

"The Olivet Discourse"

Matthew 24-25

Part 18

Introduction: Last week in our study of the Olivet Discourse we worked our way through Matthew 24:32-35.

Notice Matthew 24:32-35

Last week we looked at the meaning and the application of this parable which Jesus spoke to His disciples. Because of some of the questions presented to me about this parable I think it would be really good to review a few things which I taught you last week. But before I do let me again explain that as we move on from Matthew 24 there are 2 points we must keep in mind. In the remaining verses of the Olivet Discourse Jesus is going to make practical application concerning His 2nd coming. The focus of the remaining part of our Lord's teaching here will be based completely upon what He said in Matthew 24:27-31. As we continue Jesus will focus upon the 2 points which we must keep in mind:

1. Expectation
2. Preparedness

These 2 thoughts will take us from Matthew 24:32-25:46.

I. Expectation

Here in Matthew 24:32-35 Jesus will focus upon "Expectation". He teaches about living in expectation by teaching His disciples a parable and it is the Parable of the Fig Tree.

Now last week I told you that many want to take this parable and say that the fig tree is Israel and the tender budding branches and leaves represent revival in Israel. Therefore, many teach that Jesus gave this parable so that we would know to keep an eye on Israel and when we see Israel coming back to their land and we see the rise of Judaism then we will know that the return of Jesus is near. There are many problems with this teaching and I want to explain those problems again.

1. **You cannot “spiritualize” a parable. By that I mean you cannot say that something in the parable represents this or that unless Jesus Himself tells us it is so. If you spiritualize the parables then you will back yourself right into a corner with no way out. Let me show you what I mean.**

Luke 21:29-31

²⁹ *And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;*

³⁰ *When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.*

³¹ *So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*

Here we can see what I mean by a problem. If the fig tree represents Israel then what about all the other trees, what nations do those trees represent? You cannot just ignore what Luke tells us.

One of the first things I was taught by Pastor Ritchey when I started teaching was the danger of spiritualizing parables. You can make an application with the parable but you cannot be dogmatic when it

comes to saying this represents that or this represents something else. If Jesus says it does then it is so but if He does not then we have no right to spiritualize.

With that in mind to be dogmatic and say the fig tree represents the nation of Israel is to say something that Jesus never said.

2. Not every time the fig tree is mentioned in the Bible does it speak of Israel. Let me show you some verses where it does not speak of Israel.

Mark 11:12-14

¹² And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

¹³ And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

¹⁴ And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

The next day He explained what the cursing of the fig tree represented.

Mark 11:20-26

²⁰ And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

²¹ And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

²² And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

²³ For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

²⁴ Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

²⁵ And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

²⁶ But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

This is just one example. Another passage is in Judges 9:10-11. So you can see that the fig tree does not always refer to Israel in the Bible. So to be dogmatic about the Parable of the Fig Tree is to say something the Bible does not say.

Now as I said last week Jesus used the fig tree in Matthew 24:32-35 to teach those who will be on the earth during the tribulation that when they see the events of Matthew 24:4-31 begin to unfold then they will know that the Kingdom is very close.

Notice Matthew 24:34

When Jesus referred to "this generation" He was referring to the generation who will be alive during the Great Tribulation. When He speaks of "this generation" it is a prophetic reference. It is not speaking of the generation which His disciples were part of but He is speaking of the future generation that will be on the earth when the tribulation begins. This same thing can be seen in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 53:3-4

³ *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

⁴ *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

Isaiah uses the word "**we**" but it was prophetic. These verses speak of what happened at the cross when Jesus died and Isaiah was not there. But he uses the word "**we**" to describe the thoughts of those who in the future would stand at the foot of the cross as Jesus died for their sins. So the word "**we**" is prophetic just as the term "**this generation**" is also prophetic.

Before we go to the next point there is something else which I need to say. There are those who say this fig tree is Israel and that we are to watch Israel very closely in order know where we are in God's prophetic calendar. Let me just say there are 2 problems with that:

- 1. We are not to be looking for Israel to be revived but we are to be looking for our blessed hope.**

Titus 2:11-13

¹¹ *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,*

¹² *Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;*

¹³ **Looking for that blessed hope**, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

The "blessed hope" is the rapture of the church.

- 2. The parable of the fig tree does not pertain to the church because we will not be here. This message is for those who will be alive during the Great Tribulation.**

II. Preparedness

Now as we move on into the next verses Jesus is going to emphasize the need for those who are alive during the Great Tribulation to be prepared for His return.

Notice Matthew 24:36

This verse can be seen as the reason for those of the tribulation to be prepared. The reason is because no one knows but the Father knows the day or the hour of when Jesus will return to establish His Kingdom here on this earth.

Application:

I just need to remind you that this verse refers to the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ to the earth at the end of the Great Tribulation. No one will be able to pin point the day or the hour. In the same way no one knows when the rapture will happen. People spend so much time looking at the stars, or trying to find secret codes in the Bible to determine the rapture but the bottom line is that they do not know when it will be.

There are many predictions as to when the rapture will happen but the truth is we do not know. If you remember Harold Camping he was always setting dates and he missed everyone. Do not get caught up in those who set dates. Get far away from them.

Now Jesus will go on and point to the people of Noah's day to show how dangerous it will be for those in the tribulation to be unprepared.

Notice Matthew 24:37

Here in this verse our Lord points to the days of Noah and how the people were unprepared for the flood which was the judgment of God. Jesus tells us here that it will be the same way when He returns at the end of the great Tribulation.

Notice Matthew 24:38

Now our Lord places the people of Noah's day under a micro scope and allows us to get a glimpse of their hearts. He tells us they were eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage right up until the day that Noah entered the ark.

I believe there is a twofold meaning here:

1. They were going about their everyday business and they ignored all the warnings which God had given to them.
2. When Jesus says they were eating and drinking I believe the spiritual picture here is that they were living for the appetites of the flesh.

I believe they were so caught up in living to satisfy their own sinful desires that they did not want to hear or see the warnings which God gave to them. What were the warnings?

1. Noah's preaching.

2 Peter 2:5

⁵ And spared not the old world, but saved **Noah** the eighth person, **a preacher of righteousness**, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

2. Enoch's prophecies.

Jude 1:14-15

¹⁴ And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

¹⁵ To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

3. God's grace.

Genesis 5:27

²⁷ And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died.

Methuselah's name meant "when he dies it will come". He was the son of Enoch and apparently Enoch was given insight when Methuselah was born and he knew he would live until the judgment of God came.

Methuselah died the very year the flood came and he lived longer than anyone else which was an extension of God's grace. The people of Noah's day ignored all of the signs and the warnings which God gave.

Now let us get back to Matthew.

Notice Matthew 24:38-39

The people of Noah's day were all caught up in the appetites of the flesh and they missed their chance to enter the ark. Then the flood came and took them all away. **Now keep in mind that the flood took away the ungodly not the righteous!**

At the end of verse 39 Jesus tells us at the end of the Great Tribulation it will be the same way. The people of the Great Tribulation will be caught up in the appetites of the flesh and they will refuse to heed to the warnings which God will give to them.

Now in the next verses Jesus is going to give an illustration of what will happen.

Notice Matthew 24:40-41

During the Great Tribulation 2 will be in the field and one will be taken and the other left. Two will be at the mill and one will be taken and the other left.

First of all let me correct a false teaching that is very much accepted in our day. This is not the rapture! It cannot be because it will occur at the end of the Great Tribulation. The church will not be here. This is all taking place in the 70th week of Daniel and it pertains to Israel and not the church. Then what does this mean when one is taken and another is left? Remember who was taken away by the flood of Noah's day? It was the ungodly. At the end of the great Tribulation when Jesus returns there will be many that will not be prepared and they will be swept away in judgment. **Now listen! Those who are left are those who will be saved and prepared and they will enter the Kingdom.**

Let me support this with a parable which Jesus had told previously.

Matthew 13:47-50

⁴⁷ *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:*

⁴⁸ *Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.*

⁴⁹ **So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, [One shall be taken and the other left (see Matthew 24:40)]**

⁵⁰ *And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

This parable makes it very clear that those who are taken away in Matthew 24:40 are the wicked. Therefore those who are left will be those who are saved and they will enter into the Kingdom. Think about something; if this was a rapturing away of the saved then who would be left on earth to go into the Kingdom?

Conclusion:

Next week we will continue to look at this text because there is much more to see here. But as I close let me just say this helps us to see 2 important points:

1. Before we make an application of a verse we must know the context of the verse! It is dangerous to just pull a verse and make an application. We must know the context!
2. No matter what you are taught be sure it is backed up with Scripture and be sure you search it out. Never just believe something because I taught it or someone else you know taught it.