

Jesus and the last days

Matthew 24:1-51 25:1-46

The Olivet discourse is about the end to the Jewish age.

And then the age to come.

“Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

“For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

Matt 24:27

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the Lord of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”

Malachi 4:1

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”

Matt 24:36

Jesus and the last days

Instead of getting caught up in the endless speculation of men and their opinions of what they think should happen, let us understand what Jesus said would happen in the last days of the Jewish age.

Let Jesus be true or we are in deep trouble. When the king of kings and Lord of Lords speaks, everyone else must remain silent. Jesus Christ has told us what would occur at the end of the Jewish age. Matt 24:1-35

To insist He was incorrect because we have another theory is to say He is a false prophet and cannot be trusted. Since Jesus is true, everything else that tells us of end times events in the scriptures has to be in harmony with the teaching of Christ. We shouldn't be trying to harmonise the scriptures with our opinions.

True knowledge of the end times is only built on the rock of Jesus Christ. If we accept another way is possible we are left at the disposal of the fallible understanding of mere men who should be silent in His presence because they stand on sinking sand. Therefore what follows is a consideration of the Lord's words and purposely ignores all the speculation of men that can only cause confusion since they are not infallible and almighty.

When the first century church read these words of the Lord recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke's gospel, they didn't have to deal with the ignorance of the so called popular theology of the end times in the twentieth century and since. Our task is to grasp what God intended the faithful followers of Jesus Christ to understand in their day so they could be comforted in a time of unprecedented turmoil and tribulation.

To deviate from this path of trusting in the words of Jesus is to indulge in an unlucky dip of distorted speculation and obscure ideas to produce an outcome more suitable to the creature rather than the creator, so that God's word is not seen as revealing His wisdom but causes confusion.

Jesus clearly connects the tribulations in that day and His appearing in the same time frame. *"Truly I say to you, **this generation** will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."* Matt 24:34-35

Jesus was addressing His disciples, He used the pronoun ‘you and your’ 17 times, and this generation was used twice for the same purpose starting in Matt 23:36. “Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. ³⁷ “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. ³⁸ Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

Matt 23:36-38

At this time, Jesus's chosen personal Disciples still believed that the Messiah would overcome the Romans at that time in history, and set up the eternal the kingdom of God with Jerusalem as its Capitol. They thought these things concerning the destruction of the Temple and the end of that Age of rebellion would occur at the same time in their generation.

The establishment of Jerusalem as the centre of the kingdom of God in the world was the general belief of Israel not only the 12. Witness the turn around after going into Jerusalem shouting Hosanna, Hosanna, in the highest before Jesus was arrested, these many so-called disciples saw that Jesus displayed no power to resist or overcome the Romans, they quickly left Him.

Matt 26:56

When we have to consider what is meant in the scriptures, we must remember what is already declared has not been taken away, the curse of God that comes with sin will have its existence in our day. *“But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.”* Deut 28:15

God has decreed that the world would be cursed in the city; in the country; in their food; cursed in their offspring and the harvest, and with their livestock. The curse will be in coming in and going out. Everything will be cursed until destroyed. The curse will bring pestilence, and consumption and fever. The curse will bring suffering from sword and mildew will rot to their belongings. Rain will fail and the earth hardened. Enemies will defeat them and take them away. Their carcasses will be food to the birds and the beasts. The Lord will give you boils and tumours with scab and itch which you cannot heal. They will be struck with madness and with blindness and a bewilderment of heart. They will not prosper, and be oppressed and robbed continually. They will plant but not

eat of your crop. Their sheep shall be given to your enemies. Their sons and daughters will be given to other people. They will be driven mad by the sight of their calamity. The alien shall rule over them and they will go down lower and lower. He shall be the head, and you will be the tail. *“So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the LORD your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you.”*

Deut 28:45

All the parts of God’s word are interconnected with each other; nothing can be added or taken away.

Jesus’ teaching on the end of the age

‘Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.” 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?”’

Matt 24:1-3

The disciples ask Jesus two questions

1. *“Tell us, when will these things happen”*
2. *“What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”*

The second part is one question not two; it means ‘the sign of His coming at the end of the age.’ Mark’s gospel makes it clear that the disciples only asked two questions, not three as some wrongly suggest. *“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?”*

Mark 13:4

Who was Jesus speaking to in this discussion that needed to know what was going on? It is clear that Jesus speaks to those with Him, He says “you” 17 times, and “your” once, and once to ‘*be alert*’. He is not speaking to people in some future period but to those with Him at that time.

The answer to the first question: *“Tell us, when will these things happen,”* Jesus said these things will happen with **the generation** He was addressing. The phrase “this generation” found in refers to “this people”

and “this period of time.” *“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”* Matt 24:34

In the same way Jesus had already spoken. *“Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon **this generation.**”* Matt 23:36

The message was to those who were living at that time.

*“**You** will be hearing of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.”* Matt 24:6-8

These things have to happen before the His appearing. It was a common understanding in the Old Testament that before the Messiah came there would be anguish, birth pains, and the events of the day would be typical of distress.

1. There would be distress in the world at large. *“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,”* (v7) National rivalry would put kingdom against kingdom, and nation will war against nation.

2. Natural disaster will be common. *“In various places there will be famines and earthquakes.”* (v7) Jesus has inaugurated His kingdom but the benefits of His peace will not be known until His kingdom is consummated at the end of all time. These words of the Lord are a warning against false expectations that everything will be fine and we will all live in abundance and peace. We have His kingdom now in us but when He comes again we will enjoy the New Heaven and Earth.

3. There will be persecution of Jesus’ followers. *“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.”* (v9) *“If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”* John 15:20

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.” Matt 24:15-16

Abomination = Idolatry. Desolation = destruction. Judea = this generation. These things will take place in the lives of this generation.

4. There will be conflict between so-called followers. *“At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other.”* v10

5. The tribulation was going to be of great intensity. *“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”* (v22) The elect are the chosen ones of God, Israel. This verse is saying that not all will be killed. 100,000 were taken prisoner and enslaved.

The tribulation in Judah was such that if God had not intervened no Jews would have survived. When the Romans invaded Palestine, almost no one escaped. History records that 1.1 million Jews in Jerusalem were killed. There are even reports that famine was so bad that mothers had even roasted their own dead children for food. The Roman war went from the year 66 to 73 with a Roman army made up of six full legions. Each legion had 300 cavalry and 5,200 infantry soldiers. This is a total of 1800 cavalry and 31200 infantry soldiers.

“If those days had not been cut short,” (v22) ‘those days’ means all of those days in the period Jesus was discussing about the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus gives a warning about what they should believe concerning the things to come. *“See, I have told you ahead of time.”* v 25

Such as has not had happened and never will be

For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Matt 24:21

This is using Hyperbolic expression for effect; it is an exaggerated statement to make a point and not to be taken literally. Many similar statements are recorded in the Old Testament. But nothing since has surpassed the horror of what was experienced in Jerusalem at that time.

Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem. Daniel 9:12

The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled in all the territory of Egypt; they were very numerous. There had never been so many locusts, nor would there be so many again. Exodus 10:14

A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, so there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations. Joel 2:2

And because of all your abominations, I will do among you what I have not done, and the like of which I will never do again. Ezekiel 5:9

6. Many imposters will be claiming a personal anointing. *“Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many.”* (Verses 4-5) *“Many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.”*(v11) *“For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”* v24

There will be many who bring a message inconsistent with what the Lord teaches because they are self anointed. The prophets of old are not the prophets of the new covenant. The Prophets of the Old Testament had a special anointing to proclaim the words of God. *“Thus says the Lord.”* In the new covenant all elect believers are prophets taking the word of God to the world. There is no special role of prophet after the Apostles, for everyone has the anointing of the Spirit, and everyone is to bear witness to Christ.

There are no prophets of the old style in the Church. There exists no distinction in quality of the Spirit in the elect people of God. There are only differences in roles appointed by the Spirit who allocates gifts and ministries according to His will. The Church is built on the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, the rule is established and the role is now redundant. Instead Jesus calls for a cross and mutual suffering to be taken up by all for His sake. But many false teachers want a gospel of peace and comfort. The message of the many will compromise the word of God, so that the light they think they have will actually be darkness and wickedness will increase.

7. There will be a growing rebellion. *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.”* There will be a growing apostasy. *“At that time many will turn away from the faith.”* v 10

Turning away from the faith can be understood in terms of the Jews or so-called believers. Both Jews and unbelieving believers will not endure to the end when times of anguish and tribulation occur. Apostasy can be likened to put a snare (in the way), hence to cause to stumble, to give offense. Since those who stand firm are the saved, those who fall away were not really saved; they may have had a confession of faith but didn't produce the fruit of faithfulness. They were with us but not of us. *‘They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.’*
1 John 2:19

So we see that the apostasy of the Jews, many were not children of Abraham by faith. They were not of true faith, to be followed in kind by the apostasy of those who are in the church who are not of true faith.

8. *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”* v 14

“The whole world” is referring to the known world at that time because this is what God's word indicates happened during the life of Paul to give us a first century fulfilment of that prediction. *‘because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;’* *‘if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.’*
Col 1:5-6, 23

Again in the book of Romans: *‘First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you.’*
Rom 1:8-9

“Immediately after the distress of those days.” (v29) The end comes.

9. “*But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.*” v 6

Jesus’s Mount of Olivet discourse is about the great tribulation over four years (66-70) and then judgment of that day, at that time. (Matt 24:21) And the coming of Jesus is the final judgment day for Israel seen in the destruction of the temple. Jesus was speaking of what would happen when the Roman soldiers would invade Palestine. There would be war; many would be killed where they stand. (Matt24:6-8) By the year 70 AD Jerusalem would be destroyed along with the temple by the Roman Army.

Matt 24:2

Jesus was making a statement about His truthfulness when He said: “*when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away.*”

Matt 24:33-35

However the destruction of the Temple was not the end, according to Josephus, the siege of Masada by Roman troops took place from 73 to 74, at the end of the First Jewish–Roman War. This crushing of Masada ended in the mass suicide of the 960 Sicarii rebels, who were a splinter group of the Jewish Zealots, who, in the decades preceding Jerusalem’s destruction strongly opposed the Roman occupation of Judea and attempted to expel them and their sympathisers.

“*So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand.*” (v15) The Emperor worshipping Romans would enter Jerusalem and the Temple with their Eagle standard that represented Caesar who was to be worshipped. This is the desecration of abomination, another god to be worshipped in the place of Yahweh. The City of God and the Temple of God would be trampled under foot by pagans.

It was in those days judgment would appear. “*But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.*” Mark 13:24-27

No secret rapture to escape tribulation

“Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.” Matt 24:40-41

This is easily seen to indicate no escapes God’s judgment by looking to the context of what Jesus said. His coming is also with judgment. See the separation in verse 45 to 51, and then the whole of Chapter 25.

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.” Matt 24:29-30

“For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.” Matt 24:37

*“¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with **a shout**, with the voice of the archangel and with the **trumpet of God**, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”* 1 Thess 4:15-17

The Clouds show that God was in control

These events were not the doing of Romans, but Romans being used by God to judge the people of Israel just as He had used Babylon before. Then there would be *“the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky.”* Here in verses 29 to 31 we see apocalyptic happenings to verify His coming in judgment at that time.

“Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.” Joel 2:1-2

“What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”

Matt 24:29-31

In verse 29 Jesus begins to speak about of the sign of His coming. *“Immediately after the distress of those days.”* He is not talking about something that would happen thousands of years in the future, but *those days*. *“THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”* This image is also seen in Isaiah 13:10 and Isaiah 34:4, using the symbolic language of the apocalyptic judgment of ‘*all the nations*,’ particularly of Edom. In this verse it is about judgment on the religious and political powers in the destruction of Jerusalem.

This passage must be taken symbolically because not even a mad man would suggest that the stars will actually fall from heaven. *“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky”* (v30) the word ‘appear’ is not Parousia but phainó which means ‘to cause to appear’, to become evident. The sign of the Son of Man will become evident in the sky for those who had eyes to see. And if the stars falling from heaven is understood as symbolic, so is the coming of the Son of Man a symbolic reference. *“And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”*

Matt 24:31

For some clarity we read the Revelation of John which is the revelation from Jesus Christ written to the first century Christians. *‘Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.’*

Rev1:3

This scripture from John would have been read by those in ‘*this generation*’ in the first century, not by those thousands of years later.

'After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Rev 7:9-10, 13-14

Because John and Matthew use symbols as a means of presenting the message, we must not only pay attention to the image but also the ideas that the image is pointing towards. These dramatic images come through the mind of a prophet in the form of apocalyptic writings. The symbols are used to communicate ideas in a vivid and arresting manner to give us the understanding that would have been much more difficult with normal language.

"The SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory." Verse 30 doesn't tell us about Jesus coming to earth, but coming in the clouds to receive vindication and authority over the Jewish nation who had rejected Him. Jesus wasn't being deceptive, He told His disciples not to be deceived, because they were familiar with the Prophets his disciples knew exactly what the hand of God looked like when He came to judge the people for their wickedness.

When they saw the power of God at work, they were very well aware He had come to carry out His justice. The Old Testament was familiar with the idea of the Clouds when used in Dan 7:13 meant that the presence of the Lord. *"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven."* Dan 7:13

Further evidence from the Old Testament

For those who are familiar with the OT Prophets, this type of symbolic language was used frequently to describe God's judgment against the nations. *'Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the LORD of hosts In the day of His burning anger.'* Isa 13:13

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

Isa 34:4

'When I snuff you out, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light.'

Ezekiel 32:7

'Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine.'

Joel 2:10

Matt 24:29-31, Mark 13:24-27, Dan 7:13 and Isaiah 13:1-13, indicate that at the time of His judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple the presence of God was there to vindicate His verdict. *"And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."*

Dan 9:27

As the clouds represent the presence of God in prophecy, therefore, in a real sense Jesus was there. And we have the promise of His presence in a similar way when we carry out judgement in the church. *"Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."*

Matt 18:18-20

All that Jesus said would happen in the life of that generation did happen as He said it would. He can be trusted, to suggest that these things didn't happen in that generation is to suggest Jesus isn't Lord.

The coming of the Son in the clouds

"But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other."

Matt 24:29-31

This is not about the return of Christ at the end of the age of the Church. This is a Symbolic statement of the glory of God coming in judgement that was well known in the time of Christ and recorded in the Old Testament.

"Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."
Matt 16:28

Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."
Matt 26:64

Isa 13:3-5, 9-10

I have commanded My consecrated ones, I have even called My mighty warriors, My proudly exulting ones, To execute My anger. A sound of tumult on the mountains, Like that of many people!

A sound of the uproar of kingdoms, Of nations gathered together! The Lord of hosts is mustering the army for battle.

They are coming from a far country, From the farthest horizons, The Lord and His instruments of indignation, To destroy the whole land. Judgment on the Day of the Lord.

v9 - Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.

v10 - For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.

This was the judgement of Israel in the day of Isaiah.

Daniel 7:13-14

"I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him.

"And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

The coming in the clouds was not coming to earth, but the Son coming to the Father to receive His kingdom in glory. However, that does not mean that there are not going to be similar experiences from that time on. In fact the Bible tells us what happened then was just the beginning of birth pangs that would go on for many generations. Here in Matt 24 Jesus is addressing the generation of His day while we have a habit of thinking this as exclusively referring to a future generation, like ours or some people after us. Our day will come.

The word of God tells us He was there to verify His verdict. These things Jesus spoke of would happen in that generation. The seeming repetition of these apocalyptic symbols may well have an application in the future, but here the Lord is dealing with this generation. For now He is concerned with His disciples being ready.

Learn from the fig tree

‘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, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.’

Matt 24:32-34

The context to be applied to these verses is what has just gone before, referring to when the temple would be destroyed and the abomination of desolation and all the events that accompany the judgment of God. The issue is not that two people will be divided but that the coming of the Son of Man will be sudden and unexpected. The shoots show the fruit is on its way.

It is as if Jesus is saying these things of tribulation would happen first and then My appearing. Jesus said Jerusalem and the Temple are right on the point of facing judgment, and any reasonably sighted person could see that. These things are the scourging the country and then the judgement in the temple. It should be obvious to the disciples who are familiar with the growth of the fig tree that the end of the present age is at hand. This is confirmation the age of the Jews is over. The Olivet discourse is about God bringing an end to the Jewish age.

Be Ready for His **FUTURE** Coming

³⁶ *“But of that day and hour no one knows.”*

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 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, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.”

“Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.”

Matt 24:36-44

How does this apply to us, and how do we wait for the Lord's return. What are our future expectations and how well are we prepared?

Matt 24:1-35 shows us a generational expectation of the judgment of God on Jerusalem and the Temple. But from here on until the end of the discourse the expectation is obviously past as the Lord says at the end of the parable of ten virgins, *“Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”* (Matt 25:13) but with a future not yet fully determined, and therefore requires proper planning to prevent poor performance.

Therefore we can see that overall the Olivet Discourse deals with the now and the not yet. ‘The Now’ (when you see) is in reference to Jerusalem, and the ‘Not Yet’ as we wait to be with the Bride Groom. *‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’* The soon is replaced with patient waiting. In our waiting we should not wait as if nothing has changed, as if we can please ourselves. But we should also not wait as if we have received all that goes with the realisation of heaven now, as if we are not subject to the curse that remains on the world until the Lord returns.

The parable of the slaves

Matt 24:45-51

We must wait as faithful stewards who will give an account of our service to the Lord. *“Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.”* v45-46

But suppose the servant is wicked and abuses his fellows and indulges himself, because the master is taking too long. The master will assign him to the place of hypocrites where there is endless anxiety and torment.

Parable of Ten Virgins

Matt 25:1-13

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.” v1

We wait patiently because the celebration we look for may be subject to a long delay. As we wait we plan wisely, we keep ourselves in readiness, the Bridegroom will not come as quickly as we have expected or desire. Notice the bride as the Church is not mentioned here, so reading the church into this passage is unwarranted, but has a future application. The emphasis here is totally on the delay of the Bridegroom. The foolish virgins were not prepared for the groom to come at any time of His choosing. We must not allow current appearance to determine our agenda or preparedness. We must be prepared for a longer delay than expected. The rejection of the unwise virgins is not placed at the feet of the Bridegroom but on the shoulders of those who did not prepare adequately for His coming whom they had claimed to love.

Parable of the Talents or bags of gold

Matt 25:14-30

“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.”

The servants of the Lord are commissioned with large amounts of His assets to work on His behalf. Five talents or five bags of gold in those days' amounts to five million dollars today, Two bags is \$600,000. One talent or bag of gold is equal to \$300,000 today.

Therefore each slave has received considerable resources from the Master. The Master's assets are not a trivial matter. The Master decides on the talents, the servant is responsible for how they use what they have received. We can never sit down and feel satisfied as if what we have

belongs to us as our personal assets. A failure to utilise the Master's resources in pursuit of His advancement is the same as burying His assets in the ground, this will result in condemnation. *'So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

Matt 25:28-30

The Judgment, sorting the Sheep from the Goats Matt 25:31-46

"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left."

Matt 25:31-33

How can we tell the sheep from the goats? The sheep are those whose lives are deeply transformed by the gospel of the grace of Christ will serve the brothers and sisters of Christ as if they serve Christ Himself. *'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'* v40

The brothers of Mine are those who are in Christ. They are the ones who are likely to be most distressed by the actions of the world who are in opposition to the values of the kingdom of God. The use of brothers here doesn't exclude sisters, but they are the ones who will be persecuted by the world, those who are least appreciated and shunned because they will not compromise their devotion and obedience to the Lord. *"Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."*

Matt 12:49-50

When the separation takes place both the sheep and the goats are not surprised by the result, but surprised by the reason the Lord gives for His decision. The saved know they are saved but didn't see their work as gaining their salvation. They only did what their hearts dictated. *'For the love of Christ controls us.'*

2 Cor 5:14

The goats don't know that faith without works is dead, and works without faith is dead. The brothers did what came naturally because it pleased the Lord, the goats pleased themselves. The brethren no longer live for

themselves but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

2 Cor 5:15

Goats can do work, and from a distance they can be mistaken for the real deal, but they don't value the brothers and sisters of Christ enough to lay down their lives for them. However they don't go out of their way to provide for their practical needs. *"Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me. These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

Matt 25:45-46

'Whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.'

1 John 2:5-6

The love of Christ is all the motivation needed to live for Him and not ourselves. If His love motivates us, we will keep our lamps in working order. We will use the talents He provides so that His interests are advanced as we represent Him on earth. If we belong to Him, we will be faithful servants and feed His people in a way that pleases Him.

What's the take away for us? It's pretty simple really; if we are really grafted into the true Vine, we will produce the fruit of the Vine. His life will flow in our veins. Consequently we will love the brothers and sisters in the same way as the True Vine loves His chosen children. If we are not motivated to care for His family it would appear we probably aren't connected to Him and don't belong to His family.

Therefore we are living as goats and we have our life and interest devoted to other pastures. The issue with Jerusalem and the Temple was the judgment of God. The issue with those of us who live before He finally returns is the judgment of God, either to eternal punishment or to eternal life. In the same way the apostate Jews were judged in that generation, the visible church of believing unbelievers will be judged. Jesus is the same Son of Man coming on the clouds as yesterday. *"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."*

Rev 22:12

Are you ready?

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

'Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labour pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.'

1 Thess 5:1-3

'And He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father— to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.'

Rev 1:6-7

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