

## INTRODUCTION

- Still in the context of the question "when will these things take place?" in reference to the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem and Jesus' answer

## EXPOSITION

## I. THE PARABLE GIVEN – vv.29-30

- **29 Then He spoke to them a parable** – A parable is the usage of a common image or setting to compare it with something else to communicate some higher truth.
- **Look at the fig tree, and all the trees.** - The parable told is in the world of is related to the world of nature, a common usage by the Lord Jesus (wheat/tares, the soils, etc.).
- **30 "When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near.**
- In a relatively moderate climate with changing seasons, trees of various kinds that produce flowers and fruits (i.e. not evergreen) go through a cycle. When summer is coming, they bud and begin to produce flowers. This is an indication of the time, apart from the weather and someone telling you that what time of year that it is. The buds are a sign of what is about to happen.

## II. THE PARABLE APPLIED – vv.31-32

- **31 "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.**
- Throughout this chapter, I have sought to make a case for a distinction between the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in localized judgement (vv.7-24) and the coming of Christ in worldwide judgement (vv.25-27). The "these things" referred to are specifically a reference to the dismantling of the Old Covenant system of worship and the divine demonstration that a new age has come in God's redemptive plan. Jesus speaks with a "prophetic compression" which excludes the many things that are in between, and focuses on these two major events in relation to God's kingdom. This point is crucial in seeking to understand this text.
- By way of reminder, I suggest that we be careful and humble when it comes to the interpretation of prophetic passages. If anything is clear in relation to the NT fulfillment of OT prophecy, it is that things do not always happen as expected. There are some surprising fulfillments, and hindsight is 20/20. This should breed in us a tentativeness to be to certain about our interpretation of future events. It is not, as we will see, an uncertainty about the truthfulness of them, but rather a recognition of our lack of understanding. So what I have to say is with a real sense of this carefulness and lack of certainty on my part.
- When Jesus says "when you see these things", He is referencing the events of 70AD as witnessed by some of those that were present when He spoke these words. The events leading up to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem are like the budding of the trees, the sign that a new season has come. Israel will, in the rejection of the Lord Jesus as their promised Messiah, bring about a new season, a new era...the times of the Gentiles. This is Jesus' main point.
- When they see those signs, they should remember and know that the Kingdom of God is near. They are in the new chapter of God's redemptive story, and it is the last chapter before the end (though certainly a long chapter). All that needs to happen now is for the Gospel to spread through all the earth to claim for Himself a people of every nation to enter into His kingdom. After this, the end will come.
- **32 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place.**
- The bringing in of that new chapter through the signs which He has already spoken of will, according to this verse, happen within that generation. The "all things" Jesus refers to in this section are the events leading up to and including destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.
- These would happen before that generation would "pass away." This word means to cease to exist. So Jesus prophecies that within that generation these things would take place. It would not be a prolonged period of time, of 1,000's of years, but some of them would be witness to the reality of these tragic events.

## III. THE TRUTH CONFIRMED – v.33

- **33 "Heaven and earth will pass away**
- This phrase "heaven(s) and earth" is first used in [Gen1:1](#), and used throughout Scripture to identify the present form of creation. It is that which God has brought into existence by the Word of His power, the created realm.
- Jesus states a plain truth here, that the creation will pass away. It is the same word that is used for "this generation" in the previous verse. So in no uncertain terms, just like those living at that time have now ceased to exist, so the heavens and earth will also do so.
- This was first revealed in the Old Testament in passages like [Ps102:25-26](#)
- Look around you. Think about what you saw on the way to church this morning. Think of the things you have experienced as you have traveled. All of these things, says our Lord, will one day pass away and no longer exist.
- Now this has sometimes left Christians in something of a quandary (uncertainty or perplexity). There is something that doesn't seem right about God creating the world, our living in this world, and then all of it passing away. It seems like something of a waste. Also, it is a struggle to get excited about an existence of a non-material nature. What would it be like to be a bodiless spirit after having lived in our bodies for so many years and experiencing so many things? Is

- this what God intends? Is it God's purpose to scrap His original design of a physical universe and have us in a perpetual state of spiritual existence?
- Let's look at three verses in the NT that more fully flesh out what is meant by this passing away
  - Heb 12:26-27 while the nature of the Kingdom is not fully fleshed out here, there is a contrast between a kingdom that is to be shaken with that which cannot be shaken.
  - 2Peter 3:7-13 There is not merely a new heavens, but a new earth. In one sense, thought there is a longing to depart and be with Christ at death, this is not the end. It is to worship God in the context of a renewed world, with resurrected and glorified bodies (a part of that creation).
  - Revelation 20:11; 21:1
  - I have tried to emphasize the "positive" side of this truth. However, in the context Jesus is not emphasizing this as much as He is the temporary nature of men and creation. He is stating that everything that we see, touch, taste, hear, and smell are passing away. This being so, notice his next statement.
  - ***but My words will by no means pass away.***
  - While everything that surrounds us is uncertain and temporary (though often glorious), Jesus means to wean us off trusting in and putting confidence in these temporary things, and turning us to His Word.
  - What is important to note is that when the prophets spoke and wrote, they spoke with the authority of "thus says the Lord". But in one sense, the words they delivered were not their own. They entered in and spoke 1<sup>st</sup> person. Here Jesus goes further and makes the claim of the absolute certainty of His own words. This is important because it is a claim of deity.
  - Ezekiel 12:25-28 (previous prophecy of Israel's judgement) is an example of this. So Jesus claims, and speaks as the LORD about the destruction of Israel. Also see Isaiah 40:8; 1Peter 1:25

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#### APPLICATION

- Enjoy this world with the anticipation of the greater world to come.

*If there's a better world*

*And a brighter day*

*Even brighter than the one we're in*

*We'd all be fools to think*

*That it could be made*

*By the wills and the hands of foolish men*

*So Lord to You we give our deepest praise*

*And to You we sing our loudest songs*

*And while we live in the world that You have made*

*We hear it whisper of a world*

*Of the world that is to come (Rich Mullins)*

- While we enjoy, realize that these things are not our confidence. It must not be those created things, but the Word of God and the promised world to come. This life will always let down (vacations must end), but there is the hope and anticipation of the world to come.
- As hard as it is to say, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. is a confirmation that what Jesus said was true. The dismantling of the Old Covenant sacrificial system was climactic evidence that Jesus is the Messiah and Savior. Just as surely as Jesus prophesied that judgement and it came to pass, so He has prophesied another in which all of us will stand before Him to give an account.
- Are you ready for that judgement? Do you stand in the stained and unworthy garments of your own sinfulness, or are you cloaked with the righteousness of Christ?