

## **THE PARABLES OF JESUS, #039** **A Chronological Study**

*"To Him who opened His mouth in parables and  
uttered things hidden since the creation of the world."*  
Psalm 78:2



### **"The Budding Fig Tree"** **Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-33; Luke 21:31-33**

---

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the centuries those who are acquainted with the Scriptures have been reading the signs of the future and often hoping that The Lord's "soon" coming would be quite soon. Our text will acquaint us with Jesus' words of Matthew 24:33, "But of that day and hour no one knows." Times of great country or world-wide crisis – wars, weather catastrophes, earthquakes, etc., - have all had their moments of deep concern. It's been 2000 years now since Jesus said these words and His "soon" coming has still been delayed.

In this study we will explore some of the where's and why's of this seeming delay and both the incredible beauty, and the incredible tragedy of this "soon" event.

Jesus is very near the time of His Sacrificial death on the Cross and this is the moment that makes for the incredible beauty and incredible tragedy that is forecasted to come about in this event. As Jesus speaks of it, He has just entered the city of Jerusalem on the back of a donkey colt. There is a crowd surrounding Him and praising His name. They are expecting Him to proclaim Himself as their Messiah-King and assemble an army to "make the Romans and their soldiers go away and let them have their own country to themselves – their Promised Kingdom, now with a new king.

The larger Jewish community never really understood that Jesus' purpose, being sent by His heavenly Father, was to bring salvation to their souls from their sin-based lives. They wanted political freedom for their nation... not spiritual freedom for their eternal lives.

Jesus has just told His listeners while standing up on the Mount of Olives, looking down on the city of Jerusalem,

***"Do you see all these things? Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down"*** [Mt 24:2].

"Tell us, when will this happen...?" Jesus tells them all about His death and the resulting discipline from God that would come to Jerusalem and the Jews in just a few years. The Roman Caesar Nero will crush and destroy Jerusalem and disperse the Jews all over the middle east – and further. Israel as a nation and a place will come to an end for about 1948 years with the end of World War II.

He then told His listeners that He would return in the future – but, ***"don't believe anyone who says they are Him."*** His coming will be in an absolutely amazing way "In the sky." But He

also says, **"And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming"** – for He is coming to gather His "Elect" and take them away – for He intends on disciplining and punishing the peoples of the earth who have rebelled against Him.

So, as we look at this lesson, which is about the signs and times of His "soon" return to the air, not to the earth, for that is a message for a time after this – and we'll delve into that in the next parable, so... pay attention and make sure that YOU are ready to be received by Him and His angels when He comes!

## **THE BUDDING FIG TREE**

Once again we'll be using our technique of "Linear Text." Taking the best sentences from the 3 places in the Gospels where they reside and creating a single reading for our study.

## **THE LINEAR TEXT**

**[1K 21:29a] Then He told them, [Mt 24:32a] "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; [Luke 21:31] So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that [It / summer / He / the kingdom of God] is near, right at the door.**

**[Mt 24:39] Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.**

**<sup>35</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.**

**<sup>36</sup> "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. <sup>37</sup> For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before**

***the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.***

Just a quick note here to clarify this last sentence, as it is aimed at the unbelieving Jewish nation and speaks of His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and not the rapture. For the unbelieving nation and world will be once again swept away at that time. The earlier part of the paragraph pertains to both His coming in the air and to His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming – Be aware of the signs of the times, and be ready for Him when He comes!

***[Lk 13:26] "At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup> And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.***

***Mt 24:40 Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. [Mk 13:33] "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come.***

His message is clear. We are to be constantly on alert for Him. We are to be believers, we are to be active as believers, we are to be loving our God with all our hearts, souls and minds. We are to be fellowshiping with Him and with each other as we serve Him and each other – all the time keeping watch for His return. Don't allow yourself to "fall by the wayside" in your faith. Don't wander off into mere human desires and activities. Be His in every way you can imagine. Don't risk being "the one who is left behind."

---

**Now lets explore the text.**

***[Lk 21:29a] Then He told them, [Mt 24:32a] "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;***

So, Jesus' responds to their question about when this is all going to happen, and He directs their attention to His telling of a parable about a budding fig tree. We need to know that throughout Hebrew and Jewish history the image of the Fig Tree has played a vital part in identifying the Nation of Israel. It is a metaphor that is used over and over – sometimes as a hidden code to identify a story with the nation. Jesus immediately identifies this story as a parable – and again He's telling those who know Him and His parables that this is an illustration using metaphoric language to help His listeners "hear" what He has to say. In other places we've seen Jesus communicate positive ideas to His disciples and at the same time communicate negative ideas in His enemies, those Jewish religious leaders who are seeking to have Him killed.

In this parable Jesus is speaking very frankly to His audience, and that audience has basically two segments. Those who are believing that Jesus is their Messiah – as the savior of their sins – and those who are believing that Jesus is a troublemaker from the devil, calling Himself God, and about to make trouble with the Romans.

While American life as moved away from rural farms for the majority, we still cultivate plants and come to know how the weather (rain, dry-spells, heat, cold) all affect the natural world around us. My family moved from the relatively cold New England area to the relatively warm central Florida area. While the seasons are very different to us now, we still know and recognize the effects that the earth's seasons express upon where we are. Jesus was speaking to a people who were in the western middle east along the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea. They were

a mostly rural people and well acquainted with the effects of the season change in the weather. One tree which thrived in that area was the fig tree. If you had some you could provide for yourself or even earn part of your living by marketing the fruit. You would then know in what season and what time your tree would blossom and begin to produce figs. So... Jesus is using this metaphor of the fig tree coming into the season of beginning to bear fruit to make His listeners understand that Jesus is speaking about something that – if you are paying attention to the world around you, you should be able to determine about when that something looked for would begin to happen. We shouldn't miss His note that when the fig tree starts to grow leaves... there is still some time left before the fruit grows and ripens.

***[Luke 21:31] "So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that...."***

Jesus has, several times, told His disciples and those around Him, that He is going to be killed, that He will be resurrected, and that He will leave and return. Some who have heard these messages believe them, but most don't. Even the disciples are having a hard time understanding some of the deep stuff. They won't have a good understanding of much of it until after Jesus dies and is resurrected – then they will think back and then understand most of His parables and teaching.

Here in this "linear" compounded text we see a list of what they thought when they wrote down Jesus' words. He is saying that **"YOU Also"** need to be looking at the world events around you and when you see things that make you think that the things He promised look like they might happen... **"RECOGNIZE THAT."**

Now I'm not saying that because I recognize certain things on my timeline as things that Jesus mentioned does it mean that what I deduce is going to be "The Moment" that triggers Jesus' Return. History is full of times and events that would have triggered me to think, "Now's the time that He spoke of, He's going to return NOW" I would have been right to keep myself looking,

connecting, and expecting – because that’s my JOB – Looking, Connecting, and Expecting.

Think about how believers felt after Jesus’ resurrection and the beginnings of the new Church movement, when war was imminent with the Romans and Caesar Nero began to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple. “He must be coming back Now!” But that was not His time to return.

### **Why Not?**

Think of the hundreds of millions of human beings who have been won to Christ since then. Think of the record of believing Christians who have continued through wars, rumors of wars, pain, suffering, and the struggle of everyday life on a planet full of sinners whose hearts are “desperately wicked.” Think again of the hundreds of millions of brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ who will live, be saved, and serve Him for eternity!

I like to think of this time of waiting as a time of watching the names on “God’s Book of Life” being checked off one-at-a-time. I don’t want the opportunity for even 1 more man, woman, boy, or girl to be saved... to be lost because I want to see Him coming on the clouds today.

***[Luke 21:31] So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that.... [It / summer / He / the kingdom of God] is near, right at the door.***

Now it’s interesting that two of the scripture writers of this parable used a different metaphor to describe what we should be waiting for.

Matthew speaks of the “Summer” becoming “Near” and “Right at the Door.” This is speaking to those who are following along with the parable more literally. When things begin to “warm up” you know the “summer” is just ahead. Therefore, when you see world events “warming up” you should know that world events are going to get hotter and very hot is (just) ahead.

Mark speaks of "It," the "coming of the Son of Man" is becoming near. Just look at the world events of today... many countries at war, large and powerful countries thinking about going to war, millions of people, many of them Christians, rushing out of the countries they now live in trying to escape those who wish to kill them because their religion requires them to, to be holy. Yes, the Son of Man is coming... soon.

Luke speaks of "knowing The Kingdom of God" is becoming "Near." With the coming of Jesus, the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Anointed One, The Messiah, The Christ, The KING – also comes The Kingdom, the Promised Kingdom, Land and People of Abraham. God's Covenanted people – the Believing Jew (Hebrew), and a world of believing people... who, over the period of a thousand years... grow, once again, apart from God and toward a massive war... that doesn't take place. Instead, God's final judgment... as God teaches us that human beings just aren't ready for a holy life with God, as members of His family – without being changed and having Him in us.

---

***[Mt 24:34] Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. <sup>35</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.***

Just earlier Jesus has been describing a long period of time in those things which will take place before eternity enters into the immediate future.

There are two important points to consider in this little paragraph. First, Jesus is talking about the generation of people alive when these events take place – not the generation of people alive with Him then. Second, Earth and its heavens will not pass away until all these things have happened. You, hopefully see in his repeated sentence, that what Jesus is saying is that His Word,



all the things He prophecies, will come to pass – period. His Word will never pass away. He’s not specifically saying that when these things are completed, then Heaven and earth will pass away, but that His Word will remain true... forever.

Having said that, we also need to remember that Isaiah told us there is a final judgment coming that will put an end to what we now know as our physical universe.

***All the stars in the sky will be dissolved  
and the heavens rolled up like a scroll;  
all the starry host will fall  
like withered leaves from the vine,  
like shriveled figs from the fig tree.***

Isaiah 34:4

But that universe will be replaced with a new heaven and earth.

***“See, I will create  
new heavens and a new earth.  
The former things will not be remembered,  
nor will they come to mind.***

***<sup>18</sup> But be glad and rejoice forever  
in what I will create,***

Isaiah 65:17-18a

***“Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”<sup>[a]</sup> for the first  
heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was  
no longer any sea”***

Revelation 21:1

---

***[Mt 24:36] “But of that day and hour no one knows, not  
even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father  
alone. <sup>37</sup> For the coming of the Son of Man will be just***

***like the days of Noah. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark...***

Over the centuries many individuals have searched the scriptures and become deceived about being able to figure out just when this will all happen – especially the second coming of our Lord Jesus. Jesus was speaking to the crowd around Him. His knowledge, as a human in His time on earth, has been self-voluntarily restricted. He had come as His Father’s servant and placed Himself completely under His Father’s will. At that time Jesus was openly admitting (humility) that He didn’t know when His return was to be – Only His Father knew. We can expect that after His ascension He did regain His “God knowledge,” as part of His re-integration with the Trinity.

The rest of this paragraph has been interpreted many ways over the years – but it should be clear to us upon reading it... that Jesus was just saying that **“things will be going on just as usual.”** Noah’s world was then completely full of unbelievers except for himself and his family – and so is much of our modern world. The people of Noah’s time and the people of today won’t have a clue about it right up till “the first drops of rain.” And then... it’s too late!”

***<sup>39</sup> and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.***

***[Lk 13:26] “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup> And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.***

***Mt 24:40 Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will***

***be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. [Mk 13:33] "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come.***

As Jesus comes "in the air" to deliver His royal Priesthood – His believers – and return with them to His Father's Heaven.

It's Jesus' desire that we all keep watch on the season. Be smart and make sure you are ready for the Christ to return and take you away as a believer – not leave you behind for the disciplining of Israel and mankind in the Tribulation.

---

***FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS***

- 1. Why does Jesus use a budding fig tree as the core of this parable?**
  
  - 2. What guideline did Jesus put on the timing of His actual return?**
  
  - 3. What was the point Jesus was making by including this information?**
  
  - 4. Who are the primary people to whom this parable is pointed?**
  
  - 5. What's the central message of this parable for us today?**
-

## ***FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS***

### **1. Why does Jesus use a budding fig tree as the core of this parable?**

There are two elements to this answer. First, the Fig tree was a well-known metaphoric symbol for the Nation of Israel as well as the Olive tree. Second, the fact that the tree was beginning to bud was very significant as an illustration of the season of summer arriving and that the tree was about to deliver both its leaves and a fresh crop of figs – its crop was coming soon.

### **2. What guideline did Jesus put on the timing of His actual return?**

Jesus made it quite clear that, while you could eventually tell the “season” of His return to the earth was estimable, the exact timing was unknown – by everyone, Himself included at the time, except for His heavenly Father.

### **3. What was the point Jesus was making by including this information?**

The point of the story was that all believers need to remain constant in their “looking for Him.” According to Jesus, while it is not possible to lose one’s salvation, it is possible for those who have never made that commitment to the Christ, but who want to fellowship and be with believers, would – at some time down the road – lose their seeming commitment to Him and miss their opportunity to make the full commitment to love Him with all their heart, soul, and mind – and thus His return would not bring reward for them, but judgment.

### **4. Who are the primary people to whom this parable is pointed?**

This parable is situated in the last week before Jesus is to be sentenced to the Cross. The Holy Spirit has not yet come to indwell believers and therefore the “Church” has not yet been established. Jesus is speaking to Jews of the Nation of Israel, and He is telling them of the promised return of the Messiah and the setting up of the Abrahamic promised Kingdom in their own land here on earth.

So, this parable is all about Jesus' return to the earth to establish that kingdom. The "Rapture of the Church" has already occurred at this time of Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming. Deceased Church Age believers have been either resurrected to heaven or "Translated" (changed from their earthly bodies to their heavenly bodies) to heaven for the first ever full assembly of the Church (The Body and Bride of Christ) assembling for "The Wedding and Wedding Feast of the Lamb," that takes place in heaven during the Tribulation.

### **5. What's the central message of this parable for us today?**

Keep watch – stay worldly awake – don't neglect this task – stay focused – watch the times and the seasons – for the return of our Savior in the air... because the Rapture of the Church Age will happen just before He returns to rescue His Believing Covenanted People at His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming to the earth. We are to be ready, prepared, excited, and expecting this wonderful moment.

---

The "The Ancient Path" Study materials on this website are made available here free and may be copied for use in Bible study groups, in limited numbers, providing that no charge is made for them. Items that appear as copyrighted materials that are not of our authorship are not to be copied without the express permission of the original copyright holders. Every effort has been made to give proper footnote credit for items that are quoted.

J. Deering [AncientPath.net] is the author and editor of this study.

AncientPath.net © 2024

Jeremiah 18:15

"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path"

2024-02-07 updated