

Lesson #25- Matthew Chapter 24 Questions for Discussion (With Help for Teachers):

1. In chapter 24 we find what is commonly referred to as the Olivet discourse. What led up to Jesus' prophetic teachings concerning His return and what do you think are the implications of the destruction of the temple?

Help for Teachers:

Verse 1 states that "Jesus went out" and that He "departed from the temple". Never again would Jesus enter that temple made with human hands (though as Jesus hung on the cross God ripped open the veil to the holiest place), the icon and pride of the Jewish nation, the symbol of their religiosity, which by their self-righteousness and rejection of Him, the King, had become a "den of thieves".

When Jesus departs the beauty and glory and worth departs with Him, and nothing is left but impending destruction, be it the temple or a nation or a person. The disciples saw the temple as full of glory and point it out to the Lord. Maybe they were fascinated with it because, being from Galilee, they rarely saw the temple and its grandeur, or maybe having already heard Him speak of its destruction and knowing the implications that this held for the nation, they were hoping that perhaps there could be a reprieve. In either case, they point it out for Jesus to look at.

As the glory of the King and High Priest of the temple now departed from the temple, it departed from the people that the temple was for, national Israel. The church in the wilderness that Israel was, having rejected her Messiah, was now rejected by God, as Jesus established the New Testament church from all nations and tongues and peoples, Jews and gentiles alike, all that are called and chosen, "The Israel of God".

2. The disciples have three questions for Jesus following His declaration that the temple they so loved and admired would be utterly destroyed. Which of the three questions did Jesus not answer and why do you think He didn't provide that answer?

Help for Teachers:

Jesus provided no direct answer to their question of "when", but gave them signs to be aware of, that they would be ever prepared for His return and the end of the world. Jesus gave them warnings of deceptions to avoid. Concerning the destruction of the temple, which was the provocation for this block of teaching, Jesus did however give them a *time parameter* and instructions for how to react as they saw events unfolding. Like much of Old Testament prophesy, it seems there is often close fulfillment and farther future meaning to the same prophesy.

It is apparent and consistent with other passages of Scripture that God has intentionally withheld the exact timing of our Lord's return. It is best and sufficient for us to know that He is returning and to anticipate that it could be at any time, to the end that we will always be working and prepared. Two thousand years ago, that apostles anticipated an imminent return of Jesus and urged readiness among the flock. Though Jesus has still not returned, His coming is still sure, and we are immensely closer. Knowing all this, what manner of people ought we to be?

3. Verses 4-31 answer the disciple's questions about signs... the signs of Jesus' coming and the signs of the end of the world. Additionally, though He doesn't tell them when, He tells them what to look for concerning the destruction of the temple.

Discuss these verses and consider:

- Has the prophesy already been fulfilled? (many apply the entire Olivet discourse to end-time events)
- In what historic events might some of these prophesies have been fulfilled?
- What important applications can we make for us today

Help for Teachers:

In the study of end-time prophesy (eschatology), it is helpful to remember that the Lord didn't give us all the answers. There are three major schools of thought, mostly wrapped around how Christians have viewed the millennium (this term is not found in Scripture but is applied to the prophesied thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints). Within these major views are further divisions of interpretation. The three major views are as follows:

- I. **Amillennialism-** This interpretation holds that the thousand-year reign is not literal, but allegorical (the number), representing a large block of time. In this view, the millennial reign began immediately after Christ ascended and continues today, as believers that have and are dying presently rule and reign with Him from heaven, so reducing the influence of Satan such that the gospel can effectively reach all peoples and God's eternal purposes be accomplished. This view holds that Revelation 20 is being fulfilled now. Advocates of this position contend that the Matthew 28 commission supports this, where Jesus says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth", meaning that He reigns now over earth from heaven with His saints that have died and went to be with the Lord. The age will end with His return, at which time there will be a bodily resurrection of the believers and they will be reunited with their spirits. There will also, at that time, be a

resurrection of the unbelievers, who will face judgement and eternal condemnation in the lake of Fire. We will then enter the eternal state.

- II. **Post-millennialism-** In this view, Christ will return after the millennium. According to this idea, the progress of the gospel and the influence of the church over this world will progressively increase to the extent that society will become more conforming to God's standards, which will gradually usher in a millennial (though not necessarily an exact 1000 years) reign of peace and righteousness on earth, after which Christ will return and the resurrections of believers and unbelievers, and the judgement of the latter will occur. We will then enter the eternal state. Of the three positions, this seems to me the least conforming to what we know the Bible to teach.
- III. **Pre-Millennialism-** This view holds that Christ will return before the millennial reign occurs. Advocates of this position are typically divided into two camps.
 - a) **Classic or historic premillennialism:** In this view, at the end of the church age Christ will return in the clouds. We will be caught up to meet Him in the air and the resurrection of believers will occur as He descends, and we will immediately return with Him to earth. The millennium will begin, and we will rule and reign with Him. At the end of the thousand years, the resurrection of unbelievers and their judgement will occur, death and hell will be cast into the Lake of Fire, and we will enter the eternal state. This position is referred to as "classic" or "historic" because it has a long history of acceptance, from the earliest centuries of church history forward.
 - b) **Pretribulational (or Dispensational) premillennialism:** This view follows classic premillennialism with one major exception. Advocates of this position see that there will be a "rapture" or catching up of believers prior to the tribulation period, and that believers will not go through this time on earth but will rather be in heaven with Jesus and then return with Him to earth following that seven-year period of judgement on the unbelievers. They see the gathering together of believers and the return of the Lord as chronologically separate events. Supporters of this idea usually hold that the church age (dispensation) ends with the rapture and that national, genetic Israel is restored to favor with God and preach to the remaining inhabitants of the earth so forcefully that an innumerable number from all nations, tongues, and peoples are saved. These late believers do have to face the persecutions of tribulation. This camp is further divided into those that believe the rapture will occur at the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period, or in the middle. This interpretation was first popularized in

the 1830's by a theologian named John Darby. Later Scofield followed Darby's teachings and included them in the notes of his very popular Scofield study Bible, and the teaching gained wider support. The lack of early church support for this position is often used as a major objection to dispensationalism, although of late there are claims that evidence to the contrary has been discovered.

Some comments verse by verse:

4And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Jesus immediately warns His disciples that imposters, claiming to be Christ, would come and that they must pay attention so that they would not be deceived. The greatest threat to the church isn't an overt attack from without, direct persecution has always strengthened and spread the church. False teachers and teachings are the danger most warned against and that has proven most damaging. Three times in this block of teaching Jesus warns of false Christs. The disciples wanted to know what wasn't theirs to know, "when" will these things be? Jesus redirected their attention to focus on the responsibility He had given them... be ready. People today still flock to prophetic teachers claiming to be able to predict when the end will come. Any such teacher can immediately be discounted, verse 36. Israel rejected her King and shortly following, as their situation with Rome became increasingly precarious, various imposters rose claiming to be the Messiah. We know from history that they indeed deceived many, and their ends were abrupt. Even in modern American history, we continue to have those that somehow, claiming to be Christ, seduce a following of otherwise intelligent people to believe them, often with tragic consequences. Jesus warned in verse 5 of the success these false-Christs will have, "*and shall deceive many*".

6And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8All these are the beginning of sorrows. 9Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. 14And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

It is helpful to remember that prophecies often have a short-range fulfillment and a long-range fulfillment in mind, as did many of the Old Testament prophecies that were historically fulfilled in the captivity of Israel and Judah and were yet to be fulfilled in the advent of Christ or may still to be accomplished in the future when Jesus returns.

Verses 6-12 are frequently cited as relating to the days preceding Jesus' second coming, and they likely do have this longer-range view in mind, but the immediate question of the disciples was in response to Jesus' declaration that the temple would be destroyed. These things certainly found fulfillment in the first century.

The Roman war machine was pushing across the known world, as far south as Egypt, north into Germania and the British Isles. In conquered Israel the rumors and stories of these wars would certainly abound and be terrifying to these people under the thumb of this Iron-fisted war machine, but Jesus warns that it will only get worse. Nations and kingdoms fought each other and Rome for control. The unavoidable consequences of global warfare included starvation, as resources were consumed and destroyed as a by-product.

In a matter of days from Jesus saying these words, He would hang on the cross and as He cried out and yielded up the ghost, the earth would quake so violently that rocks were ripped apart. In AD79 Mount Vesuvius erupted. Yet Jesus warned the disciples in verse 8, "All these are the beginning of sorrows".

The beginning makeup of the first church were Jews, and the greatest persecutors of the early church were the Jews, who as we see through the lens of the apostle Paul before his conversion, pursued them relentlessly from city to city to exterminate this sect. As the gospel door was quickly opened to the gentiles and Christianity spread abroad, Christians were now hated by the gentile nations as well and falsely blamed for all manner of evil (including the burning of Rome). Multitudes of Christians were tortured and killed for their faith. To this point these early disciples (the ones asking Jesus these questions) had been protected by the master from the hatred of the world, but as He

forewarned, most of them would suffer rejection and violence and death for their testimony for Jesus.

Christ made it clear, and so it was the case, that His coming would not bring peace on earth, but division, even within the same household (Luke 12:51-53).

It seems we often simplify history. The situation of religion was far more complex in Israel in the days of Christ and the early church than just Judaism versus Christianity. There was indeed a strong sect of followers of the Pharisees, who had created their own brand of Judaism, but there were also followers of the Sadducees, who took Judaism in a very different direction. Then there were those (many) who had adopted much of the culture of the Greeks, referred to as Hellenists. And as is the case with religion in our world today, many were largely uninvolved, other than maybe that they loosely identified with one party or another for expediency's sake. The situation was a mess, iniquity abounded, and without the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, the love of many became cold.

Amid all this gloom and darkness, Jesus made this remarkable statement in verse 13, *"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"*. At first glance, this may sound like a mandate to perform well through it all in order to be saved, the obvious alternative being that if you fail you will not be saved. But this is not a mandate, but rather an observation of fact that brings believers, particularly those that are under persecution, great comfort. Paul records in Philippians 1:6 that *"...he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"*. Again, in Romans 8:35-39 Paul writes, *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* We are saved by the grace of God through the blood of Jesus Christ, through faith given to us by the Spirit. Those that are His will endure in faith until the end, because having been made a new creature in Christ by no effort or will of our own (John 1:12-13), He will sustain and keep us to the end, not by our power but by His.

It's also noteworthy that some scholars through the centuries have seen in verses 7-13 a prophesy of conditions within Jerusalem during the siege of Titus, as starvation and lack of sanitation resulted in horrific circumstances, even cannibalism.

14And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. 15When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

Verse 14 seems to jump out as one of those prophecies that were to be soon fulfilled and yet have a distant application to the second coming and end of the world. By the time the men that were asking these questions (destruction of the temple/ return of Jesus/ end of the world) died, the gospel had been preached in the known world. The apostle Paul made it clear that his intention was to take the gospel message to Spain, the end of the earth in their mind (Romans 15:23-24). The Bible doesn't tell us if he ever made it past Rome, but secular history has more than one record that Paul indeed journeyed to Spain. We know that many of the other apostles, to whom Jesus was directly speaking in this passage, pushed north, east, and south into what was known of the world. Luke records in Acts 8:1-4 that because of the persecution of the saints at Jerusalem, they "went every where preaching the word." Paul tells the Colossians that the gospel has come to them, "as it is in all the world" (Col 1:6). All this gospel progress would have occurred before Titus laid siege to Jerusalem and utterly destroyed the temple in AD70.

Verse 15, also seemingly with a near and distant fulfillment in mind, is the famous prophecy of "the abomination of desolation". Jesus states that He is referring to the same prophecy found in Daniel (9:27, 11:31, 12:11), phrased "the abomination that maketh desolate". While many believe that this refers to a future event shortly preceding the return of the Lord, and that the perpetrator is the man of sin, the anti-Christ, the son of perdition (see 2 Thess. 2:1-4), it seems apparent that Jesus is speaking more immediately of the ruin of the temple at the hands of the Romans, under Titus.

Daniel 9:25-26 reads, *"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. **And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.**"* (Emphasis added). A few points of interest concerning verse 26 (bold): Relative to the time, it is understood to mean weeks of years, thus each week (7 days) would be multiplied by seven. By these calculations, one week (7 years) had elapsed from the time a decree was sent out that Jerusalem be built (Cyrus, among others, is commonly referenced) to the time Gabriel delivered this prophecy to Daniel. This added to the 69 weeks Gabriel foretells, becomes 70 weeks of years, or 490 years from the edict to rebuild to the cutting off of Messiah the Prince. Jesus was cut off (died) not for Himself, but for His people. Titus was a prince, made a

general at the time by his father, Vespasian, and entrusted to end the rebellion of the Jewish people. Titus came against Jerusalem with four Roman legions and auxiliary troops and laid siege to the city. When the city fell it was the intent of Titus to preserve the temple, but his soldiers, in their hatred for the Jews and lust for blood, were beyond the control of Titus and were unstoppable as they utterly wrecked and burned the temple. So as Daniel prophesied, *the people* of the prince destroyed Jerusalem and the temple (sanctuary). When the Jews saw the Roman legions standing even in the holiest place of the temple, there was nothing left but to flee Judea. Desolation for the nation of Israel, as had been determined by God and prophesied, had come because of their rejecting of Messiah. Scholars continue to debate exactly what is (was) the abomination that makes desolate. Some see it as the sacrificing of a pig on the alter or the statue of Jupiter Olympias set on the alter, both by Antiochus Epiphanes 200-ish years earlier that set the stage for these events. Others contend that it was the unfulfilled intention of Caligula to set up a statue in the temple, or the eagle Herod placed over the temple gate, or the alleged (ancient historians offer differing records) story that Titus defiled the holy place of the temple by having relations with two harlots within.

16Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: 17Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: 21For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Verses 16-22 speak of the suddenness and severity of the coming persecution. After a long siege Titus and the Roman legions broke through with unprecedented brutality against the rebel Jews. Josephus records that as starving inhabitants fled the city, many were disemboweled by the Roman soldiers to discover if they had swallowed gold from the temple and its appurtenances. The judgement of God against Jerusalem was severe, as the sin of Jerusalem was severe, even to the rejection and crucifying of Christ (Amos 3:2). Upwards of a million people were killed, per Tacitus and Josephus.

The woe concerning women with children and the warning to flee quickly and pray that your flight be not in winter fits well with the view that the AD70 fall of Jerusalem was at least part of the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, and it fits well with the classical premillennialism understanding (I think both are in view, stressing that this is opinion). It does, however, become difficult to reconcile with pretribulational premillennialism perspective. If a rapture of the church is to occur prior to tribulation, why is Jesus giving this warning and prophecy to His disciples?

Verse 22 speaks to the sovereignty and mercy of God. Though Jerusalem be destroyed, and the temple desecrated, and multiplied thousands killed as God justly brought judgement on the wicked, or though He pours out His wrath on the world in the tribulation yet to come, yet He, by His grace alone, has an elect that He has chosen to be His children. He will seal them and see them through the evil. He will bring them safely through the trial. Even as the great majority of the Jewish people denied Jesus, there was a remnant of believers, and for their sake, the days were shortened. Consider Sodom and Gomorrah. The wickedness of that people stunk such that it reached heaven, but God would not judge that city until He sealed righteous Lot and his family, though “vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked”. God protected Lot, His elect, through the firestorm, even as it fell, even as he resisted God’s provision. Like Jesus tells these disciples to “flee into the mountains”, so Lot was commanded, and physically dragged by the angels to “escape to the mountain”.

23Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25Behold, I have told you before. 26Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. 27For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 28For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Verse 23 takes up the warning again to take no heed when people tell you that Christ has come or that His prophet is working great miracles; don’t even go look. Don’t believe them.

In verse 24 Jesus warns that there will not just be a few that claim to be the Messiah, but that there will be an abundance. The centuries since Jesus’ earthly ministry have been dotted with those making such a claim. The Bible records that it was already prevalent. When the apostles were arrested and it was the intention of the Jewish leaders to kill them, a doctor of the law named Gamaliel stood up and gave this advice, “For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.” In modern American history we have seen men like Moon and Jones, claiming to be the Christ and deceiving hundreds, if not thousands, gaining national attention. I think it interesting that like Jesus foretold, they commonly entice people to depart society, to come out into “the desert” or the “secret chambers”. It always ends dismally and often tragically. The True and Only Messiah, Jesus Christ, came into the places and cities where people were. He

has commanded His disciples to go and do likewise, proclaiming the gospel and gladness.

The deception will be powerful, but heed that their signs and wonders will be deceitful (trickery, “lying wonders” [2 Thes 2:9]). Who is vulnerable to their trap? The unbelieving. What a merciful and trustworthy Savior is our Lord Jesus! He says, “if it were possible...”. But because He will finish the work in us that He has started (Phil 1:6) and see us through to the end (1 Thes 3:13), it is not possible that the elect be deceived (John 10:5, 14, 26, 27).

There will be no need for someone else to tell you that Jesus has returned. Jesus uses a clear analogy concerning the recognition of His return... lightening. Though it strikes in one hemisphere of the sky, its brilliance flashes across the entire sky. Its brightness is such that it is “seen” even through closed eyelids. Jesus uses another metaphor to make it clear that He is not returning in secret... the eagles. When an animal dies the location of its remains becomes unmistakable, as multitudes of high-soaring eyes pinpoint the meal and circle above. John writes in Revelation 1:7, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”

Jesus came and humbly and quietly took on flesh, making Himself a servant for our sake. The world barely noticed. When He returns, He is coming in the fulness of His glory for all His saints to adore, and all unbelievers will tremble. Not one person will miss the event. It seems Jesus to be most directly speaking of His return and the end of time as He tells His disciples:

29Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

It is noteworthy that some see in these verses, most directly, the aftermath of the AD70 destruction of the temple and Jerusalem for Israel. The nation slipped into obscurity. Thus, in this view, the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars represents the disappearance of the glory of the nation of Israel, perhaps of the temple, Jerusalem, and the many lesser cities of Judea that crumbled into ruin.

It appears far more likely that the primary meaning the Lord had in mind here concerned His second coming, and is what Paul is referring to in 2 Thessalonians 2:1, the coming of our Lord and our gathering together unto Him.

Jesus has already made clear that His coming will be like lightening, brilliant so that all inhabitants of earth will see, but also sudden. Lightening is accompanied by clouds; the “two men” in “white apparel” reported that Jesus will return as He ascended, in the clouds.

Now He reveals that when He returns, “after the tribulation of those days”, all the usual heavenly sources of light will fail, and “the powers of heaven shall be shaken”. I don’t know what that looks like but reminds me of the darkness that occurred for three hours as Jesus died on the cross and the earth shook... but this time heaven shakes.

There is significance to heaven shaking, as the writer of Hebrews quotes Jesus (interesting, the gospel writers didn’t record these words of the Lord), *“Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, **Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.** And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.”* This shaking marks the removal of things that are temporal and the installation of things eternal. Isaiah prophesies in 24:23, *“Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.”*

Verse 30 makes me think that, after the heavens shake, the first and best of eternal things appear... “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven:”! Jesus foretells that “every tribe of the earth”, all peoples, will see Him return, as the men in white apparel had predicted, in the clouds, and with power and great glory!

Jesus declares in 31 that now, **after** the tribulation of those days, **after** the shaking of the heavens, **as** the Son of Man comes on the clouds with power and great glory and all the tribes of earth mourn, the much-lauded trumpet will sound “and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thes 4:16-17). His elect will be gathered from the four winds. Once again, this doctrine appears. These are the chosen. Many are called but few are chosen (Matt 22:14). They are born of the will of God exclusively, children of grace (John 1:13). Not one will be forgotten or perish, for on that great day He will send the angels to gather them to Himself.

4. Discuss verses 32-51, as Jesus explains what we should grasp from these teachings to this point.

Help for Teachers:

Here Jesus gives the disciples the practical application of these prophetic teachings. The parable of the fig tree is a very practical lesson. *"When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:"* Observable things happen with predictable consequences. When the fig tree, common in Judea, is seen to have new and tender growth in its branches, and fruit comes on the tree, there is no doubt that summertime is about to happen. When these signs are present, summer is coming and is more than an abstract concept; it's inevitable and you would be foolish not to prepare for it. *"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."* Just like that, we are warned of Jesus to be observant for the signs of His coming that he has revealed, for they are just as reliable of a predictor of His soon return as the budding of the fig tree is of summer. Ignorance or ignoring of the signs won't stop the occurrence. Recall that Jesus had already rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees for demanding a sign (Matt 16:1-4), when they had willfully rejected so many signs that there aren't enough books in the world to record all that Jesus had done (John 21:25). They were confident in forecasting the weather by looking at signs yet pretended not to see the abundant evidence that Jesus was the promised Messiah and Son of David. "Hypocrites" was the title Jesus assigned to them.

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

Many ideas have been offered in expositing this verse. It seems best to understand it in a practical way, as that is the sense in which Jesus is communicating in this block of teaching. Recall that the disciples have interest in three things that Jesus is addressing, the first of which is the destruction of the temple (also what signs will precede the end of the world and Jesus' return). Jesus here reinforces the nearness of the ruin of the temple and the Jewish State, so near that perhaps some standing in Jesus' midst that moment would live to see it happen. He begins with "verily"; you can count on it, this is no idle threat, it will really happen.

Verse 35: He has just told of the shaking of the heavens to come at the end, and now reaffirms that these things are certain, but gives comfort as He reassures that none of His promises will fail; His Word, this gospel that they and we have hope in, will be eternal. Look what John sees in his revelation vision, *"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: **and his name is called The Word of God.**"* (Rev 19:11-13)

Verse 36 makes it abundantly clear that we can and must observe the signs and be ready, but the exact day and hour is the Father's secret. Though a secret, a certainty. So certain is that day that while not revealed to us or even to the angels of heaven, God has assigned it a certain day and a certain hour and given it a certain name, the "day of the Lord".

Verses 37 through 39 describe conditions on earth at the day that Jesus returns, and the end is revealed. We know from other texts that it will be a time of great evil and rejection of truth, but interestingly that is not the circumstance that Jesus wants His disciples to see here. Rather, He refers them to the days of the destruction of the world by water, the days of Noah. What about those days did Jesus see important for His followers to understand?

Peter tells us that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He was a hundred years in building the ark, all the while warning the people of the impending judgment of God on the inhabitants of earth, pleading with them to repent. The point Jesus brings to the attention of His disciples is that while Noah hammered and preached, his message was ignored. The things that occurred in the days of Noah that Jesus points to weren't inherently evil... they are blessings God has provided for mankind and are routine and required for life to continue forward. Therein is the point, though thoroughly warned with one hundred years of God's patience (but truly within a "generation" for those of Noah's era, based on lifespan in those days) that destruction was coming, the message, the signs if you will, were so disregarded that life just continued as if nothing was different. The people that God judged in those days by flood were caught completely off guard. Jesus is telling His disciples, (1) The judgement and fall of the Jewish nation (religion, "church" if you will) is so imminent that you, the generation now living, **will** see its desolation, and (2) be vigilant for the signs of My return and the end of the world because no man knows the day or hour and these events **could** occur even within this generation. The N.T. writers spoke as if though they anticipated that Jesus may return at any moment. Bottom line: we better heed the signs Jesus has given; it's not business as usual.

The importance of readiness for the Lord's return is made clear as Jesus states that on that day, the day of His return in the clouds when the elect are gathered from the four winds and rise to meet Him in the air, those unprepared (the unbelievers) will be separated and left. There is no reason to take this teaching as allegorical; this is, again, the practical lesson Jesus wants His followers to grasp. The one taken/ one left as normal life seems to go on as though there won't be a reckoning (2 Pet 3:4) is meant quite literally.

This is followed with the command to “watch therefore”, directed to the disciples, that know Him as Lord. Verse 43 through 47 also appear targeted to those that are in Christ, real servants that are being warned to stay on task. Verse 43 refers to the subject as “goodman” of the house, with every intention to protect the home, but needing to stay awake through the night, not knowing the exact time that the thief will come. Jesus says in verse 44 “therefore” or just like that, we must be ready. We know Jesus will return but we haven’t been given the exact time, but ample signs to keep us on guard.

45-47 is Jesus giving us a description of who really is a “faithful and wise servant”, those that He finds watchfully anticipating His return, and about the Master’s business. Jesus describes those as “blessed” and to be rewarded.

48-51 seem to be speaking of those that are not truly servants, but “evil” servants. They have decided that Jesus’ coming is not anything for them to worry about. They are destructive and hurtful. They revel with those that are of polluted minds. Their end is that of those in Noah’s day; the Lord returns and executes judgement, and they are caught completely unaware. Their fate is that of the hypocrites. Jesus uses terms consistent with the end of unbelievers, “cut asunder” and “weeping and gnashing of teeth”.