

Matthew 24:32-51 The Parable of the Fig Tree

This morning our focus is on Matthew chapter 24 verses 32 through 51, it finishes out the chapter. Remember these chapters, chapters 23 through 25 are all centered on the prophecies of the end times, the center of which is focused on verses 4 through 31. The last two weeks we studied the end times prophecies part one, and end time prophecies part two as we took verses 4 through 31.

All this is framed around three questions in verse 3 of chapter 24, **While He was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, Tell us, when will these things be? And, what is the sign of Your coming and of the completion of the age?** So Jesus addresses that beginning with verse 4 going through verse 31 and following.

In verses 4 through 31 Jesus put together a formula, a systematic formula and pattern outlining the seventieth week of Daniel, the last seven years of Daniel's prophecy which is focused on the tribulation period. We saw four sections in these verses. We saw The Pains of Birth, which is the first three and a half years of the tribulation period. And in that time Jesus said, **But you will hear about wars and rumors of wars. See, do not be disturbed. For it is necessary for all these things to happen, yet the end is not yet. For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be famines and diseases and earthquakes everywhere.** So this is a time when it is just going to be, not just sporadic, not just in different parts of the world, but it will be everywhere, it will be so bad.

But then all this is going to happen for three and a half years until The Pivotal Point, verse 15, it is the second phase that we studied, from last week. **Therefore whenever you should see the abomination of desolation, which had been spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (the one reading, let him understand).** He is appealing to people who are Jews who know about Daniel's prophecies. And Daniel talked about the antichrist. That when he turns on Israel after making a covenant with them, he helps them rebuild their temple. And then after he has the temple rebuilt, and after he helps them to begin sacrifices once again, he turns and puts his image in the holy of holies, and says that the world must worship him. He starts his own religion. But he says that in order to buy and sell in the economic system of the world you have to take the number of his name. In order to get the number of his name you must worship his image so it is a religious issue. He says, *Whenever you see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place* that is the pivotal point of the three and a half years of tribulation, the mid-trib.

This opens up the next section verses 16 through 28. He says when this happens - the abomination of desolation is set up in the temple - **Then let the ones in Judea flee into the mountains.** You see, he is talking to Jewish people about being in Judea and fleeing to the mountains when they see the image put up in the holy of holies. Why? Because this brings what is called The Great Tribulation in verse 21. **Great tribulation will happen, such as has not happened from the beginning of the world until now, and it shall never happen. And except those days were shortened, all flesh would not be saved. But on account of the elect, those days will be shortened.** And so he is telling them it is going to be a great tribulation and

that if He had not shortened it to three and a half years, the second part of the tribulation, then nobody would be saved. But you see His elect - His elect again is the Jews, the Jewish people. Because of His elect He has shortened the days to three and a half ~~days~~ years or 1260 days according to the prophetic calendar of 360 days.

Verse 26 of this section says, **Therefore if they should say to you, Look, He is in the wilderness; you should not go out. Or, Look, He is in the private rooms, you should not believe it. For just as the lightning comes out from the east and shines as far as the west, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass may be, there the vultures will be gathered together.** So His coming is going to be suddenly. It is going to be for all to see. It will not be secret.

So, at the end of this great tribulation period Christ is going to come, which opens up the last section that we took last week, The Promise of His Coming. I will read the three verses. **And immediately after the tribulation of those days, so as soon as the tribulation is over, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give her light, and the stars will fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven. And then all the tribes of the land will wail.** We saw last week the word *tribes* is pertaining to Jews, Jewish people. **And they will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and much glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, that would be the shofar horn, the ram's horn, and they will gather together His elect, that would be the Jewish people, from the four winds, from the extremities of the heavens to the extremities of them.** So when He comes at His second coming after the tribulation is over to set up His kingdom on the earth, He is going to draw, He is going to call the angels to come and blow the shofar horn and call all of His people from the four corners of the earth and the extremities of them, call them to Jerusalem, where He and they will set up His kingdom here on earth for one thousand years.

So everything from verse 32 which we start with today, everything from verse 32 to the end of chapter 25 are parables and stories to illustrate the teachings of verses 4-31. So after He gets through describing the four sections or stages of the seventieth week of Daniel He starts out in verse 32 with The Parable of the Fig Tree.

First of all, He has a command, **But learn the parable from the fig tree: Whenever its branch already should become tender and should put out leaves, you know that the summer is near.** The fig tree, and the olive tree, and the vineyard, and the vine, are all symbols in the Old Testament of the nation Israel. You can find this in Joel chapter 1 verse 7, Hosea chapter 9 verse 10, and all of Jeremiah chapter 24 talks about the fig tree and the vine. So learn the parable of the fig tree, **Whenever its branch already should become tender and that should put out its leaves, you know the summer is near.** It is a sign. Just what He got through describing about the signs of the times. They asked Him in one of their questions, *what are the signs of the times?*

Verse 33, the consideration, **In this way also, whenever you yourselves should see all these things, know that it is near at the doors.** So when you see these things happening know that His coming is near at the door, just like the fig tree bearing its leaves is a sign.

The Certainty of it all in verses 34 through 36. Jesus said, **Truly I say to you, never will this generation pass away, not until all these things have happened.** Now some people say that the word *generation*, it has been a popular teaching over the years, means forty years. So, the forty year generation - they say that the budding of the fig tree was Israel becoming a nation in 1948. And then you add forty years because of this generation, it is 1988 and that the Lord's coming will be January 1, 1989. The man who spearheaded this teaching - I went to his church on the very day, January 1, 1989, just to see what he was going to say if the Lord had not come according to his calculations. And, of course, the Lord did not come. And he says, "Well the figures in the Bible do not lie, but the figures of man are wrong." That is all he said.

The word *generation* does not mean *years*. In fact, we get our word *generate* from it. The Greek word is **γενεά** (*genea*), *to generate*. It means a race or kind of people that have been generated. So He is talking about the Jewish race, the Jewish people. **This generation shall not pass away until all these things happen.** God is going to protect His people.

Verse 35 says, **The heaven and the earth will pass away, but My words should never pass away!** Jesus said. **But concerning that day and the hour, no one has known, not even the angels of Heaven, except My Father only.** So nobody knows the exact day or the hour except the Father in Heaven. He is saying that this race or kind of people, that is the Jews, shall not pass away until all things be fulfilled. They are His elect or *chosen people* and He will fulfill His promises to them.

So He says, **Notice these things.** He gave the formula, He gave the system, when these things happen His coming is near. So He is telling the Hebrew and Jewish people, "Be ready." You do not know when He is going to come.

So the first point He really wants to establish for us here, in these verses, verses 32 to 36 is that His word will stand. What He says He will do. They will not fail. But now in verses 37 to 41 He wants the Jews to be ready.

In verses 37 to 39, The Condition, **But just as in the days of Noah, in this way also will be the coming of the Son of Man. For just as they were in the days before the flood: eating, and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. And they did not know until the flood came and took all away.** The word *took* is the word talking about removal for judgment, the flood took them all away. **In this way also will be the coming of the Son of Man.** So it was life as usual until the flood came. And it was sudden, it was quick, and it was unexpected. It took them away quickly. As soon as the door of the ark shut the rain started. We are not talking about a rainstorm. We are talking about the floods of heaven. In Genesis chapter 1 verse 6 it talks about the *rāqîa'* - the canopy around the earth where water was stored up in the heavens. And this canopy broke open and all the waters came. It was not a rainstorm. It was a flood, and it took everyone away as they were carrying on life as usual.

Matthew 24:40-41, The Conclusion. **Then two men will be in the field; the one is being taken and the one is being left; two women grinding in the mill; one is being taken, and one is being left.** The people who were taken, where are they taken to? I have struggled with those verses for years. Gone in both directions. But Luke chapter 17 verse 37 tells us that

they are removed for judgment. That event of *removed for judgment* into the valley of Megiddo is recorded in Revelation chapter 19 verses 17 through 21. They are removed for judgment. Jesus gathering all those who are going to oppose Him into the valley of Megiddo, a 200-mile valley, a 200 mile stretch of land, where these people are removed to, and drawn to, to set up to the attack against Christ when He comes.

Matthew 24:42-51, The Precaution Concerning the Coming of Christ. We have had The Precondition Before Christ, now we have the Precaution. Look at look at verse 42, **Watch, therefore, because you do not know in what hour your Lord comes.** He can come at any time. And this was for the Jewish people, not the church.

See the teaching of I Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 1 to 10 about being ready. If you have your study guide, turn over to ~~verse~~ page 10. We have I Thessalonians chapter 5 for you. He says, **But concerning the times and seasons, brothers, you have no need for it to be written. For you yourselves know accurately that the day of the Lord, as a thief in the night, comes in this way. For whenever they should say, Peace and safety! Then sudden destruction comes upon them, just as the labor pain to the one having a baby in the womb, and they should never escape.** So as soon as they say, *peace and safety*. See the first part of the tribulation period, the first three and a half years in the first part of that will be the antichrist helping the world unite amidst all of the tragedies that are going on. And he makes a covenant with the nations of the world, especially Israel, to help rebuild their temple. This is before he sets up his image in the holy of holies. And everybody says, "Peace and safety!" We have our man of the hour who is going to lead the world, especially the Jewish people, to peace and safety. He is going to bring an end to this chaos of the world. But that is when he turns on them and breaks the promise, breaks the covenant. So, **Whenever they should say, Peace and safety! Then sudden destruction comes upon them.** Why? Because he turns on them and sets up His image in the holy of holies. **Just as the labor pain to the one having a baby in the womb and they should never escape.**

Listen to this, I Thessalonians 5 verse 4 and 5. **But you yourselves, brothers, are not in darkness, in order that the day should overtake you as a thief.** It will not overtake you. Why? Because **You yourselves are all sons of light and sons of day; we are not of night, nor of the darkness.** Actually, the Bible says that the person who has received Christ is already ready when Christ comes. That is what makes a person ready, is to be born of the Spirit of God and to be saved. According to I Thessalonians 5, the readiness and the preparedness is having Christ. So you are already of the light. You are not of the darkness. It is not going overtake you as a thief, because you are saved. You have Christ.

Verse 6, **So therefore, we should not sleep, as also the rest do, but we should be watching and we should be sober.** So we should be different. We should be ready to go because we have Christ. **For the ones sleeping sleep by night, and the ones being drunk are drunk by night. But we ourselves being of day should be sober,** and then a quote from Isaiah 59 verse 17 **having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.** So we have already put those things on.

Verse 9 is a very important verse, **Because God has not appointed us for wrath,** not for His anger, **but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.** So we are of salvation, we are not under God's judgment. The tribulation period as we know it, as we have studied it in verses 4 through 31, is judgment. Judgment on the world for rejecting Christ, especially the Hebrew and Jewish people who rejected Christ as their Messiah. It is punishment. It is judgment. Those who are in Christ are not under God's judgment. We have been saved. We are in Christ Jesus and Christ Jesus lives in us. Again, **Because God has not appointed us for**

wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. The One having died on behalf of us, so that whether we should watch or we should sleep, we might live together with Him.

So back in Matthew chapter 24 at verse 42 where it says, **Watch, therefore, because you do not know at what hour your Lord comes.** If you do not have Christ, and especially if you are Jewish, you need to be watching, you need to be ready for Him to come, and not be left in your unbelief state.

The Caution in verses 43 and 44. **But know that, that if the housemaster, the King James says *good man, if the good man of the house, if the housemaster had known in what watch the thief comes, he would have watched and would have not allowed his house to be dug through. On account of this, you yourselves also become ready, because in that hour you think not, the Son of Man is coming.*** The term *think not* means *to presume*. In the hour in which you presume that he is not going to come, that is the time that He is coming. So, you need to be ready. You need to watch. You need to look for the signs and be ready.

In verses 45-51, The Comparison. **Who then is the faithful and wise servant whom his master appointed over his servants, to give to them the food in season? Blessed is that servant whom his master shall find doing in this way when He comes. Truly I say to you, He will appoint him over all of his possessions.** The faithful servant is that Jewish person who has received Christ and has been entrusted with the word of God to feed God's servants. His reward will be, **He will appoint him over all of his possessions. But if that wicked servant should say in his heart, My Lord delays to come, and should begin to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and to drink with the ones being drunk. The Lord of that servant will come in a day in which he does not expect and in an hour which he does not know.** So the wicked servant is the unbelieving Jew. It has nothing to do with the Gentiles. It is not talking about the church, the body of Christ. It is talking about these two servants; one is a faithful servant, one is unfaithful. One is faithful to the commission that God has given to the Jews to receive the Messiah and take that truth to the world. But they rejected their Messiah therefore they are the unfaithful. It is called *the wicked servant*. He is going about life as though the Lord is not coming, and he is not fulfilling His commission.

Verse 51, **And will cut him in two, and will appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** That is literally what they did was slaves who were unfaithful in their functions - they would be cut in two, the Greek word is the word (**διχοτομέω**) dichotomy - **cut in two and his portion is with the hypocrites.** *Hypocrites* again is the word (**ὑποκριτής**) hupokritēs that means *actor, someone who answers according to the script*. So your portion will be appointed with the hypocrites. We are talking about salvation itself here. For the hypocrites there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We are talking about warning to the Jews during this time, especially the preconditions and the precautions of the coming of Christ. They did not know when He is coming, but they have to be ready. The weeping and gnashing of teeth is the place of hell where the unbeliever will be. So there is a warning to be ready. But do not let anyone put a guilt trip on you. If you have received Christ that is what makes you ready, whether you are Jew or Gentile. Especially

now, we are in the time of the Gentiles, not the time of the Jews. In order to be saved and ready and do go be with the Lord one must receive Christ. Not accept Him mentally, but literally receive His Spirit into their life. And Christ will come and dwell there and that is what makes a person ready, that is what takes us to go be with Him when He comes, is Christ dwelling within us. Christ in you is the hope of glory, Paul said.

So next week we continue. Chapter 25 is full of parables and illustrations concerning the signs of the times, emphasizing to the Jews to be ready.

Let's close with prayer.