



THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THE FIG TREE

Before Life Group

Read [Mark 13:5-31](#)

Jesus and His disciples were leaving the temple that day when one of His disciples made a comment on the beauty of the temple. It was an architectural marvel that easily drew crowds to see and experience the blessing and provision of God. The comment, while appearing largely to be small talk, spurred in Jesus a teaching moment for the disciples. For however grand and great the temple, it would, eventually fall and be demolished. The marvel of this world would only be temporary. The spiritual unseen battle would take the focus for this particular teaching moment.

While the parable that Jesus tells can be found in verses 28-31, it is important to understand the context in which Jesus is speaking. The conversation was birthed out of an understanding regarding the end of time. For everything the people saw appeared as though the end was at hand. The Romans had occupied and oppressed the people. There were constant wars and even more rumors of wars. The world endured famine, storms and decay. On top of that, God stood before them incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. These seemed to be obvious signs that the world was coming to an end.

God, however, had different plans. For all the supposed signs that displayed themselves to the world, this would not be the end, not yet. The coming of Jesus Christ was a sign of restoration, not the sign of the end. Christ's first coming would be the sign that God's hope and desire that others could return to their right standing with Him. The works of Christ on the cross paved the path for mankind's safe return amidst the decay of the world. As the increase of troubles and persecution arise, we are reminded that we stand in the harvest season with Christ returning His people to Himself.

For the Christian, these signs are the signs of the changing of seasons. Just as the changing of leaves signals a new time for the earth, the changing times we experience shows that we are quickly approaching the final era of humanity. All the troubles, the groanings of the earth, and everything else we see and experience that feels troublesome are merely signs of this earth coming to its conclusion. While some would claim that the end is coming, the Christian can hold fast to hope. For us, it will not be the end but rather the continuance of our eternity with Jesus Christ. We may feel persecution during this day and age, but the signs of the changing seasons are upon us; and the Lord God Almighty reigns supreme in all eternity, having established His victory on the cross.

The Condition of The World As The Days Continue

With the introduction of sin, the world became irrevocably broken. A perfect creation made good in the eyes of the Lord could not sustain the presence of the filth of sin. Then came the conflict. One of the effects of sin

set the world against itself in chaotic entropy against God as the world drifted further from its intended relationship with Him. Jesus' coming challenged the very status quo of the system, however decayed it might have been. Furthermore, the world is resistant to right standing with God. The sin nature inside each of us must be abandoned in order to gain God. When we come to Christ and put our faith in Him, we leave behind the sin nature and all its desires and effects, and unite ourselves with the person of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the course of this passage, Jesus makes it abundantly clear what we, as Christians, will face as we follow Him. We will be brought before unfair trials, there will be family feuds, and we will endure wars while simultaneously fearing other wars. Furthermore, there will be many who will falsely claim to be Christ while in no way representing the true nature of Christ, but rather representing a forgery of God. When this occurs, we as Christians cannot decay into despair or develop a victim mentality. We cannot grow weary or tired in the process. Instead, we must recognize the situation for what it is—the nearing of the end.

The truth is that the more hostile to Christ and Christianity the world becomes, the closer we move towards the return of Jesus Christ. “Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door.” ([Mark 13:29, NIV](#)) As believers, the end of the world is not something that we should fear since the end for us is not actually the end. Fearing the decline in situations in the world reveals our lack of faith. Fear runs counter to the love of God. Instead, we can have faith knowing that the coming of Christ is soon. Whatever troubles and difficulties we face as believers cannot conquer us because our hope is eternally established by God. Expect the world to grow more and more hostile to God, as a world that hates Him. Even more so, let us expect the coming of Christ to be imminent, and live our lives in keeping with this lifestyle. We have been given every warning that difficulties and persecutions will come, but we also have every indication that Christ reigns victorious over all creation.

The Word of God Above All Others

There will be many who exhibit thoughts and words counter to the word of God. Some will directly oppose the message that Christ came to earth. Others will take a subtler approach teaching half-truths and appealing lies. Furthermore, at times it will feel as if the world is winning. We watch the news and slip into despair at every turn, thinking that we are surely at the end now! The questions arise as to whether or not we are living in the period of Revelation, weeping at the state of this world not being what it once was.

With Christ's return, Heaven will come crashing into earth for the sake of rescuing those who have put their trust and hope in Jesus Christ. While teaching explicitly about the state of the world falling into war and decay, the message that Heaven and Earth will pass away reminds us that the true battle is spiritual. Furthermore, God will break every boundary in order to provide the way for His beloved creation to return to Him, even if it means Heaven and Earth will pass away in the process. After all, as Revelation tells us, there will be “a new heaven and a new earth” ([Revelation 21:1, NIV](#)). He will extend grace to those who believe and justice to those who have rejected Him. In the process, heaven and earth will pass away as we take our home in eternity in the new heaven and new earth.

But the word of God will still reign supreme in the new heaven and new earth. The sovereignty of God cannot be overruled, and He holds the full authority and Kingship over all the world, both spiritual and physical. The Great High King will reign from His throne and yet we will be in communion with Him. Our relationship as one with Christ and sons and daughters of the Father will not fall. His words will reign true throughout all



eternity. This is why we trust in the word of God. Our faith directs us to believe in the sovereignty of God. We can trust the word of God simply because we believe He has already achieved the victory over sin and death through His acts on the cross and we identify ourselves with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection.

We may be able to see the signs that we are in the final season of this creation, yet we will not fear or lose hope. The word of God has reigned through the past circumstances. It reigns now through the current circumstances. It will continue to reign forever and ever. As the world faces every sign of impending doom, we who hold to the faith can keep our heads held high. These things must happen in order for the end to run its course. After all is said and done, the end will come, and we will be united with our Heavenly Father, fully and completely.

Discussion Questions

Read [Mark 13:5-31](#)

1. What warnings does Jesus give the disciples on what is to come and what they will face? What picture does this paint of the situation in which they find themselves? Do any of these resonate with you as something Christians face now?
2. Explain the meaning of, “if God had cut short the days, no one would survive”? What does this reveal about God’s feelings towards His people? What role does Christ play in this story?
3. Do you find any comfort in knowing that Jesus has already conquered any trial or difficulty we face? What are you facing in your life? How does Christ provide the strength to endure these difficulties?
4. Why do Christians face persecution and trouble in the world? What does this say about the nature of the desires and stance of the world?
5. How does the hostility to Christianity validate our need for a Savior? How do Christ’s actions amidst this hostility reveal His nature toward His creation?
6. With the word of God continuing on through all the trials, why is it difficult for us to run closer to God in the middle of difficulties? What things do we tend to run to in times of crisis or despair? Why should we run to Christ instead?
7. We know that God reigns through all eternity, and that He has conquered sin and death. Why then do we sometimes hesitate in turning to him when we are in need? What awaits the Christian who has put her faith and trust in Jesus Christ? How does having faith in God provide us with strength and hope to face the difficult times in the world?

About the Author.

Pastor Daniel Burton lives in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. In May 2015, Daniel graduated from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with his Master of Divinity. It was here that he began to explore his passion for Theology and deeper exploration of the word of God. Daniel believes that, at its core, Theology should be fun. Check out more of his work at <http://thegospeloutpost.com>

