

This Generation Shall not Pass

Matthew 24:34

After denouncing the scribes and Pharisees for the final time, He told His disciples that Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed. To a Jew, that was the center of all moral thought and life. Stunned, the disciples asked Jesus three questions:

1. When shall these things be?
2. What shall be the sign of thy coming?
3. What shall be the sign of the end of the world?

Jesus answered each question *individually*. He then drew their attention to vital Danielic ties that would make clear significant way mark issues at the end. Finally, Jesus made several unusual *summation statements* to develop a perspective that would help them know *exactly when* these issues would become urgent.

“Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming. He mingled the description of these two events. Had He opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves. When He referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, His prophetic words reached beyond that event to the final conflagration in that day when the Lord shall rise out of His place to punish the world for their iniquity, when the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. This entire discourse was given, not for the disciples only, but for those who should live in the last scenes of this earth’s history.”¹

Summation Statements

Let’s look at *two* of His summation statements.

“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see *all* these things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors.” Matthew 24:32-33.

There is buried in these two short verses a wealth of information that Jesus is conveying. When new tender branches start to grow in the early spring with small leaves, one knows that summer is near. Jesus did not say, “Figs will soon be ready to eat.” He introduces a *timing* metaphor. Intriguingly, the disciples questions were *timing* concerns also.

When the tender shoots of the fig tree start to appear with leaves, you know a *season*, a *time period* is just around the corner. Why? Because when *one sign* occurs (the tender branches), others will follow – leaves, buds and fruit. When that sequence of signs has occurred, the summer *season*, a specific time, will have arrived. Unless any disciple or follower of future

¹ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 628.

generations would miss the point, he said (here's another timing insert), "when ye shall see *all* these things, know that it is even at the doors." What things? The signs Jesus gave in answering the three questions of the disciples.

Once the signs would begin, they would occur close enough that they could *all* be seen at one time. He didn't stop there. Another summation point is made:

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Matthew 24:34-35.

A *generation* – *genea* (ghen-eh-ah') [1074] – in the context of Jesus' use of this word suggests "the contemporaries," "those living at that time." The people who are living when these signs *begin* will see them *all* finished. Summer will be here. All the signs He shared with the disciples will occur. The end will come, and Jesus will be here (Matthew 24:27).

Jesus Now Answers the First Question

"When shall these things be?" After giving specific warning against deception and misinterpreting "wars," He responds to this specific query in verses 7 and 8.

"For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." Matthew 24:7-8.

Four things would occur *together*: extensive wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes. Lest we trivialize this (Jesus certainly didn't mean it that way), these four signs would be significant enough that they would impact the whole world – measurably! Is that happening now? Let's summarize what is occurring:

1. **Wars** – Since the 1700's war has taken on global dimensions. Currently, there are 83 wars going on in the world, 63 of which are sectarian. Add to this the growing global threat of terrorism, our world is now dealing with woes of an unprecedented nature. Terrorism has killed over 1.5 million people since the 1990's.
2. **Famines** – The past twenty years have been the worst in history. In a world of plenty, 3 million have died in North Korea, 3 million in Sudan and a similar picture is shaping up currently in Uganda.
3. **Pestilence** – 32+ million people now have AIDS. In the past 25 years, 7 million have died.
4. **Earthquakes** – The Catholic Church has the best global natural disaster data center in Belgium – *Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disaster*. Look at one of their graphs in this issue under "**Calamity Bulletin** (p. 23)." We have moved into phase four when the exponential curve is going nearly straight up.

Have we reached a time of sorrows? Without question. The issue we must reckon with in looking at Biblical information: "Has a sign begun, a trend started that will continue until Jesus Comes?" There is *no solution* to the wars now in progress, the AIDS epidemic, the crescendoing trend of earthquakes, natural disasters and famines. A trajectory has been set,

its vector is on target, its momentum accelerating. A time of sorrows has come to this earth.

We can expect soon the rest of the signs Jesus so carefully outlined to occur – *in this generation*. The tender twig has now grown into a fully leafed branch.

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