

Matthew 24:32-36

Quick Intro: Great job last week, Tim! I was in Amarillo.

Back in our study... Please Open to **Matthew chapter 24** (Need a Bible? Raise your hand...)

- Context: **Olivet Discourse!** - questions about when & what (signs, arrival, end of age)
- Last Time: **End of the Great Tribulation** - **Stellar Shaking** (sun, moon, stars) **Awesome Arrival** (clouds, power, glory) **Great Gathering** (trumpet, angels, four winds)
- This Time: Jesus gives us a **parable** about discerning the **"signs of the times"**

Message Title: **Ripe for the Pluckin!**

- **The Season is Close** (verses 32-33)
- **The Promise is Sure** (verses 34-35)
- **The Day Is Unknown** (verse 36)

Imagine a farmer with an **orchard of fruit trees**:

- He knows when the fruit is beginning to get ripe.
- But he doesn't know the exact day they'll be picked just yet...
- He just knows the harvest is coming at some point soon!

Jesus uses this same imagery to teach us about His return.

The Season is Close (verses 32-33)

READ, PRAY

V. 32 - Now **learn** this **parable**

- **Learn** = the call for spiritual discernment
- **Parable** = we know we're **dealing with allegory** now (shifting from "literal")
 - **Parabole** (para = beside + ballo = throw) - To "cast alongside" (comparison!)
 - **Objects, stories, or symbols** - to help reveal a deeper truth.

V. 32 - From the **fig tree**

- **"Bring me some figgy pudding, bring it right here!" Ha!** (so demanding!) Also, they traditionally have raisins, not figs, just FYI... **Fig Newtons, instead!**
- Fig trees are among some of the most common in Israel. Oaks, olive, oak, pine, palm, "vines"
- In many verses in the Bible, the **fig** doesn't appear to have special significance.
- But there are **a handful of verses that connect** the **fig tree** to that of **Israel** (disciples = aware)
- In Duet. 8:8 they are associated with the **Israel's Promised "Land" blessings** (wheat, barley, vines, figs and pomegranates)
- In Hosea 9 they are **associated with ISRAEL, the "people"** - Hosea 9:10, NET - **"When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the wilderness. I viewed your ancestors like an early fig on a fig tree in its first season."**
- In Joel 1 - **warning of coming judgment on Israel** - repent or: "withered and dried up fig tree"

- In Jeremiah, it is used in language of **impending judgment on the people of Judah**. Jeremiah 8:13 - "I will surely consume them," says the Lord. 'No grapes shall be on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree...'"
- In Jeremiah 24:1-10 - "Basket of Good figs and Bad figs" - **The Israelites that would return!**
- **Most common connections to Israel** are the **"Fig, Olive, & Fruit of the Vine"** Here = **FIG**
- And in the New Testament, in Luke 13 - we see a parable where the **Fig Tree (ISRAEL)** is **given ONE LAST CHANCE** to produce (**"repent"** (the previous verse), if not, **"cut it down..."**)
- Then, **right after the Triumphal Entry**. **Jesus cursed the fig tree** (just the day before this!)
- Matthew 21:19 - "Seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, 'Let no fruit grow on you ever again.' Immediately the fig tree withered away..." = **Spiritual Bareness... National judgment...**
- Then, the next day, **Jesus announces to the leaders of Israel**, **"See! Your House is left to you desolate"** (Matthew 23:38)
- Even at the **end of the Great Tribulation period**, there's a Fig mentioned! Rev. 6:12-13 - "...behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black... and the moon became like blood... and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind." The very next chapter deals with the **sealed tribes of Israel**.
- **You must recognize all these connections to this particular tree and Israel!** (True Israel?)
- Now, granted, many theologians would say we're **reading too much into the Fig Tree and Israel**. Specifically because of the parallel account in Luke:
 - Luke 21:29-30 - "Then He spoke to them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near...'" - **All the trees**, implies the meaning has **nothing to do with the fig itself**
 - Since Luke states **other trees**, we have to give **merit to that interpretation**. (that **any other fruit tree could make the same exact point...**)
- Personally, I have **no problem with BOTH** being true. We're dealing with **a clear lesson** and an **illustrative parable**, which tends to have **symbolic & hidden meanings**. (especially since **the FIG is called out** (could have picked any others (cypress, mulberry, etc) but chose **the FIG**)
 - Which I think means, we're dealing with both: **Israel AND a simple end times lesson**.
 - Let's read the next part and give **both likely interpretations...**

V. 32 - When its **branch has become tender** and **puts forth leaves**, you know that **summer is near**

- Jesus wants us to **"know"** when a **new season** is coming upon the world.
- **Two ways of looking at this:**
- (1) Nothing to do with Israel, just a **simple agricultural analogy** (a farmer **knows by watching**)
 - When the leaves grow in the spring and the flower is budding and the fruit is getting ripe, we're getting close! Simple - even children know from watching...
- (2) Much to do with **Israel becoming a nation again**. (**Died in AD 70 - Born again in 1948**)
 - Israel bearing fruit again is a sign we're **near the time of harvest...** (Ezekiel 36-37 and Isaiah 11 both speak of **Israel's regathering in the last days** - Romans 11 as well)
- Again, given it's a parable, I believe **both are potentially true**.
 - The apparent meaning and the symbolic meaning...

V. 33 - So you also, when you see **all these things**, know that **it (HE) is near—at the doors!**

- **So you also (even so)** = means **"in this way..."** (**Likewise!**) - **It's application time now...**
- **When** = an **expression of time**. Remember, the disciples asked, **"WHEN?"** (Mt. 24:3)

- **All these things** - what things? **ALL (not just any one)** of the "**signs of the times**" listed in **Matthew 24** (wars, famines, earthquakes, false prophets, abomination, persecution, apostasy)
- **Here's the point:** When the "**signs of the times**" start happening (with more **intensity, frequency, and clarity**), we're **getting very close to Christ's return**.
 - **It = He** (there's **no subject attached to the verb "is"**) - translations vary on **it vs He...**
 - **Luke 21:31** - "Even so you, too, when you see these things happening, **recognize that the kingdom of God is near.**" - **A kingdom must have a king - His name is Jesus!**
- **Know (recognize)** = watch, learn, and understand by experience
- Jesus is asking us to **have discernment and be watchful** of the "**seasons**" (not the first time)
- **Luke 12:54-56** - "Then He also said to the multitudes, 'Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; (**Central Texas verse!**) and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, **but how is it you do not discern this time?**'" - **A spiritual weather report forecasting the coming storms upon the world!**
- **Like fruit that is ripe and ready to be plucked**, the **signs** of **Christ's return** are getting near.
 - **At the doors** - a figure of speech meaning **close or near...**
 - Can I just say, I do think we are **VERY CLOSE!** (**Harvest Time = Judgment & Sorting**)
- **James 5:8-9** - "...establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand... Behold, **the Judge is standing at the door!**" - Christ **stands at the door & knocks!** (Rev. 3:20)

The Promise is Sure (verses 34-35)

V. 34 - **Assuredly**, I say to you

- **Assuredly (Truly)** = **Amen** ("so be it" or "may it be so"). - **Most universally recognized!**
- Often times, **Amen Amen (verily, verily)** - **doubled for emphasis**
 - We use it **at the end**. **Jesus uses it upfront!**
- **Rev. 3:14, NIV** - "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of **the Amen**, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation." - **He is THE SUPREME AMEN!**

V. 34 - **This generation** will by no means pass away till **all these things** take place.

- **This generation** - Exactly **who** is Jesus referring to here? What **Generation** exactly?
 - Is Jesus still in **symbolic parable mode** or did He just transition **back to literal** here?
- **Heavy Theological Disagreement**. Let's break down some thoughts:
- **Generation** = "Genea" (of the same stock/family, several ranks of natural descent, successive members of a genealogy, a group of men with same pursuits, a perverse nation, an age range)
 - There are **verses in the Bible to support each** of these nuances...
 - That said, it's a **very DIVERSE word with lots of different usages**, leaving us wandering.
- **Here's the best options:** (all one one slide)
 - (1) The people **alive at time of sermon** (until AD 70) - most literal, which I have been favoring
 - (2) The **kind of people** in mind (Israel / the wicked) - Israel won't pass away UNTIL (being kept)
 - (3) People at the **time of the Fig Tree** (Israel as a nation) - within 80-100 years of 1948
 - (4) People alive at **Christ's Return** (signs of the times) - whichever generation that may be...
 - ***All of these are legit possibilities with merit.
 - It's possible **in some way He meant ALL** with much **symbolism & foreshadowing (dual)**

- **Given the context** of the verses that came just before all of this (signs of the times): world wide unprecedented tribulation, universal cosmic signs, and gathering of God's people at harvest time, **I think it's referring to options 3 or 4**, (possibly those thoughts are even connected)
 - **"This generation"** (with the demonstrative pronoun) points to the same generation that **"sees all these things" in verse 33**. Since the full scope of **"all these things"** includes **eschatological elements**, "this generation" must be a future end-times generation.
 - **But my main reason for this approach** is that most usages of **Genea** in the Gospel of Matthew are **"qualitative, not quantitative" (and negative)** (to what shall I compare this generation? **"wicked & crooked generation"** | **"evil & adulterous generation"**)
 - **Spiritual State**. The fact that **they will "pass away"** adds intrigue to the **final wicked group on earth** (which ties to the ideas of **Noah and Lot** (next week))
- **Recognized at Pentecost** when the church age began - Acts 2:40 - "And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.'"
 - ***The evil, unbelieving, adulterous Christ rejecting generation, will pass away into eternal destruction at the time the whole world passes away.

V. 35 - **Heaven and earth** will pass away...

- At the time of that generation - there will be **cosmic upheaval**.
 - **Heavens** (skies and universe) + **Earth** (which makes simple sense to us)
 - Our world as we currently know it will one day cease to exist... **(after Christ's return)**
- Rev. 20:11 - "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them." - **all elements judged!**
- 2 Peter 3:10, CSB - "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief; on that day the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, the elements will burn and be dissolved, and the earth and the works on it will be disclosed [burned up]..."

V. 35 - **But My words** will by no means pass away... The Word of God is **unshakable!**

- 1 Peter 1:24-25 - "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, **But the word of the Lord endures forever.**"
- Buildings, empires, presidents, kings, statues have all crumbled... Yet **not** the Word of God
- We read 2 Peter a minute ago about the heavens and earth dissolving, let's pick up...
- 2 Peter 3:11-13, CSB - "...since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, it is clear what sort of people you should be in holy conduct and godliness as you wait for the day of God and hasten its coming. Because **of that day**, the heavens will be dissolved with fire and the elements will melt with heat. **But based on His promise**, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells."
- Yes, the heavens will be shaken (v. 29) but the promises of God are Yes & Amen (2 Cor. 1:20)
- **In context**, Jesus' words are eternal and trustworthy, **guaranteeing the certainty of His return**. And eventually, the creation of a new glorious heaven and earth. **Garden restored!**
- Jesus said He would give His life as a ransom for many, and **HE DID**
- He said He would rise from the grave, and **HE DID**
- So When Christ says He is going to return to make all things new, **HE WILL**

Illustration: Antarctic, British explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton left a few men on Elephant Island (1916), **promising he would return**. Later, when he tried to go back, huge icebergs blocked the way. But suddenly, as if by miracle, an avenue opened in the ice and Shackleton was able to get through.

His men, ready and waiting, quickly scrambled aboard. Contemplating their narrow escape, the explorer said to his men, "It was fortunate you were all packed and ready to go!" His men replied, "We never gave up hope. Whenever the sea was clear of ice, we rolled up our sleeping bags and reminded each other, 'He may come today.'" One day, Jesus Christ will return to take all believers with Him.

But a big question in our passage is: WHEN?

- That's one of the disciples' OG questions that kicked this whole thing off!

The Day Is Unknown (verse 36)

Okay, so we've got a big mystery and dilemma here (no clear consensus...)

- Jesu just told us to discern the times (Parable of the Fig Tree & Luke 12: weather rebuke)
- Now, he says, you can't know the time...
- And, as we will see next week, the time of His return will be like the days of Noah = "business as usual" - but everything we've just read in Matthew 24 reads "business is not usual" (greatest tribulation the world has ever seen, or will ever see again (v. 21))
- Further, if you believe in a future 70th week of Daniel (which I do), and you simply count down using the days given in Daniel & Revelation (either from the peace treaty of Antichrist with Israel or the Abomination of Desolation), then you do know the day of Christ's return (1260 days (Dan 9 and Rev 12), 1290 days & 1335 days (Dan. 12)).
 - What are we to make of all this? Is this a riddle or paradox or something?
 - You see the challenges and complexities, don't you?

V. 36 - But of that day and hour

- Peri de = The Greek transitions here "but concerning..." leads to a new or additional thought
- Of what day and which hour? Of the day and hour of Christ's return! (or, the rapture?)
 - If Christ is referring to "the rapture" here, it's certainly not explicit & veiled.
 - A pre-tribulation rapture would make sense of how you could not know the day or hour. This solves the "business as usual" problem, and "not knowing the day" problem. But are we eisegeting that in the text?
- Or, is Jesus speaking in GENERAL, but not specific terms in regards to all the end times stuff to come? It could be that the term "that day" and "[that] hour" are synonymous terms with "The Day of the Lord" (sometimes narrow (parousia), sometimes broad (full 3.5 yrs of Great Tribulation))
- So, let's work through these verses as they are written before we conclude anything...

V. 36 - But of that day and hour

- That (Ekeinos) = specific (not just any) - Jesus is getting at a specific event.
- In which we cannot know the Day and Hour (exact timing) (MUCH on this next week)
- Some have said, "he didn't say the 'year'" - and have tried numerous times to set "years"
 - The Great Disappointment, Jehovah's witnesses, LDS, Y2K, Aztek, Mayan, etc. etc.
 - That's all heresy and an abuse of this passage.

V. 36 - No one knows

- You know what no one means? ... NO ONE! (even intriguing Beresheet prophecies, and Day is 1,000 year prophecies - we need to be humble & careful) Even Rabbi's warned against this.

V. 36 - Not even the angels of heaven

- Even supernatural, transcendent powerful beings who are in close proximity to the Father
- How can men possibly think they can predict the timing of Christ's return, if not the angels?
 - They even play a part as the reapers at the end of the age, and yet they do not know!

V. 36 - [Nor the son]

- This phrase is in most translations (not NKJV) - due to some manuscript differences.
- However, the parallel account in Mark 13:32 is included in all manuscripts and translations, so we know this was said. But, it's mind-blowing to think about!
- If Jesus is God, how could He not know when He would return?
- Phil. 2:6-7, NIV - "[Christ Jesus] who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." - hypostatic-union!

V. 36 - But My Father only.

- No one would argue that (He knows the beginning from the end!)

This whole idea is even repeated again to the disciples at Christ's ascension:

- Acts 1:6-7 - "When they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.'" - A few things to mention:
 - (1) Jesus did not say no to restoring the kingdom to Israel (Israel will be saved)
 - (2) In His resurrected, ascending form, he did not say that he no longer knew
 - (3) We're not to know the exact Chronos or Kairos (placed together = it deals with specific periods or measurements of time)
- This lines up even with OT Theologies: Deut 29:29 - "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever..."

My conclusion (until this point) - It's best to look at this language as referring to the return of Christ, for sure. And possibly, even a pre-tribulation rapture being inferred here (more on that next week)

- I think every generation is meant to think it is imminent! (even 2,000 yrs ago)
- Romans 13:11-12 - "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand..."

One last thought about this (and I am not saying this to dismiss that we should not be setting dates - WE SHOULD NOT), but it might not have to do with date setting per se. But one point Jesus could be making here is that "the world" does not know the day or hour. It will come upon them like a thief...

- 1 Thess. 5:1-4 - "Concerning the times and the seasons.. you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief..." (next week's message will clarify this further...)

CLOSING:

The point of everything we've looked at today? Three of them: (all on one slide)

- **The Season is Close** (We're to be discerning the "signs of the times") - generally, we can see...
- **The Promise is Sure** (Christ's Word / His Return will come to pass) - Amen, assuredly!
- **The Day Is Unknown** (We're to "always be ready" for His Arrival) - date unknown, but imminent!

(parallel passage)

Mark 13:33 - "Take heed, watch and pray; **for you do not know when the time is...**"

- **To the unbeliever** - you do not know - take this seriously **(GOSPEL - ALTAR)**
- **To the believer** - Be on guard. Be alert. Stay alert. Watch & pray - Remember His sacrifice!

Communion

Matthew 26:26 - "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, '**Take, eat; this is My body.**'"

Matthew 26:27-28 - "Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For **this is My blood of the new covenant**, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"

Matthew 26:29 - "I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on **until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.**"

PRAY