



The Lighthouse
NEW TESTAMENT NOTES

2 Thessalonians

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The Second Letter to the Thessalonians

Introduction to the Second Letter to the Congregation at Thessalonica

Theme: The theme of 2 Thessalonians is that they must patiently endure tribulation until the day of Christ (2 Thes. 1:7-10) and by no means let anyone deceive them into thinking that Christ's coming will precede the great apostasy and revelation of the man of sin (2 Thes. 2:2-3). During this time some had taught that the resurrection was already past (2 Tim. 2:18) and therefore Christ's coming was imminent or could occur at any second (2 Thes. 2:1-2). Paul repudiates this idea as pure deception (2 Thes. 2:2-3). He explicitly denies that "*our gathering together unto him*" (2 Thes. 2:1) or "*the day of Christ*" (2 Thes. 2:2) "*is at hand*" or will occur until after two specific end time events occur (2 Thes. 2:3) of which he goes on to further describe (2 Thes. 2:4-12). Christ made it perfectly clear in the parable of "*all the trees*" (Mt. 24:32-36) that one cannot be looking or watching for the coming of Christ if they are not watching for those things that announce and usher in His return. It is true that the "*times and seasons*" (Acts 1:7; 1 Thes. 5:1-2) cannot be presently known and could occur at any time within any generation. So the Biblical expectation of the coming of Christ is any generation at any time with regard to the heralds that announce His coming. That is why we are called to patiently wait and watch (2 Thes. 3:5) so that they do **not** come upon us "*as a thief in the night*" (1 Thes. 5:4). His coming for the saints is no secret coming, but he is "*revealed*" (Gr. *apocolupsis*) or visibly uncovered or exposed as the King of kings and Lord of lords "*in power*" (2 Thes. 1:8) and with the "*shout*" of an archangel and "*sound of a trumpet.*" Hence, his coming "*with*" the saints (1 Thes. 4:14) is the very same coming "*for*" the saints (1 Thes. 4:15-17) and is anything but secret or silent. Upon gathering together the saints in the air (2 Thes. 2:1; Mt. 24:31) he descends pouring out His vengeance upon the ungodly (2 Thes. 1:7-9; Rev. 19:11-21) overthrowing the kingdom of this world and ushering in His kingdom on earth.

Date: Most conservative scholars agree that it was written sometime between 51 to 52 A.D. The problem with dating New Testament books is determining the exact birth year of Christ and how long after the ascension of Christ Paul was converted in Acts 9, and how long he spent in Tarsus and Antioch before being set apart and authorized as the church apostle (missionary) in Acts 13:1-4.

Writer: The very first verse in the greetings of this letter identifies Paul, Silas and Timothy as the co-contributors in producing this letter. (1:1). I think Paul wrote many of his letters in collaboration with the gifted ministers that accompanied him on his missionary endeavors. Since most of his letters were orally dictated to another member of his group who did the actual writing, others could hear what he was saying and could interrupt and make suggestions or comments. I can see them sitting around a table or camp fire and discussing the issues of a certain congregation and what would be the best way to approach those issues. Through this cooperative interactive process the Holy Spirit impressed upon the mind of Paul the best approach. There is wisdom in a multitude of counselors.

Audience: The audience is explicitly stated to be the congregation at Thessalonica (1:1). Take a look at the map of Paul's Second Missionary Journey on page 8 so you can follow along with the following description of his journey from Turkey to Greece. The city of Thessalonica is found in modern day Greece. These were Greek speaking people who lived in northwestern Greece in the province of Macedonia. Paul preached the gospel at Thessalonica on his second missionary

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journey. While in Troas (Acts 16:8), in Asia minor or what is the east coast of modern Turkey today, he received a vision from the Lord wherein a man called him to come over to Macedonia to preach the gospel (Acts 16:9-10). In two days (Acts 16:11) he crossed over the Aegean Sea that separates modern Turkey and Greece to the upper North East coast of Greece in the province of Macedonia. He landed at Neapolis (Acts 16:11) and then proceeded to Philippi (Acts 16:12). After establishing a congregation at Philippi (Acts 16:13-40), he proceeded to pass through “*Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica*” (Acts 17:1). At Thessalonica he ran into stiff opposition and persecution by the Jews (Acts 17:2-9). However, they were successful in constituting a sizable congregation (Acts 17:4) before they had to flee for their lives at night to Berea (Acts 17:10). The members of this congregation are described by Luke in the following words: *And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.* – Acts 17:4

The congregation at Thessalonica was fitly framed together by Paul through obedience to the Baptist Pattern. John The Baptist was sent by God to “*make ready a people prepared for the Lord*” (Lk. 1:17). He acted as the part of “*the friend of the bridegroom*” in preparing and presenting the bride to Christ (Jn. 3:29). Paul acted in the same capacity in preparing and presenting each congregation as a “*chaste virgin*” to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). The Baptist method of preparation was a three-fold pattern. He first preached the gospel (Jn. 3:36), then secondarily baptized repentant (Mt. 3:6-8) believers in Christ (Acts 19:4) and thirdly taught them, thus making “*disciples*” of them (Jn. 4:1-2). Jesus adopted the very same three-fold pattern and commissioned it as the authorized pattern for making disciples unto the end of the world (Mt. 28:19-20). Paul was sent out as a church called, ordained and authorized missionary to administer the very same Baptist Pattern (Acts 13:1-4). This is the pattern administered by Paul in Thessalonica. Hence, the congregation at Thessalonica was “*fitly framed together*” or “*built up*” according to the Baptist Pattern.

It is dishonest for anyone to apply Pauline letters to the post-apostolic era Christians who are divided up into various conflicting denominations and doctrine. The “*we...us....ye....you*” of the Pauline epistles were Christians of like faith and order found in congregations of like faith and order. This congregation was constituted, set in order, or fitly framed together according to the Great Commission pattern as authorized missionaries from the congregation at Antioch (Acts 13; 1-4; 18:20). The Great Commission pattern was established by John the Baptist and adopted by Christ. The specifics of how they were constituted and under what adverse circumstances they were constituted are the subject material of the first three chapters. Today, New Testament congregations are those who have been constituted after the Great Commission pattern and are like faith and order with the congregations of the New Testament.

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Outline

Greetings – 1:1-3

A. Tribulation precedes the Day of Christ – 1:4-2:17

1. No deliverance from present Tribulations – 1:4-6
 - a. Enduring tribulation glorifies Christ in the churches – v. 4
 - b. Enduring tribulation proves your worthy of the Kingdom – v. 5
 - c. Enduring tribulation will be vindicated – v. 6
2. When our Deliverance Occurs – 1:7-12
 - a. No rest from tribulation until His appearing in glory – v. 7
 - b. No rest from tribulation until Destruction of our Persecutors – vv. 8-9
 - c. No rest from tribulation until our glorification – v. 10
 - d. No rest from tribulation until after God has proven you worthy – vv. 11-12
3. Two things that precede that Deliverance – 2:1-17
 - a. The Subject – Our gathering together – v. 1
 - b. The Pre-trib deception – v. 2
 - c. The Apostasy and man of sin must occur first – v. 3
 - d. The revelation of the Man of Sin – vv. 4-8
 - e. The revelation of the Apostasy – vv. 9-12
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B. Final Exhortations while we patiently wait for His coming – 3:1-15

1. The need for prayer for one another – vv. 1-3
2. The need for patient endurance in obedience to apostolic doctrine – vv. 4-15
 - a. The exhortation to patient endurance in obedience – vv. 4-5
 - b. How to deal with disorderly members – vv. 6-14

Salutations – 3:16-18

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The Second Letter to the Congregation at Thessalonica

Chapter 1

Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the congregation¹ of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;²

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the congregations of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.³

5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God,⁴ for which ye also suffer:

6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God⁵ to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

¹ **“Unto the congregation”** – He is not writing to 20th and 21st century Christians who are divided into conflicting denominations with conflicting doctrine and practice. He is writing to a congregation that he founded which was like faith and order with all the other existing congregations in the first century. Hence, the contextual *“we...us....ye...you”* of the Pauline letters represent an audience united by like faith and order.

² **“Groweth exceedingly...the charity of every one of you all toward each other Aboundeth”** – This is proof of the present application of Ephesians 4:12-16 to the institutional body of Christ. Here is a congregational body working as described in 1 Cor. 12:13-26.

³ **“Tribulations ye endure”** – They were to regard enduring tribulation for their faith a privilege and a sign of their worthiness (v. 5), rather than seeking escape. They were to count it all joy (Rom. 5:3-5) knowing that it would work for their ultimate benefit and increase their hope. Old Testament saints refused deliverance from suffering so they could have greater rewards (Heb. 11:35). Our ancient forefathers during the Dark Ages gladly offered themselves up to persecution believing they were in the Great Tribulation facing the man of sin in the person of the Pope and the Great Whore as the Roman Catholic Church. The first 5,000 years of history produces no type of Christianity that had an expectation of deliverance from tribulation. These believers were already translated into the spiritual kingdom of God at new birth. However, suffering tribulation after their new birth demonstrated they were worthy to rule in the coming kingdom of God on earth. Paul instructed all of his congregations that it was through great tribulation they must enter the coming physical kingdom of God (Acts 14:20-21). Jesus told his disciples that as long as they lived in this world they would suffer tribulation (Jn. 16:33). Suffering in the Great Tribulation can be no greater in intensity than what Christians endured in the Dark Ages. They were crucified, skinned alive, beheaded, cast into boiling oil, wrapped in bloody skins and fed to lions, skewed up the middle of their bodies, and the list goes on and on. However, today Pre-tribbism thrives in countries where no physical torture exists. Pre-tribbism is a shameful doctrine that seeks to escape suffering for Christ.

⁴ **“Counted worthy of the kingdom of God”** – He is referring to the coming physical kingdom on earth and their inclusion in the Bride of Christ. They had already been translated into the spiritual kingdom of God. Paul told the congregations of saved persons that it would be through much tribulation they would enter the coming kingdom (Acts 14:20-21). Identification with Christ and His teachings resulted in persecution by the professing people of God or the religious world. The religion of Rome and of the Jews were their persecutors. During the Dark Ages it was the Roman Catholic Church that was the persecutors of the congregations of Christ. Today, it is the religious world (Muslims, professed Christians) who are the persecutors of the congregations of Christ. Persecution is not restricted to physical harm, but also is inclusive of spiritual harm, opposition and ridicule of the faith once delivered.

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7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed⁶ from heaven with his mighty angels,

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel⁷ of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction⁸ from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

10 When he shall come⁹ to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness,¹⁰ and the work of faith with power:

12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵ **“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God”** – Fallen men justly deserve wrath, but none can demand mercy on the basis of justice. Election is *“of grace”* (Rom. 11:5) according to God’s purpose of grace (Rom. 9:11).

⁶ **“Rest with us when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed”** -. This *“rest”* from tribulation occurs *“when”* (Gr. *en* or *“in”*) Christ is revealed in power and in glory with the angels. This destruction of the wicked also occurs *“when”* or *“in”* this same coming. Verses 7-10 are but one single sentence in the Greek text. The *“when”* of verse 10 is the same *“when”* of verse 7 in regard to the same event. The precise point in time when Christians will be delivered from tribulation is when Christ is *“revealed”* in His glory and power in heaven with the angels, as he comes to destroy the wicked at Armageddon. This is no secret coming. It is a loud, open and obvious coming that *“every eye”* shall see (Rev. 1:7) and every ear shall hear (1 Thes. 4:16) and therefore openly reveals Christ in all of His glory and power, as He comes to destroy the antichrist, his armies (v. 10) and overthrow the kingdoms of this world.

⁷ **“Them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel”** -. God’s children are never the objects of His wrath, whether in the Great Tribulation or in the coming of Christ at the end of the Great Tribulation. The objects are always *“them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel”*. In the Great Tribulation the trumpets have only the wicked as their objects of destruction and torment (Rev. 9:21) while the elect Jews and elect Gentiles are preserved from His wrath (Rev. 7). In the vials of wrath only the wicked are the objects of wrath (Rev. 16:1-14) while the Lord’s people are preserved (Rev. 16:15).

⁸ **“Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord....from the glory”** – There is no *“presence of the Lord”* on earth during the Great Tribulation. Only at his Second Advent are the wicked sent directly into Gehenna (Rev. 19:20) for *“everlasting destruction”* and removed *“from the presence...from the glory”* of His Person.

⁹ **“When He shall come”** - Verses 7-10 is one sentence in the Greek text. This sentence provides an order of events that occur *“in [Gr. en] that day”* (v. 10) or *“when”* (Gr. *en* *“in”* v. 7) he is revealed in power and glory. Therefore, the repeated Greek preposition *en* translated *“when”* in verse 7 and *“in”* in verse 10 confine these events to the very same day. First, the saints are given *“rest”* from tribulation *“in that day”* by their removal and glorification (v. 10, 1 Thes. 4:14-17). Second, the wrath of Christ is poured out upon their persecutors *“in that day.”* He comes *“with”* his saints *“for”* his saints (1 Thes. 4:14-17) which *“meet”* him in the air just previous to descending upon this world at Armageddon, to deliver Israel from the armies at Armageddon. The Greek term *“meet”* in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is the same word translated *“meet”* in Acts 28:15 where those coming out of Rome to *“meet”* Paul, immediately returned with Paul to Rome or from the place they departed from. Moreover, the word used for His coming *“when”* he destroys the Antichrist is *“parousia”* (2 Thes. 2:10) which is the same term that describes the day of our gathering together unto him.

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Chapter 2

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,¹¹

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind,¹² or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us,¹³ as that the day of Christ is at hand.¹⁴

The PreTrib Deception – 2 Thes. 2:3

There is not one solitary single scripture that spells out any kind of pretrib coming. However, the scriptures do explicitly condemn a pretrib expectation (2 Thes. 2:1-3; Mt. 24:29-31). The whole Pretrib doctrine is based upon inferences. Every one of these inferences is based upon ignoring the immediate and overall context of Scripture and violating primary principles of exegesis. The so-called language of “imminence” is equally applied to what all acknowledge to be the Posttrib events (Acts 1:6-7; 2 Thes. 5:1-4; 2 Pet. 3:10-12). The very application of such language to Posttrib events invalidates it as language of imminence. There is not one person, or group of persons living between the 1st and 15th century that embraced a Pretrib coming. Proper understanding of the parable of “*all the trees*” completely repudiates every facet of the Pretrib theory (see article entitled “The Key to Understanding the Coming of Christ” on page 14).

¹¹ “**The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him.** There are not two different comings here. The grammatical structure here demands this sentence be understood as “*The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ even our gathering together unto Him.*” This is not contrary to the meaning of the English conjunction “and.” The English conjunction “and” can mean “even” or an additional description which follows. However, the Greek structure demands this is the meaning. The definite article precedes the first noun prior to this conjunction, but is absent from the noun following the conjunction. Grammarians identify this structure as the Grande Sharp Rule. The only Greek scholars that reject this rule are those who oppose the deity of Christ, as one of the greatest proofs of the deity of Christ is taken from Titus 2:13 where this same Greek structure is found. Moreover, the very same Greek term translated “*gathering together*” is used by Christ to describe His coming and gathering of the elect in Matthew 24:31. Moreover, this is the subject introduced in verse 1, which is also “*the day of Christ*” in verse 2 and “*that day*” in verse 3.

¹² “**Be not soon shaken in mind**” – The contextual error being addressed was originating from those false teachers who claimed the resurrection had already occurred (2 Tim. 2:18). This would incredibly shake the very foundations of their faith. Paul had taught them in the first epistle that the resurrection would not occur until the rapture coming of Christ (1 Thes. 4:14-16). To claim the resurrection had already occurred would imply they had been left behind with the wicked and there would be no deliverance from tribulation. For those being prepared to endure tribulation, the most disturbing false teaching possible is a Pre-trib expectation of deliverance from tribulation. Why? Falsely proclaiming “peace, peace” when there will be no peace is wholly destructive to the mindset required to endure tribulation.

¹³ “**Nor by letter as from us**” – Apparently some had been impersonating Paul by writing letters under his name. He lists various means whereby some could use to deceive them, and then concludes by saying “*Let no man deceive you by any means*” in addition to those means already stated.

¹⁴ “**The day of Christ is at hand**” – Lightfoot translates this “*The day of Christ is imminent.*” The Textus Receptus, as well as the Majority Text all read “*the day of Christ.*” This phrase is used consistently by Paul in every other case to describe the day when Christ comes to resurrect and rapture His saints. This is the stated subject in verse 1 “*our gathering together unto him.*” This is an explicit denial of a Pre-trib coming. The Critical text reads “*the day of the Lord.*” Even if the critical text reading was accepted it would repudiate the Pre-trib coming. Paul says that the revelation of the man of sin must “*first*” precede that day. That revelation of the man of sin is found in Matthew 24:15-29 where it does in fact precede His coming (Mt. 24:30-31).

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3 Let no man deceive you by any means:¹⁵ for that day shall not come, except¹⁶ there come a falling away first,¹⁷ and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God,¹⁸ or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God¹⁹, shewing himself that he is God.

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?²⁰

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.²¹

¹⁵ “**Let no man deceive you by any means**” – No stronger warning can be stated than this. The day of “*our gathering together unto him*” (v. 1) or “the day of Christ” (v. 2) must be preceded by two distinct events. Hence, the resurrection was not already past as some had been teaching (2 Tim. 2:18). Hence, all who teach a Pre-trib any second coming are identified as explicitly as deceivers.

¹⁶ “**That day shall not come, except** – “*That day*” has for its antecedent “*the day of Christ*” in the preceding verse, which in turn has for its antecedent the time of “*our gathering together unto Him*” in verse 1. He is speaking about the day of the rapture coming of Christ.

¹⁷ “**First....falling away and...**” Paul is not saying one or the other, but both (“*and*”) must occur first before our gathering together unto him occurs. “*Falling away*” translates the Greek term *apostasia* from which we get our English term “apostasy.” This term is never used for a spatial departure, but always a religious or political departure. Paul does not use the root term *aphistemi* as Pre-tribbers attempt to force upon this text. Making this term mean the rapture would have Paul making the absurd claim that “*our gathering together unto him*” (v. 1) or the “*day of Christ*” (v. 2) cannot come until *our gathering together unto him* occurs first. Moreover, the Greek term *aphistemi* is never used for a spatial departure in the New Testament, but always a religious departure. This is the same apostasy predicted in 1 Tim. 4:1 which is a departure from “*the faith*” due to “*doctrines of demons*” just as Paul goes on to describe it in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12. Paul continues to describe the revelation of the man of sin in verses 4-8 and the apostasy in verses 9-12.

¹⁸ “**Exalteth himself above all that is called God**” – He is the same person being described in Daniel 7:8,11,21,25 of whom Michael the Archangel is now restraining his arrival and revelation until it is his time in God’s purpose as revealed in the book of Daniel (Dan. 10:12, 20-21). He is described in Revelation 13.

¹⁹ “**Temple of God**” – The Jewish temple would be destroyed in just a few years (A.D. 70). Those who would receive him as “*God*” will not be the Jews, but the apostasy described in verses 9-12. Hence, the “*temple of God*” is no true temple of God, but that which is perceived by the apostate movement to be his temple. The New Testament institutional congregation is called “*the temple of the Spirit*” (1 Cor. 3:16). Hence, the apostate institutional congregation would also be perceived as “*the temple of God*” or the Great Whore of Revelation and her harlot daughters (Rev. 17:5). He is the “*God*” of the apostate movement that is empowered by his miracles, signs and lying wonders (v. 9). The temple in Revelation 11 is a figure of God’s people. The outer court represents Jerusalem or the unsaved Jewish elect during the time Jerusalem is being trodden down by the Gentiles. Jerusalem is trodden down by the Gentiles from A.D. 70 until Christ saves the Jewish nation at His return (Rev. 1:7). The inner court represents the saved during that period who are measured or saved. (See my commentary on Revelation).

²⁰ “**I told you these things**” - Paul explicitly told them the precise order of the resurrection in relationship to the coming of Christ. Hence, there can be no excuse to believe the resurrection was already past, as some were teaching (2 Tim. 2:18). He had already told them that the “*day of the Lord*” Jesus Christ would not come upon those watching as a “*thief in the night*” and so there was no excuse for embracing an imminent any second return. Apparently, he had instructed them in the book of Daniel in regard to the revelation of the man of sin and who restrained his coming (Dan. 10:13,19-20).

²¹ “**Revealed in his time**” -. The book of Daniel is provided to show the time table of God’s purposes in regard to the rise and fall of kingdoms, including the final antichrist kingdom. The rise and fall of these kingdoms is according

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7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work:²² only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.²³

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying²⁴ wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness²⁵ in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth,²⁶ that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion,²⁷ that they should believe a lie:²⁸

to God's time table. Michael the archangel is in charge of restraining and permitting the rise and fall of each of these kingdoms (Dan. 10:13, 20-21). In the book of Revelation it is Michael over the angels that control the events.

²² **"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work"** – Apostasy was already present in the New Testament period. There were already many antichrists (1 Jn. 2:18; 2 Jn. 8). The Christian Jewish Gnostics were infiltrating the congregations (Acts 15) with their Gnostic teachings. The rise of the Roman Catholic Church and her Protestant daughters was still in the future. The Restoration movement in the 19th century was yet in the future with its many false prophets. In the last days just prior to the coming of Christ this apostasy would manifest itself in an apostolic like miracle movement or the modern day charismatic movement (Mt. 24:5,24-25; 2 Thes. 2:9-12).

²³ **"Until he be taken out of the way"** – No one removes God the Spirit. This refers to Michael who directs the angels under him to restrain and allow kingdoms to arise in keeping with God's eternal purpose as outlined in the book of Daniel (Dan. 10:13, 19-20). The book of Revelation was not yet written when Paul wrote this letter. Paul's only source for instructing them in regard to the Antichrist was the book of Daniel. In the book of Revelation it is the angels of God that direct and control events, allowing them to arise and overruling them. Michael is at the head of God's angelic host (Rev. 20:1).

²⁴ **"Lying wonders"** – By the word *"lying"* Paul is referring to the design behind the wonders rather than the legitimate power producing the wonders. God's design behind his miracles, signs and wonders was to provide a visible supernatural confirmation that the person doing them was speaking the truth. Satan is counterfeiting this confirmation design in order to deceive people into thinking what his servants speak is truth from God. The authenticity of the power and reality of these supernatural works is confirmed by Christ (Mt. 24:24-25). Hence, they are real and supernatural in nature. However, they are *"lying"* since they are giving visible confirmation to false doctrines of demons.

²⁵ **"All deceivableness of unrighteousness"** – A deceptive *"unrighteousness"* refers to something that appears as righteousness but is not. This is a supernatural empowered apostolic like religious movement that promotes a false gospel and false doctrines (1 Tim. 4:1) based upon good works. However, it attacks the very foundation of true righteousness that is sufficiently provided in the works performed in the physical body of Jesus Christ that satisfies all demands of the law in our behalf.

²⁶ **"Love of the truth"** – *"The truth"* is synonymous with *"the faith"* or *"the doctrine"* or *"the tradition"* or *"the apostles' doctrine"* of which the gospel of Christ was the preeminent aspect. They reject the true apostolic faith and doctrine, especial the truth of the gospel of justification without works. This is a false type of Christianity whose final authority is their supernatural experiences and feelings of spiritual discernment. Even their interpretation of scripture is ultimately determined by their experience rather than submitting their experience to God's Word (Isa. 8:19-20).

²⁷ **"Strong delusion"** – The Greek term translated *"strong"* (*energia*) is the very same word used to describe the effectual powerful work of the Holy Spirit in true believers (Eph. 3:20). The Greek term translated *"delusion"* is the

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12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure²⁹ in unrighteousness.

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord,³⁰ because God hath from the beginning chosen you³¹ to salvation³² through sanctification³³ of the Spirit and belief of the truth:³⁴

same term (*planes*) used to describe deceivers and their deceit (1 Jn. 1:7). This apostate apostolic miracle like movement will provide strong powerful internal experiences that completely dominate their lives.

²⁸ **“That they should believe a lie”** - Their counterfeit miracles joined with their counterfeit Holy Spirit like internal experiences will replace God’s Word as their final authority. These supernatural experiences will be their holy grail in discerning truth from error instead of the objective truth of God’s Word. The Pentecostal/charismatic movement of the 20th and 21st century **as a whole** repudiates the doctrine of justification by faith without works. There are some saved people within the Great Harlot who do not repudiate this essential truth of the gospel (Rev. 18:4). However, as a whole, this entire movement within the Great Whore repudiate the truth of the gospel and **“believe a lie.”**

²⁹ **“Damned....that had pleasure”** – These supernatural experiences will provide a sense of the supernatural well being in righteousness. He is describing those in Matthew 7:21-23 whose hope for entrance into heaven is split into two facets of their profession foundations – (1) **“Lord, Lord”**; (2) **“in thy name have we not done many wonderful works”**. This is the gospel condemned by Paul in Galatians 1:8-9 – faith in Christ plus good works. Of course it is presented as faith in Christ joined with good works produced by Christ in and through the believer that provides the basis of justification. However, the gospel of Christ declares that the good works necessary to justify us was finished with the works performed in the physical body of Jesus Christ in our behalf **“without works”** performed in or through our physical bodies. Good works in and through our own bodies is the manifestation of justification rather than the basis for justification (James 2:14-16).

³⁰ **“Beloved of the Lord”** – God’s love is found only **“in Christ.”** Outside of Christ there is nothing but wrath and condemnation (Jn. 3:17, 36). Election to salvation is the ultimate evidence of God’s *redemptive* love. God’s *benevolent* love is expressed upon the good and evil alike.

³¹ **“From the beginning hath chosen you to”** – Before the world was created they were chosen (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9). Therefore **“from the beginning”** of this creation God’s elective purposes were being implemented. Election is not man choosing God, but God choosing man “to” salvation not “because of” salvation.

³² **“Chosen you to salvation”** - The elect are not chosen “because of” salvation but **“to”** (Gr. *eis*) or “unto” salvation. The Greek preposition *eis* with the accusative case show that the action of choosing terminates with salvation.

³³ **“Through sanctification”** – Not only are the elect chosen unto salvation, but the means for saving them is equally chosen beforehand. The term **“sanctification”** simply means “set apart” unto something. The same root is used of the temple prostitutes at Corinth. They were called **“saints.”** Hence, the term carries no moral significance. It is what a person or thing is set apart unto that determines its moral significance. God’s saints were chosen to be set apart by the Holy Spirit and belief of the truth. Hence, they are set apart unto righteousness.

³⁴ **“Of the Spirit and belief of the truth”** – In eternity they were chosen unto salvation. In time they are set apart by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the truth of the gospel. The gospel becomes the creative word by the Holy Spirit to speak into existence the metaphorical **“light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”** (2 Cor. 4:6). Man can bring the gospel unto the exterior of men. Only the Holy Spirit can take and use it as His creative word to change their heart from a state of darkness to a state of light. The gospel that God uses to speak a new heart into existence is the same gospel that new heart is embracing or experiencing. This is the effectual call of God through an empowered gospel (v. 14; 1 Thes. 1:4-5).

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14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, ³⁵to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.³⁶

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Chapter 3

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.³⁷

3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.³⁸

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.³⁹

³⁵ **“He called you by our gospel”** – He is referring to the effectual call (1 Cor. 1:26-31; Rom. 8:28-32). When the gospel is empowered by God it calls into existence a believing heart by the command of God (2 Cor. 4:6; Jms. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23, 25). Faith cometh by this empowered word, or the word of command (Rom. 10:17 *rhema* translated “*word*”).

³⁶ **“To the obtaining”** – This is when the gospel comes “*in the Spirit and in power and in much assurance*” (1 Thes. 1:5) or is effectual in actually obtaining entrance into “*the glory*.” Heaven is the present “*glory*” of Christ’s presence. He sits on the right hand of the Father “*in glory*.”

³⁷ **“All men have not faith”** – Advocates for foreseen faith, instead of foreordained faith, demand that all men do have faith and only need to exercise it. However, the Scriptures deny that. Indeed, Jesus says “*no man can come to me*” (Jn. 6:44a) whereby he asserts universal inability of fallen man to believe in or come to Christ by faith. If that were not true then there would be no need for the exception clause that follows that universal denial – “*except the Father draw him*.” Jesus denies that the Father draws “all” men without exception (Jn. 6:64-65) but only draws “all men” without distinction of race, class and gender (Jn. 12:20-32). Christ died for the “*whole world*” or all mankind without distinction of race, class or gender but not for all mankind without exception. Faith is the work of God (Jn. 6:29) in those He first gives to the Son so that they can come to him (Jn. 6:37-39) and internally teaches them (Jn. 6:45). This internal instruction is for “all” the New Covenant people of God (Jn. 6:45a with Isa. 64:13; Jer. 31:33-34; Heb. 8:10-12; 10:12-15). Teaching is impossible from hearing, and so “*everyone*” (Jn. 6:45b pas) that have been taught and heard do come.

³⁸ **“Things which we command you”** – These are the “*things*” of the apostolic doctrine and order or what he calls “*the tradition*” in verse 6. The apostolic faith and order was established in every congregation in the apostolic age (Acts 2:42; 14:2-3; Rom. 16:17; Eph. 4:16; Jd. 3; etc.).

³⁹ **“Patient waiting for Christ”** - No imminent expectation here. The term “*patient*” translates the Greek term *hupomone* which means to endure under pressure or steadfast endurance under tribulation. Physical death is always imminent and can remove us from earth into the presence of God. Moreover, the things that precede his coming may

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6 Now we command you,⁴⁰ brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves⁴¹ from every brother that walketh disorderly,⁴² and not after the tradition⁴³ which he received of us.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.⁴⁴

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all [but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him,⁴⁵ that he may be ashamed.

occur within any generation at any time. Such things usher in the coming of the Lord and are therefore part and parcel the expectation of His coming. So in that sense, our expectation is imminent, as we do not know the “*times or the seasons*” of the day of the Lord (1 Thes. 5:1-3). We do know that for those patiently enduring tribulation in a state of watchfulness, that these things will not come upon them “*as a thief in the night.*”

⁴⁰ “**We command you**” - This is not a suggestion but a command in the strongest language possible. It is a command concerning members in the congregation at Thessalonica that are considered to be a “*brother*” or a true Christian rather than an “*enemy*” (v. 14). Church discipline is essential to preserving the congregation as a metaphorical “*chaste virgin*” (2 Cor. 11:2) or from keeping it from being “*corrupted*” (2 Cor. 11:3) into a metaphorical “*harlot*” (Rev. 17:5). A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump if it is not removed (1 Cor. 5:6).

⁴¹ “**Withdraw yourselves**” -. This is an act by the congregation to remove itself from the transgressor. This is an act by the congregational body to remove that person from its membership (1 Cor. 5:11-13).

⁴² “**Walketh disorderly**” – The Greek term translated “*disorderly*” is taken from the military. It refers to a person marching with soldiers who is marching out of step with the rest. This is not an occasional act, as the present tense demonstrates this is a characteristic practice. This may refer to embracing false doctrine or practice in a characteristic manner.

⁴³ “**The tradition**” – The term “*tradition*” translates the Greek term *paradosis* which simply means to hand over, or give over, or things passed down from one person to another. There are things passed down that are not good (Mt. 15:2-14). However, the apostles were charged with passing down the commandments of Christ (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:42; 14:2-3). Paul is referring to the apostolic doctrine and practice.

⁴⁴ “**Neither should he eat**” - We are living in a time and in a society where healthy capable people don't expect to work and earn their own living, but think they have a right to live off of others. Paul condemns that attitude and instructs the congregation not too feed or sustain them.

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15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all

17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, ⁴⁶which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

⁴⁵ **“Have no company with him”** - We are not to fellowship with those who oppose, violate and reject apostolic faith and order.

⁴⁶ **“With mine own hand”** – Most of the time Paul had someone who wrote his letters while he dictated them. However, in this case, he wanted them to know of how devoted he was to their care, that he wrote the letter himself.

The Key to Understanding the Coming of Christ

Introduction

The term “eschatology” comes from two Greek words *eschatos* (last things”) and *ology* (study of) and means “*study of last things.*” In order to grasp some of the disputes that surround this topic, there must be an understanding of some basic terms that surround this topic.

For example, there are two basic areas of dispute that surround the two terms, “tribulation” and “millennium.” The term “tribulation” refers to a time of great trouble. The term “millennium” means a “thousand” and depending upon your view, it either refers to a *period of time*, before or after His coming, or a *spiritual state* before His coming. Regardless, of your view the word means a “thousand” years.

In regard to the tribulation there are three views – Pre, Mid and Posttribulational. In regard to the millennium there are also three views – Pre-, A-, and Postmillennialists.

Let’s first consider the issue of the millennium. The prefix “pre” means “before.” Some are called “**PRE**-millennialists” because they believe that at the end of this age Christ will come and then set up a kingdom on earth and rule on earth for a thousand years **BEFORE** He ushers in a new heaven and earth. At the beginning of this thousand year period, they believe that the nation Israel will be restored to God and will rule over the other nations of the world during this time. The prefix “pre” points out that they believe His second coming will occur **BEFORE** this thousand year period begins.

Others identify themselves as “**POST**-millennialist. The prefix “post” means “after.” A **POST**-millennialist believes that Jesus will come **AFTER** (post) a thousand year reign. They would spiritualize this thousand year reign. Instead of interpreting it as a period of time or one thousand literal years with Christ literally reigning on earth, they believe it is the present rule of Christ through the gospel. They often call themselves “gospel millennialists” because they believe the gospel is being proclaimed now and through its preaching the world will be converted and welcome Christ to earth. In their perspective things will get better and better due to the proclamation of the gospel during this period we live which they identify as the millennium or a spiritualized state or condition of gospel reign. They do not necessarily believe that the nation of Israel will be restored and reign with Christ over other nations although they do believe a “remnant” of Israel will be saved.

A third group identify themselves as “A-millennialists.” They do not believe in a literal thousand year reign of Christ upon this earth. The prefix “a” means “no” in Greek, and therefore an “A-millennialists” is one who believes in “no millennium” at least in a literal sense. They believe that Christ is reigning in the hearts of His people now and that someday He will come and put down the kingdoms of this world and usher in a new heaven and earth. They do not believe in the restoration of the nation Israel nor do they

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believe in the resurrection of the righteous separated from the unrighteous by a thousand years. They believe in a general resurrection of all the dead at one time at the end of this age when Christ comes after He conquers the nations of this world. Upon the return of Christ the resurrection occurs and He immediately raises all the dead in one resurrection and then one judgment scene occurs after which he immediately creates a new heaven and earth.

Primarily it is among pre-millennialists that there is a dispute over the time of the rapture in regard to the tribulation period. All premillennialists (those who believe Christ will come first and then set up His kingdom on this earth for a thousand years) believe that at the end of this age there will be a time of great trouble upon earth just prior to the second coming and millennial reign of Christ. They are divided over two things concerning this great time of trouble. They disagree when this trouble begins and how long this trouble will last and they disagree concerning the exact time Christ will come in regard to this time of trouble.

Many identify this time of trouble to be seven years in length and synonymous with the 70th week of Daniel in Daniel 9:24-27. Others believe that this time of trouble begins in the middle of the 70th week. Others believe that this time of trouble began with the 70 A.D. destruction of Jerusalem and continues unto the end of this age (historical premillennialist).

The area of dispute over the exact time of Christ's return is identified by three prefixes attached to the word "tribulation" – Pre-tribulation, Mid-tribulation and Post-tribulation. All premillennialist believe He will come before the millennial period. However, some believe He will come before this tribulation period begins, while others believe He will come during the middle of it, while others believe he will come just prior to the close of this period at His revelation in the clouds before he descends.

Those who call themselves "**PRE**-tribulationists" believe that Jesus will come secretly before this time of tribulation begins, and will resurrect and rapture away the saints, and then pour judgments out upon this world, the antichrist and his followers. After this seven year period of tribulation they believe He will come with those raptured saints and put down the antichrist and set up the millennial reign of Christ upon a rehabilitated earth.

Others call themselves "**MID**-tribulationists" and they believe that Christ will not come or resurrect or rapture the saints until the middle of this last seven year period. They would make a distinction between Daniel's 70th week and the great tribulation. They would argue that the tribulation does not begin until the middle of the 70th week of Daniel with the revelation of the Antichrist as "god."

The last group call themselves "**POST**-tribulationists" because they believe that the Second Coming involves only one coming and that it occurs just prior to the battle of Armageddon after the tribulation. They would make a distinction between the 70th week of Daniel and events that occur within this seven year period (such as the great

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tribulation, the wrath of God, the battle of Armageddon, etc.). They believe that Christ resurrects and raptures the saints to meet Him in the air and then descends to put down all earthly kingdoms at the battle of Armageddon before he sets up His millennial reign.

Hence, much of the debate in the area of eschatology revolves mainly around two periods of time. The period called Daniel's 70th week or the final seven years of this age and the period called the millennial reign. You need to study what the Bible says concerning these two time periods and come to a conclusion about what you believe about them.

This writer is what would be called a Post-tribulational Premillennialist. I believe that Christ will come near the end of the 70th week of Daniel just prior to the battle of Armageddon. At that precise time He will resurrect and rapture the saints to Him in the air and then descend and enter into that battle. He will win and put down the kingdoms of this world. After His victory at Armageddon there will be a seventy-five day period wherein Christ will reward His saints according to their works and the marriage of the Lamb will occur followed by the marriage supper that ushers in His thousand year reign over this earth.

The Key Parable

“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh.” – Lk. 21:28

“Now learn a parable...(Mt. 24:32)..Behold the fig tree, and all the trees....When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves...(Mk. 13:28)....ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away...(Lk. 21:29-33)...

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, but my Father only.” – Mt. 24:36

The above scriptures are taken from all three gospel accounts of what many call the Olivet Discourse. It is called the Olivet Discourse because Jesus spoke these things on the Mount of Olivet. The Olivet Discourse is the only full length discussion the Lord left us about end time events. The parable of *“the fig tree and all the trees”* is one of the parables spoken by the Lord in this discourse. The above combinations of texts provide the fuller picture of this grand parable. For example, Luke 21:28 acts as the transition verse between the previous historical section (Luke 21:7-27) and the following parabolic section (Luke 21:28-33). This discourse opens with a historical listing of events and closes with parables. Luke 21:28 is the introduction and transition verse between the

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historical and parabolic sections. Luke 21:29 and Mark 13:28 provide more details left out by Matthew. Matthew 24:36 provides the natural conclusion to the primary lesson of this parable.

Why should we be diligent to “*learn*” this parable above all other parables dealing with end time events? First, it is the only end time parable Jesus commanded us to “*learn*.” This separates it from all the others. Second, this is the only parable repeated in all three accounts. No other parable has this kind of emphasis. Luke records no other parable but this one and Mark records no other parable found in Matthew but this one. Finally, in all three accounts the Holy Spirit places this parable first before all others in all three accounts.

These three facts clearly demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is giving this parable preeminence above all other parables in this discourse. These facts demonstrate this parable is intended to be the interpretative parable. The fact that Luke records no other parable but this one clearly shows it is intended to be the interpretative parable. He commands us to “*learn*” this parable because it is the key to understanding what Jesus means when he says “*watch*” in all the following parables. There are several things we can learn from this parable.

A. Learn the Primary Lesson of the Parable:

There are some that believe the primary lesson of this parable is to understand the “*fig*” tree to represent Israel. The inclusive “*all*” along with the mention of the “*fig*” tree means that the “*fig*” tree and “*all the trees*” share something in common. It is this common factor shared between “*all*” the trees that provides the primary lesson of this parable.

The “*fig tree*” was mentioned by name because those listening would most naturally be watching it above all others because of its coveted fruit. However, the primary lesson of this parable had to do with what the “*fig*” tree had in common (rather than in contrast) with “*all the trees*.” What do all trees have in common? During spring time the “*fig*” tree and “*all the trees*” react in a common way. They begin to bring forth green spouts and leaves. It is this common productivity found in “*all the trees*” including the “*fig*” tree that Jesus is going to use to teach His primary lesson.

His lesson has for its focus not the type of tree but the type of response and time of that response which all trees share in common. The response is the productivity of leaves and sprouts which indicate that the time is now spring.

“When they now shoot forth, ye SEE and KNOW of your own selves that summer is nigh at hand.” – Lk. 21:30

Did you get the point? When the sprouting takes place, those WATCHING can know what time it is “*NOW*” and therefore can also know what time is “*NIGH*.” When this

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response occurs spring is “*now*” and summer is “*nigh*.” Therefore His primary lesson is concerning how to **KNOW** what time it is by WATCHING for specific preceding events to summer.

“*WHEN ye shall see these things....KNOW that it is near, even at the doors.*” – Mt. 24:33

“*WHEN ye shall see these things.....KNOW that it is nigh, even at the doors.*” – Mk. 13:29

“*When they **now** shoot forth, ye **SEE** and **KNOW** of your own selves that **summer is nigh at hand.***” – Lk. 21:30

After clearly emphasizing this primary point shared by “all the trees” Jesus directly applies this illustration in nature to His kingdom coming.

“*SO LIKEWISE ye, when ye shall see all these things, KNOW that it is near, even at the doors*” – Mt. 24:33

“*SO ye IN LIKE MANNER, when ye shall see these things come to pass, KNOW that it is nigh, even at the doors*” – Mk. 13:29

“*LIKEWISE ye, when ye see these things come to pass, KNOW that the KINGDOM OF GOD is nigh at hand.*” – Lk. 21:29,31

“*And WHEN these things BEGIN to come to pass, THEN look up, and lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh.*” – Lk.21:28

The point of this parable is to define how to know what is presently unknown. The illustration from nature shows how to know that Spring is “*now*” and therefore KNOW that summer is “*nigh at hand*.” The words “*SO LIKEWISE*” or “*SO...IN LIKE MANNER*” demand that the same point is being made in regard to His coming and the preceding signs that announce it. Apart from these preceding signs there is no other way to KNOW the “*day*” and “*hour*” or “*times*” and “*seasons*” as His coming is hid to all but the Father.

“*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only*” – Mt. 24:36

“*...Lord, wilt thou AT THIS TIME restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW the times or the seasons, which THE FATHER HATH PUT IN HIS OWN POWER.*” – Acts 1:6, 7

This parable teaches that the Father has designated heralds at a precise time in the future to reveal the time of Christ’s coming to all who are watching. Hence, just as watching for summer is inseparable from watching for those Spring time events that

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announce it is nigh at hand, so likewise, it is impossible to be watching for the Lord's coming apart from watching for those preceding events that announce it is nigh at hand.

Just as watching and being ready for summer fruits inseparably includes watching for the trees to announce Spring life, so likewise, watching and being ready for the Lord's coming involves watching and being ready for those preceding events that herald it is nigh at hand. This is the point of the parable of "*all the trees*." Watching is inclusive of both the heralds and the appearance of His coming. Hence, to "*watch*" is defined by this first parable to be inclusive of both the heralds of His coming as well as His personal appearance.

The more imminent aspect of His coming is the herald aspect of it as this precedes and announces that His appearance is at hand. Moreover, there is no warning that one is in the middle of the 70th week, because the things that characterize all previous generations (Mt. 24:5-14) characterize the first half of Daniel's week. Hence, His coming, regarded as inclusive of the heralds and actual appearance (Mt. 24:15-31) is imminent in that none can know when it will begin except by watching for it to occur. It is also imminent from God's perspective of time (2 Pet. 3:8-9).

This first parable has defined what we are to watch for (the heralds) if we are to be watching for the Lord's return at all. Jesus closes this parable by reminding us that NONE but the Father knows the time of His coming and therefore we must be watching NOW unless we be taken by surprise and "*these things*" come upon us like a "*snare*" or like a "*thief*" and catch us in an unready state in disgrace. Remember, there is no such thing as instant holiness, watching involves spiritual readiness inclusive of growth in progressive sanctification and daily readiness.

The historical section has warned us how we ought not to respond to these things when they occur. In so doing, He is implying that we ought to be ready to respond the right way. That right way is described in Luke 21:28. How to be ready to respond that way is the subject of the parabolic section that follows. Those ready can respond to the heralds in joy whereas those not ready can only respond like the rest of the world (fear, surprise, deception, ignorance, and in dishonor).

The parable of the "*good man*" is an illustration to impress upon the reader the need of constant watchfulness. Jesus said "*if the good man of the house would have known what hour the thief had come HE WOULD HAVE WATCHED.*" – The point is, he DID NOT watch and so his house was damaged. The damage refers back to the warnings in the historical part. The world will be damaged by surprise, confusion, deception and fear because they are not ready or watching. If he had been watching he would **not** have been caught by surprise. Constant readiness and watching is the lesson of this parable.

The illustration "*of the days of Noah*" teaches us that those who fail to take heed and watch will be caught by surprise. Jesus says that they "*knew not.*" This answers the objection often thrown against Posttribbers. The objection is "*how can anyone be taken*

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by surprise when the tribulation begins”? Jesus answers this objection by the illustration of Noah. How could anyone be taken by surprise by the flood? Didn't Noah warn them for over 100 years? Didn't the building of the Ark alert them to coming judgment? Didn't the animals marching in two by two (seven by seven of the clean) alert them? Yet the Bible says that when the flood came they “*knew not*.”

It didn't take Noah or his family by surprise. Why? Because Noah and his family took heed and watched and was ready. When “*these things begin to come to pass*” they will take by surprise all those who were not prepared in advance.

The parable of the just and unjust stewards teaches another area of advance preparation for His coming. There is no such thing as instant holiness. When these things begin to come to pass it will be too late to become holy. Holiness comes by progressive faithfulness to God's Word. Those living unholy or ungodly lives will not be ready for what these things announce – the coming of the Lord in judgment. These things will bring judgments upon the unfaithful stewards and shut them out of the joy of those described in Luke 21:28.

The parable of the ten virgins is a very clear and very simple point. Both knew in advance that the Lord was coming. The wise did what was necessary in ADVANCE to prepare for that coming while the foolish did not. Jesus had instructed His disciples in the historical section of what to expect and how not to respond when these things begin. The wise would take heed to this instruction and be prepared to respond exactly as instructed “when these things begin.” In so doing, they could receive these things joyfully in great expectation. On the other hand, those who are not mentally and spiritual prepared for such things in advance will be shut out of that particular joy of His coming. The point of this parable is that it is FOOLISH not to prepare in advance for what you know will come. Those who are not prepared in ADVANCE will be scurrying about trying to obtain mentally and spiritually what the wise obtained in advance. The point is that those who do not take heed to His instructions concerning “*these things*” in advance will be SHUT OUT of that particular joy that can only be for those ready when these things begin (Lk. 21:28).

The parable of the talents provides us with another lesson of advance preparation. While we are watching and waiting we are to be busy in the Lord's work. Those standing idle will not be ready to face the Lord at His coming. Watching includes spiritual faithfulness BEFORE He comes.

The parable of the sheep and goats teach that separation will occur within the professing kingdom of God when Christ returns. Many other texts teach this same judgment of professors (Mt. 7:21-23; 13:28-30; 36-43). The goats asked when Christ was in such need and they did not respond to His needs. In other words they claimed to be Christians. At that day Christ will not judge the fitness for entrance into His kingdom on the basis of mere profession of faith but rather upon the evidence of a living faith. The term “*brethren*” is being referred to in the same sense as “little children” in Matthew 18. Both the “*brethren*” and “*little children*” are spoken of in the third person but

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represent true believers. The point of this last parable is that mere profession does not make you ready for the Lord's return. These goats refer to professing Christians that survive the tribulation period such as the evil servant and the idle servant in the previous parables.

Throughout these parables the emphasis has been on holy living and the uncertainty of timing when the Lord returns and therefore the need for constant watchfulness. We believe this fits perfectly with the intent of the parable of "*all the trees*." Now nobody knows the exact time of His coming therefore in order to KNOW that time we must be CONSTANTLY WATCHING and READY. That time will be announced by particular preceding events yet in the future and the time for these revealing events are yet unknown. To simply wait until "these things" occur before attempting to get ready for His coming is IMPOSSIBLE because holiness is not something you put on or take off. Either you will be ready to respond in joy to these things or you will not and the difference is advance mental preparation and expectation.

Some have lifted Matthew 24:36 out of its context and demanded that Jesus is referring to an altogether different coming than what the immediate context has just described (Mt. 24:29-35). Not only is such an interpretation unwarranted by the immediate context but it is destructive to the intent of the parable that precedes it. The intent of that parable is to define what Christ wants us to be watching for when later He says "watch" and why we need to watch for preceding events as that is the only way to come to KNOW what none presently know but the Father.

"...when ye shall see these things come to pass KNOW that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

B. Learn The Subjects being Addressed:

The subjects are identified in the parable as "*ye*." Grammatically, pronouns are identified by their nearest antecedent. If we trace this pronoun back to its nearest antecedent we find that it is identified in Matthew 24:3 as "*the disciples*" and in verse 1 as "*his disciples*". Mark 13:3 more specifically identifies these disciples as "*Peter and James and John and Andrew*". From the beginning of this discourse unto the end there is no change in the pronoun and therefore no change in the subject being addressed. This whole discourse is spoken to "*his disciples*."

The issue of debate has always been concerning what capacity is Christ addressing "*His disciples*"? Are they being addressed by the common understanding of the term "*disciple*" as used in the New Testament or is there a departure from this common meaning? The book of Matthew provides only one definition of "*His disciples*" and that is found in Matthew 28:19-20. This definition is followed by all other gospel writers and epistles. The Bible knows of no other definition or usage of "*His disciples*" outside of the Matthew 28:19-20 definition. It certainly cannot be disputed that "*Peter and James and John and Andrew*" were of the Matthew 28:19-20 kind of disciple.

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Some argue that they represent a special class of unbaptized and unchurched Jewish believers during the Great Tribulation. However, will the immediate context support such a new and different definition of “*His disciples*”? For example, does the Bible anywhere identify a special class of unbaptized, and unchurched believers as “*His disciples*”? Does the immediate context explicitly make such an application?

Whoever they might represent, one thing is clear from the grammar. The grammar demands that only one subject is consistently addressed from beginning to the end of this discourse. Grammar says there is no change to another subject.

Not only does the grammar demand one consistent subject being addressed but the contextual development insists that the same subject is being addressed throughout the discourse. For example, Matthew 24:5-29 lists events still future to those being addressed as “His disciples.” The purpose in listing these events is not only to answer their question about the future but primarily to instruct them how to respond to such things when they face them. For example, they are not to be deceived when false Christ’s arrive. They are not to believe certain things indicate the end has come. They are not to fear such things when they do come. They are not to believe certain teachings about His coming. In Matthew 24:25 Jesus bluntly tells “*his disciples*” – “*Behold I have told you BEFORE.*” Hence, from Matthew 24:5 until Matthew 24:25 they represent the same subject whom is being forewarned prior to any of these things coming to pass. This fact demands two obvious conclusions.

First, they are being addressed as PRE-crisis disciples. If “these things” are descriptive of the 70 AD destruction then they are PRE-70 AD disciples. If the contextual crisis is the 70th week of Daniel then they are PRE-70th week disciples. Whatever the crisis may be they are “his disciples” prior to these things. That makes them PREtribulation disciples.

Second, there is no sense in forewarning them if they are not going to be present when these things come to pass. Why tell them not to believe certain teachings if they will not be present when such teachings occur? Why tell them not to fear that certain things indicate the end has come if they are not present when such things occur? Hence, common sense dictates that they are being forewarned as Pretrib disciples because they will remain on earth and become tribulation disciples. Luke 21:28 makes the transition from prewarned pretrib disciples to tribulation disciples.

“And when these things begin to come to pass then look up and lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh”.

Matthew 24:5-29 list the preceding things to His coming and warn them how they ought not to respond to such things. However, Luke 21:28 instructs them how they should respond to these things. While the world responds “*Oh no, woe is me*” they are to respond in excited expectation that these same things herald the near coming of Christ – “*Oh boy, here comes the Lord.*”

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He has told them how not to respond as well as how they should respond to these things when they begin to come to pass. In the parabolic section (Mt. 24:32-25:30), he instructs them how they can be ready to respond as directed in Luke 21:28.

AD 70 and/or 70th Week Disciples

There have been two extreme applications of this discourse. There are those who insist that it has already been completely fulfilled in the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman General Titus. There are others that are just as insistent that it is all yet future, and will be fulfilled in the 70th week of Daniel.

The truth is that both are right and both are wrong. Jesus is employing a prophetic technique commonly used by Old Testament prophets. He is prophetically describing a greater event way off in the distant future (70th week of Daniel) through the use of a lesser nearer event (70 AD destruction).

For example, both Isaiah and Jeremiah would predict the near fall of Assyria by Babylon and then the fall of Babylon by the Medo-Persia kingdom. However, they would use terms and descriptions that would go beyond the immediate and find fulfillment in the overthrow of the final kingdoms of this world by God at the end of the age. So likewise Jesus is using the near AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem to point to and describe the final attack of the Antichrist against Jerusalem in the 70th week of Daniel at the end of this age.

Both Matthew and Mark place emphasis upon the far event. However, Luke who is writing to gentiles (Lk. 1:3) separates the two events because the gentile reader would not be familiar with this prophetic technique.

Luke describes the AD 70 destruction in Luke 21:20-24a. He also predicts the aftermath of a span of time when Israel is scattered into all nations. However, he then introduces the second event with the words *“until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled.”* These words needed no explanation to the readers of Daniel. The precise time of this fulfillment is spelled out by Daniel in the following language:

*“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand **UNTIL a time and times and the dividing of time.** But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.” – Dan. 7:24-27*

This three and half year period is the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles. Here is how the times of the gentiles will be fulfilled. It will be fulfilled in a three and half year

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period at the end of the age when tribulation upon God's saints occurs and wrath upon the Antichrist and his kingdom will occur. Luke goes on to describe God's wrath upon the world (Lk. 21:25-26) which is later described by John under the metaphors of trumpets and vials.

This double application resolves the argument over what "*this generation*" means. It refers to "*this generation*" at Christ's first coming which would see the near prophetic event in AD 70. It also refers to "*this generation*" at Christ's second coming which would see the far prophetic event described in Daniel.

Furthermore, in regard to the near AD 70 event it cannot be denied that "*his disciples*" refers to the literal baptized church "*disciples*". They would literally see all those things that led up to and culminate in the AD 70 destruction. They were PRE-70 AD disciples. So likewise, the final application has to do with that generation of disciples living prior to the far event. They are PRE-trib disciples.

The grammar and context of the Olivet Discourse absolutely demands this. The pronoun remains unchanged throughout the discourse. They are obviously pretrib disciples because they are warned in advance. They become tribulation disciples because they are told how to respond "*when these things begin*" (Lk. 21:28). Those "*disciples*" in "*this generation*" that precedes the 70th week of Daniel not only see all these things begin but they see all these things actually come to pass including the coming of Christ in power (Lk. 21:30). No amount of mental gymnastics can avoid these clear statements and deny the continuity of the subject before, at and during those things being described. The subject does not change at any juncture. Regardless of whether it is the near or the far application "this generation" precedes the crisis and then enter into it. Next it will be proven that "this generation" refers to the literal generation at the first and the second coming of Christ.

This Generation, not "race"

Prior to 1984 there was general agreement among conservative scholars that "*this generation*" referred to the common understanding of the term "*generation*." However, most interpreted the Biblical "*generation*" to be 40 years. In 1948 Israel returned to Palestine and most conservative scholars believed that within a period of 40 years the end would come. However, when it did not come as expected another interpretation became more popular. They decided that the Greek term should be translated by the rare meaning "*race*" instead of "*generation*." This interpretation would not limit "*these things*" to a limited time frame but rather to the continuity of the Jewish race. The resulting idea was that THE JEWISH RACE would not go out of existence until all these things be fulfilled. This interpretation gave them more breathing room.

However, does the context support this new interpretation? One basic rule of interpretation demands that we must accept the common meaning of a word as long as the common meaning makes sense before seeking a rare meaning. "*Race*" is a rare

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meaning. Can the common meaning make sense in this context. Those who oppose the common meaning argue that the common meaning makes no sense in this context. These interpreters see only the final and ultimate application (70th week) and thus argue that “this generation” to whom Christ was literally speaking did not live to see such things. However, was Christ referring to His own generation at the first advent in Matthew 24:35 or to the generation that would see all these things begin as well as come to pass in fulfillment?

Moreover, if the prophetic technique of a dual fulfillment is recognized then the common meaning makes perfect sense. If Christ has in view two separate events and two separate generations – the generation at His first advent and the generation at his second advent, then, “*this generation*” as applied to each advent makes perfect sense. Such an application of “*this generation*” would mean that the literal generation at the first advent would indeed “see all these things come to pass” in regard to the AD 70 prediction. Likewise, the application of “*this generation*” to the second advent would mean that the literal generation at the second advent would indeed “*see all these things come to pass*” in regard to the 70th week of Daniel.

Furthermore, the common meaning is fully supported by the immediate context. The first mention of “*this generation*” is found in Matthew 23:36. Here Jesus contrasts “*the days of our fathers*” who killed the prophets with “*this generation*” (Mt. 23:30,36). Making a contrast between “*the days of our fathers*” and “*this race*” makes no sense as the “*this race*” would be inclusive instead of contrasting. The phrase “*days of our fathers*” is synonymous with the “*generations of our fathers.*” Christ’s point is that in each “*generation*” the prophets received the same treatment as He would receive in “*this generation.*” However, “*this generation*” is the culmination of all previous generations as “*this generation*” will kill the prophet of Whom all prophets in all previous generations prophesied about. Hence, the rejection and killing of Christ was the culmination of all previous generations. Absolute evidence that “*generation*” instead of “*race*” is the intended meaning is the fact that Christ begins with “*Abel*” as the first prophet killed. The Jewish “*race*” had no existence prior to Abraham. However, Abel was the first prophet killed in the first “*generation*” of mankind and every generation since has followed suit. The particular evil of “*this generation*” is that they would reject Christ while all other generations rejected only those who predicted Christ. In Matthew 23:36 “*this generation*” by context refers to the literal generation that would see the AD 70 destruction because of their rejection of Christ.

His second use of “*this generation*” occurs in Matthew 24:34. Immediately after saying “*this generation*” in Matthew 24:34, Christ compares “*this generation*” with “*the days of Noah*” (Mt. 24:37). This phrase “*days of*” is synonymous with the idea of Noah’s “*generation.*” He is not referring to the “*days*” before or after Noah but to that present generation which witnessed all those things that led up to the end of the world. The point of comparison is that Noah’s “*generation*” was the final generation at the end of a world. They saw all those things that announced the end of the world come to pass. So likewise, “*this generation*” or the final generation of mankind will also see all the preceding signs that announce coming judgment at the end of the world.

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In Matthew 23:36 “*this generation*” has reference to the generation living at Christ’s first advent which would see the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as the judgment prophesied in Isaiah 28 and Daniel 9:26:

“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.” – Dan. 9:26

However, in Matthew 24:34 we have it referring to the literal and final generation of mankind on earth. We know the context demands this because there is the immediate comparison with “*As in the days of Noah.*” The telescopic technique used by the prophets would only reinforce this interpretation. If it is recognized that Jesus is combining two events, one near while the other one is far in the future, then, “*this generation*” could be applied to each without contradiction and make perfect sense. He is describing the far distant 70th week event in terms that also apply in a limited way to the near 70 AD prophetic destruction of Jerusalem. Both the first and second coming “*generations*” are in view.

Learn what “things” you need to watch for

In Matthew 24:5-14 Jesus first describes things that we are not to interpret as indicators that the end is near (Mt. 24:6,8):

“...for ALL THESE THINGS must come to pass, but the end is not yet.” – v. 6

“ALL THESE THINGS are the beginning of sorrows” – v. 8

Jesus is describing general birth pangs that can be found in every generation including the last generation. However, as such, they do not clearly distinguish the last from all others. Therefore He plainly says that “*all these things*” do not indicate the end of the world has come. These things are not the distinctive signs of the final generation.

Beginning in Matthew 24:15 the specific things that reveal the last generation are spelled out in detail. Indeed, verse 15 is introduced by a watch word “*When ye shall see*” and then followed by verses which describe a particular period of time identified as “then” and “those days” and finally closes with the time words “*immediately after THE TRIBULATION OF THOSE DAYS*” (v. 29). Between verses 15-29 there is a definite period yet to come with definite signs that is called “*the tribulation of those days*”.

Remember that Jesus is using the Old Testament technique of a future final event crouched in the description of a near event. If we want to know what are the specific signs of the **near** event they are spelled out in Luke 21:20-24a. If we want to know what are the specifics of the **far** and **final** event it is found in the language that goes beyond the AD 70 event which includes the actual coming of Christ in the clouds. Matthew and

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Mark emphasize the signs of the far event while Luke emphasizes the preceding signs of the near event. This provides both “*generations*” clear warning.

For example, Matthew and Mark point the reader to the eschatological person of the “*abomination of desolation*” found in the book of Daniel – the picture of the final antichrist on earth. On the other hand, Luke points to the “armies” of Titus the Roman General (Lk. 21:20). Matthew and Mark speak of a “*shortened*” tribulation that is greater than any that ever preceded it or will follow it. Luke also brings the reader up to the final great crisis at the end of the world when he says “*until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled*” (Lk. 21:24b). Any reader of Daniel knew that the times of the gentiles would be fulfilled by the final beastly kingdom at the end of this age (Dan. 7:19,23) under the antichrist (Dan. 7:20-21,24-26) Indeed, Luke continues after his description of the AD 70 destruction and the scattering of Israel among the gentile nations to describe a time of universal trouble after the fall destruction of Jerusalem and scattering of Israel among the nations that the world has never seen before or will see again:

“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations; with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of the heaven shall be shaken.” – Lk. 21:25-26

These are the things that terminate the “*times of the Gentiles*” as well as the end of this age. They are those things described in the book of Revelation under the trumpets and vials.

Matthew and Mark mix the near with the far whereas Luke separates them from each other. Luke is writing to gentiles (Lk. 1:3) who would not be familiar with the prophetic technique of mixing so He separates the two.

As the literal disciples being addressed in the Olivet Discourse were PRE-70 AD disciples being warned in advance in order to know how to respond when Titus the Roman general encompassed Jerusalem, SO LIKEWISE, we as PRE-trib disciples are to be watching for those things that announce the 70th week in order that we too might respond accordingly (Lk. 21:28).

What we are to be watching for are those things that define the final generation of mankind from all previous generations. It is “these things” that herald the end of the age and it is these things that the parable of the trees would have us WATCH for.

Learn the designated time for an increased Expectation

*“And **WHEN** these things BEGIN to come to pass **THEN** look up, lift up your heads for your redemption draweth **nigh**.”* – Lk. 21:28

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The above verse specifies an exact point of time when an increased expectation is to begin. This exact point of time begins “*when these things BEGIN to come to pass.*” As previously noted, Jesus is not talking about those things listed in Matthew 24:5-14 but rather those things beginning in Matthew 24:15-29. Those things listed in Matthew 24:15-29 are the things that identify the second half of the 70th week of Daniel. The abomination of desolation is revealed in the midst of the 70th week according to Daniel 12:11-13. It is this specific sign that reveals exactly what time it is on God’s prophetic calendar. All other previous things (Mt. 24:5-14) are general signs that characterize every generation to some extent. But “*when you shall see...the abomination of desolation*” you know exactly what time it is. Hence, at this precise point the countdown can begin.

It is significant that Jesus says that they can know that their redemption “*draweth nigh.*” There is a great difference between “near” and “here.” Jesus does not say that their redemption is here when these things begin. He says it is “*nigh*” or near. They are to respond to these end time events with greater expectation for the coming of the Lord. Why? Because “*this generation*” will be the first generation in the history of mankind (other than Noah’s) that can KNOW that the end has come and the Lord’s return is nigh at hand.

All the parables that follow this interpretative parable impress upon the reader the need for watching NOW for Christ as defined by this interpretative parable. The kind of expectation described in the parables that follow this interpretative parable implies two things. First, the uncertainty of “*when these things*” will begin and the need for constant readiness. Second the certain expectation of the Kingdom of God when these things do begin. Hence, by context these parables are applicable only to pretrib disciples entering the second half of the 70th week of Daniel. Obviously, the generation of disciples seeing all these things come to pass cannot help but have a greater expectation of the soon return of Christ. They will be the only generation that can KNOW how nigh His coming is.

The Expectation of Early Christians

In the first three centuries of Christianity, the early Christians mistakenly believed that the abomination of desolation or antichrist was revealed in the Roman Emperor who claimed to be God and to be worshipped as God. Under his persecution they believed they were already in the Great Tribulation and therefore expressed the expectation that Christ’s coming was shortly at hand.

Pretrib historians quote only the aspects of their expectation while avoiding their clear belief that the churches of Christ were either already in the Great Tribulation or were about to enter it. Pretrib historians acknowledge that these Christians expressed the belief they were already in or about to enter tribulation but dismiss it because they are unable to harmonize these two aspects. However, their belief was consistent with Christ’s teaching in the parable of “*all the trees*”. It is the pretrib historians that have

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failed to learn this parable and therefore failed to understand these early Christians. All Baptist groups during the dark ages clearly stated that they believed they were already in the Great Tribulation and identified Rome as the Great Whore and the Pope as the Antichrist. In accordance with that belief they also expressed an expectation for the soon return of Christ. These early Christians responded to what they perceived to be the antichrist and the 70th week of Daniel just as Christ taught them:

“And when these things begin to come to pass then look up and lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh.” – Lk. 21:28

Learn from the parable of “*all the trees*” that an expectation for the soon appearing of Christ is consistent with thinking you’re in the Great Tribulation or about to enter it. Learn from the parable of “*all the trees*” that WATCHING for Christ’s return includes watching for these things to begin. Learn from this parable that you MUST be watching NOW for these things to begin in order to KNOW in advance when the Kingdom of God is coming nigh. The parables that follow this interpretative parable simply reinforce these principles. The parables that follow are applicable to disciples that will see all these things begin to come to pass in the final generation. Are we the final generation? That can only be KNOWN if we see these things “*begin*” to come to pass.

“Therefore what I say unto you, I say UNTO ALL, Watch” – Mk. 13:37

The expectation of those being addressed in the Olivet parables is dependent upon “*when ye shall see these things come to pass.*” Knowing how near the coming of the Lord is, is dependent upon “*when ye shall see these things come to pass.*” The parable of all the trees demands that you cannot be watching for the return of Christ without watching for “*when...these things begin to come to pass.*” The parable of all the trees defines what it means to “watch” for Christ in all the following parables of the Olivet Discourse. This is why it stands at the head of all the other parables. This is why it is the only parable repeated three times. This is why Jesus commands us to “learn” this parable.

Therefore, our expectation is an *any generation* expectation and all these things can “*shortly come to pass*”. Be alert and be watching for you do not know the hour or the day, the times or the seasons apart from WATCHING for these things to begin.

Learn the Certainty of the fulfillment of unfulfilled prophecy

“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.”
– Mt. 24:35

The ultimate proof of the inspiration of the scriptures is 100% fulfilled prophecy. All other religions and all other religious writings cannot measure up to this standard. Only God can be so accurate and therefore only the Bible is God’s Word. The failure of even

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one unfulfilled prophecy would make God a liar and His word untrustworthy and reduce Him down to the level of the gods of other world religions.

There is a theory today that is very popular which has its basis in the denial that there exists even one unfulfilled prophecy that must precede the coming of the Lord. The popular “any second” expectation of the Lord’s return rests solely upon the belief that nothing prevents the Lord from returning at “any second” since He ascended into heaven. If there is but one unfulfilled prophecy after His ascension into heaven that must be fulfilled prior to His return, then, this would be SOMETHING that would prevent anyone from believing that NOTHING prevents His return at any second. If such unfulfilled prophecies exist after the ascension of Christ then any theory that would deny such is a serious error as it would force those who embrace that theory to choose between prophetic inspiration and this any second theory. It is impossible to believe that preceding prophecies must be fulfilled prior to the Lord’s return while at the same time believing NOTHING prevents the Lord from returning at any second. There is no middle ground; one is true while the other is error. If there are preceding prophecies that need to be fulfilled first then to embrace a theory which deny their fulfillment is to deny the inspiration of the Word of God. Nothing can be more heretical than taking a position that forces you to deny prophetic inspiration as all other truth depends upon prophetic inspiration.

We can clearly show that not merely one, but many unfulfilled prophecies prevented early Christians from believing such a theory.

For example, even before the ascension into heaven, Jesus commanded them to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit “*not many days hence.*” This prophecy was emphasized by John the Baptist and Christ. This is something that prevented an *any second* expectation of His return after His ascension. He could not come before without making God a liar and the scriptures untrustworthy.

For example, before the ascension into heaven, Jesus commanded them to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judah and Samaria unto the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). This was the great commission of the Church. It wasn’t until Acts 8 that the church went further than Jerusalem. It wasn’t until after Acts 10 that the first gentile was witnessed to. It wasn’t until Acts 13 that the first missionaries were sent unto the gentiles. Even at the writing of Acts 28 Paul had not gone to Gaul and other parts. This is SOMETHING that prevented an “any second” expectation of His return after His ascension. He could not come before this without making God a liar and the scriptures untrustworthy.

For example, after His ascension into heaven Peter stood up and quoted an unfulfilled prophecy in regard to the office of Judas (Acts 1:15-17). He said that this prophecy “must” be fulfilled. Here is SOMETHING that prevents the any second expectation after His ascension. He could not come before this without making God a liar and the scriptures untrustworthy.

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For example, God told Ananias that Paul “must” suffer many things for His name sake and go “*bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel*” (Acts 9:15-16). This necessarily implied a long and extended ministry. Paul had not been sent out unto the Gentiles prior to Acts 13. He was still quoting this statement by Christ in Acts 22:21 and Acts 26. Here is SOMETHING that prevented an *any second* expectation after His ascension. He could not come before these things without making Himself a liar and the scriptures untrustworthy.

For example, Christ told Paul by the Holy Spirit “*in every city*” (Acts 20:23) that he “*must*” go to Jerusalem, and then he “must” go to Rome (Acts 23:11) and then he “must” stand before Caesar (Acts 27:24). Here are SOME THINGS that prevented Christ from coming at “any second” after His ascension. He could not come before these things without making Himself a liar and the scriptures untrustworthy.

For example, Christ told all of us in the Olivet Discourse that Jerusalem would be destroyed BEFORE they were scattered into all nations and BEFORE the times of the Gentiles would be fulfilled (Lk. 20:24) and BEFORE the 70th week of Daniel begins (Dan. 9:26). Here is SOMETHING that prevents the “any second” expectation of Christ’s return after His ascension. He could not come before these things without making Himself a liar and the scriptures untrustworthy.

For example, Isaiah prophesied that the cannon of Scripture would be completed under the supervision of the Apostles prior to the coming of the Lord (Isa. 8:16-18). Jesus affirmed this promise in the upper room by the coming of the Holy Spirit which would lead them into “*all truth*”. The apostles recognized this prophetic task and claimed to be fulfilling it (2 Pet. 3:15-17; I Jn. 4:5-6; Rev. 22:17-18). Here is SOMETHING that prevents the expectation of an “any second” return after the ascension of Christ. He could not come before this without making God a liar and the scriptures untrustworthy.

For example, Peter was told that when he was young he went where he wanted but when he grew old he would die a certain type of death (Jn. 21:18-19). John said that these things were popularly known (Jn. 21:23) and especially since he published in his gospel. Peter says this prophecy was well known (2 Pet. 1:14) as he also published it abroad. Here is SOMETHING that prevented the expectation of an “any second” return after His ascension. He could not come before this without making Himself a liar and the scriptures untrustworthy.

The list goes on and on (Isa. 11:11, 2 Thes. 2:1-3, etc.). However, only ONE is sufficient to prove that the “any second” theory is something that New Testament Christianity could not believe without making God a liar and the scriptures untrustworthy.

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How do Pretrib theologians respond to such problems to their theory?

First, some argue that all these things could have occurred FASTER than they actually did. Grant it but still they had to happen FIRST and anything which must happen FIRST denies an expectation that demands NOTHING must happen first.

Second, some deny the need of fulfillment. They argue that Jesus could come and render all these things unnecessary. In other words, they are clearly inferring that the Holy Spirit is a liar and the prophetic word is not dependable.

Third, some try to argue that all unfulfilled prophecies are NOW fulfilled and therefore nothing NOW prevents the any second return. This is an admission of error. This admits that New Testament Christianity could not and did not believe in imminency and therefore it is only NOW an acceptable belief. This also begs the question. How can we NOW believe in a doctrine that New Testament writers could not teach nor believe THEN? The scores of unfulfilled prophecies prevented any apostle from believing that NOTHING prevents the any second return of the Lord. If many unfulfilled prophecies existed THEN how can we be sure that many do not exist NOW? This is just mental gymnastics that tries to beg the question.

Last, some try to argue that most Christians did not know of these unfulfilled prophecies and therefore they believed nothing prevented them from embracing an any second return of Christ. These prophecies were published early and spread among the churches. More importantly, the Holy Spirit knew and such a theory would make Him speak out of both sides of His mouth. The Holy Spirit would not teach some that necessary preceding prophecies were still unfulfilled while leading others to believe nothing needed to be fulfilled. – This makes God the author of confusion.

You cannot believe in the inspiration of the scriptures and hold to the pretrib theory. Why? Simply because the pretrib doctrine of imminence forbids you to believe in the necessary fulfillment of unfulfilled preceding prophecies prior to the coming of the Lord. You cannot believe that NOTHING prevents an any second return and at the same instant believe that SOMETHINGS must be fulfilled prior to the Lord's return. You must choose one or the other as they contradict each other. To choose the pretrib doctrine is to deny the explicit teaching of the scriptures.