

I. Mark 13:28-29 - The Parable of the Fig Tree

A. v28-29 - The Parable of the Fig Tree

Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door.
Mark 13:28-29 NIV

1. Jesus tells the disciples to learn from the fig tree. When it puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. The fig tree gives one notice that summer is drawing near.
2. In the same way, when one sees the signs Jesus has given, they can know that the Temple is about to be destroyed. Once again the signs Jesus gave are:
 - a. The abomination of desolation - Jerusalem surrounded by the Roman armies (Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20-24)
 - b. The Gospel calling people from all nations to be part of God's people (Mark 13:27)
3. All the other things - false Christs, earthquakes, wars, etc - are NOT signs. But when the Gospel has gone forth and the nations are coming to worship the Son of Man (as prophesied in Daniel 7:13-14), and when the Roman armies march on Jerusalem, one can know that the time of the destruction of the Temple and the end of the Old Covenant era is near.
4. Some have argued that the reference to the fig tree is a metaphor for Israel returning to the land. But this is not Jesus' point here. We can see this for a couple of reasons.

- a. The fig tree does not always represent Israel. For example, in Jotham's parable in Judges 9:7-20, he tells a parable of many trees and bushes. These do not represent different nations but illustrate the wrong actions of the people who followed Abimelech. The fig tree has nothing to do with Israel. Only context can show that Israel is in view.
- b. The most common use of figs or fig trees is in reference to judgment on Israel. God will make the fig trees and grape vines unfruitful. This occurs a lot in the Old Testament:

“I will take away their harvest, declares the Lord. There will be no grapes on the vine. There will be no figs on the tree, and their leaves will wither. What I have given them will be taken from them.”

Jeremiah 8:13 NIV (also Isaiah 34:4; Jeremiah 29:17; Hosea 2:12; Joel 1:7; Micah 7:1)
- c. Jesus Himself had done this in Mark 11:12 and following, Jesus uses the fig tree as a symbol of Israel. However, it is a symbol of apostate Israel and the Temple which are going to come under judgement because of fruitlessness. Thus, when Jesus used it only two days before, the reference was not for restoration but for judgment!
- d. Finally, and most importantly, Luke tells us that Jesus not only mentioned the fig tree, but trees in general:

He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰ When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Luke 21:29-30 NIV
- e. Thus, since Jesus mentioned “all the trees” and not just the fig tree, the point has nothing to do with Israel returning to the land. It is simply an agricultural metaphor. As when leaves sprout one knows summer is near, so also when one sees the Gospel drawing people from every nation to God and then when one sees the Roman armies surrounding Jerusalem, one can know that the destruction of the Temple is near.

II. Mark 13:30-31 - The Timing and Certainty of the Events of Mark 13:1-29

A. The timing of Mark 13:1-29

I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Mark 13:30-31 NIV

1. I have mentioned this several times during these special After Hours sessions and in the teachings on Mark 13, because this is critical to understanding Mark 13.
2. Jesus is crystal clear - everything He has described in Mark 13:1-29 will be fulfilled during THIS GENERATION.
3. The same statement is recorded at the same place in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 - so the events described in the Olivet Discourse had to be fulfilled during THIS GENERATION.
4. Jesus is emphatic about this - "I tell you the truth", a phrase Jesus uses to underline the certainty of what He is saying.
5. Some try to say this means 'this race' meaning the Jewish nation. Although the word for 'generation' (γενεά) can refer to a race, it is also used in the restricted sense of "those living during the same period of time." It is CERTAIN that the reference here is to the current generation alive at the time of Jesus.
6. Jesus refers to "this generation" (γενεὰ αὐτῆς). This phrase is used 19 times in the New Testament (Matthew 11:16; 12:41, 42; 12:45; 23:36; 24:34; Mark 8:12; 8:38; 13:30; Luke 7:31; 11:29, 30, 31,

32; 11:50, 51; 17:25; 21:32; Hebrews 3:10). Every single time the phrase refers to a specific generation, never to a race or nation. Consider a few examples:

"To what can I compare **this generation**? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: ¹⁷ "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' Matthew 11:16-17

The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with **this generation** and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and **now one greater than Jonah is here**. Matthew 12:41

I tell you the truth, all this will come upon **this generation**. Matthew 23:36 (the 7 woes)

7. It is the generation alive as Jesus spoke the words that heard and saw Him, rejected Him, and that will bear the guilt of all the blood shed upon the earth. This will happen when judgement falls and the Temple is destroyed and the Old Covenant age is ended forever.
8. This means every single sign and event in Mark 13/ Luke 21/Matthew 24 prior to this statement MUST have been fulfilled within that generation (usually considered to be 40 years in Scripture).
9. If one wants to say that Jesus did not intend us to understand "THIS GENERATION" to mean the generation to whom He was speaking, they will have to find examples in Scripture, and especially the New Testament, to show where the phrase is used to mean "this race" or "this nation" or "that future generation" - but I can't find a single one. Every single use in the New Testament refers to the single generation being spoken to.

10. I also note again that this fits perfectly with Jesus' statement about the destruction of the Temple, and the disciples' question as to when the Temple would be destroyed. That is the focus of Mark 13:1-29, and it did in fact happen in the time of "THIS GENERATION".

5. Properly understood, Mark 13 is one of the greatest evidences of the truth of Jesus' words and His status as the Great Prophet of God.

B. The certainty of Mark 13:1-29

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Mark 13:31 NIV

1. Jesus stated that the destruction of the Temple, and the fulfillment of everything in Mark 13:1-29 during THIS GENERATION was absolutely certain.
2. In fact, it would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for His words to not come true.
3. His words did come true!
 - a. He prophesied that the Gospel would be proclaimed throughout the world and that in fulfillment of Daniel 7:13-14 many Gentiles would come to worship Him as the glorified Son of Man - and they did!
 - b. He prophesied that the abomination desolation spoken of by Daniel in Daniel 9:24-27 would come as the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem to destroy it - and it did!
 - c. He prophesied that the Temple would be destroyed within a generation, and it was destroyed in 70AD.
4. The fulfillment of Jesus' words in the destruction of the Temple in 70AD is so startling and exact that liberal scholars try to explain it away. They say that Jesus could not have known this ahead of time, and so the Gospel writers must have written this later. However, we know that this is not true, for Luke wrote Acts during Paul's first imprisonment, probably around 60-62 AD, and he had already written Luke before this! And Mark was probably written before Luke!