is forty years, then the Rapture took place in 1981 followed by the seven-year Tribulation and the Second Coming of Jesus in 1988!

I guess that means we are in Heaven!

A biblical generation is hard to pin down. In Matthew 1:17 we read, **So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are**

fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

Christian and Jewish theologians alike agree that, based on biblical genealogies Abraham was called by God in the year 2085BC. We know he was seventy-five years old at that time which means Abraham was born in 2160BC. Matthew 1:17 tells us there were forty-two generations (14x3) from Abraham to Christ. If you divide 2160 - the year of Abraham's birth - by 42, you get 51.4. Thus there is validity for a Biblical generation to be 51.4 years.

Not so fast! Listen to this (from Genesis 15:13-14 &16):

And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again...

God referred to the four-hundred-year period the Jews were in Egypt as four generations. Therefore, in this model, a generation is not forty years but one hundred years.

Ah, but what about Psalm 90:10?

Psalms 90:10 The days of our lives *are* seventy years; And if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years, Yet their boast *is* only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Generation is tough to nail down. It can be anywhere from forty to one hundred years. So let's not try to be too precise.

There are two more acceptable explanations of **generation** that fit the context:

1. Some scholars believe the thought is that the very **generation** that sees the beginning of these things will see their end. The same people who see the beginning of the Tribulation will see the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven to reign.

2. The other explanation is that **generation** should be understood as *race*. This is a legitimate translation of the Greek word; it means men of the same stock, breed, or family (Matthew 12:45; Matthew 23:35-36). So Jesus was predicting that the Jewish **race** would survive to see all these things accomplished. Their continued survival, despite atrocious persecution, is a miracle of history.

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Heaven means the atmosphere around earth and what we call space – the stellar heavens. You read how God will one day dissolve the heavens both in Second Peter 3:10-13 and in the Revelation.

Again we see Jesus emphasizing the certainty of these events. His word is far more secure than any of the natural laws and phenomenon we daily depend upon.

When we look at trends in the news that line up with the End Times we are looking towards the Tribulation and the Lord's Second Coming.

The Rapture is signless. It is imminent. But if we see the signs of the Tribulation, and since we believe the Rapture precedes it... It is OK to think we are closer than ever to the imminent event!