

Jesus' Parables in Chronological Order

Parable #41 — Matthew 24:32-35 — Signs From a Fig Tree

³² “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁴ I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The Day and Hour Unknown

³⁶ “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴² “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Parable #42 — Matthew 24:45-51 — Wise and Wicked Servants

⁴⁵ “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷ I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ ⁴⁹ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. ⁵⁰ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹ He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Parable #41 — Matthew 24:32-35 — Signs From a Fig Tree

1. “Signs From a Fig Tree” is one of only six parables repeated in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. What does this tell us?
2. In Verse 24:33 and 34, what does “all these things” refer to?
3. What are some current examples of false prophets deceiving people?
4. In Verse 24:33, what does “it” in the phrase “it is near” refer to? (Luke 21:31)
5. In Verse 24:34, what does “this generation” refer to? Do you feel as though you are in the generation that Jesus speaks about?
6. Who knows when the end times will come? (24:36)
7. What does it mean for you to “keep watch” (24:42) or “be ready” (24:44)?
8. What would you do if you knew that a thief would try to rob your home tonight?
9. If a non-Christian looked at your life today, would he have any reason to accuse you of not believing of the imminent return of Christ? How can you have a sense of expectation about the imminent return of Christ?
10. What would you do if you hired a house sitter/caretaker to watch your home and children, left for a week-long vacation, and then returned a day early to find that your caretaker had neglected your kids, trashed your house, and ignored your other instructions?
11. But do we really have to worry about being ready for the end *today*? Only a few signs of the end times have appeared. The second coming of Christ is probably a good way off. You’ve put the past behind you and you’re making progress with your life. You’re not doing anything really bad today. You’re entitled to a little fun today, aren’t you? Tomorrow is another day.
12. In what ways are you *not* ready to face the Lord *today*?

Parable #41 — Matthew 24:32-35 — Signs From a Fig Tree — Leader's Notes

2. “All these things” refers to everything Christ just talked about: wars, famines, earthquakes (24:4-8), persecution of Christians (9-10), false prophets (11), the abomination that causes desolation (15), false Christs (24), the need to flee because of the Great Tribulation (16-28), and the stellar events (sun darkened, no light from the moon) of verses 29-31. All those things will signal the nearness of Christ's return, just as a tree with new shoots signifies that summer is coming.

4. Jesus was referring specifically to God's kingdom when He said, “You know that *it* is near...” When Luke relates the parable, he specifically says, “you know that the kingdom of God is near.”

5. “This generation” does not refer to the disciples, not to the Jewish race, not to the nation of Israel, and not to those who reject Christ.

The new leaves on the fig tree are analogous to the signs preceding the second coming. The phrase “this generation” clearly refers to the generation that is alive at the time those signs are fulfilled. Jesus was saying, “The generation that sees the signs of the second coming will not pass away until I return.” That was Jesus' answer to the disciples' question of how much time would pass between the sign of His coming and His actual return. So once the birth pains begin (Matt. 24:8), everything else will happen in rapid succession. Elsewhere Scripture specifies that the tribulation will last for seven years (Dan. 9:27—each week in Daniel's seventy-week prophecy is seven years long). It's a time period known as Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7). In the book of Revelation we learn that the worst part of the tribulation will be during the last three and a half years (12:14), which is 1,260 days (11:3) or forty-two months (13:5). Jesus referred to that period as the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21). It's beginning will be marked by the abomination of desolation (Matt. 24:15-21).—John MacArthur