

Luke 21:29-33

²⁹Then Jesus told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹So also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.

Berean Standard Bible

1

Lessons for life. Luke 21:29-33

Learn from the natural sphere. 21:29-30

Nature is God’s school room. 29 “Look at the fig tree and all the trees”

Knowledge must be self-acquired. 30 “you can see for yourselves and know”

Learn from the human sphere. 21:31-32

God is bigger than humanity. 31 “know that the kingdom of God is near”

God puts limits on humanity. 32 “until all these things have happened”

Learn from the eternal sphere. 21:33

All creation is temporary. 33 “Heaven and earth will pass away”

Only in God is there eternity. 33 “My words will never pass away”

2

A little knowledge is better than no knowledge. Luke 21:29-33

What I know by experience. 21:29-30

Life is learned from nature. 29 “Look at the fig tree and all the trees”

Life is lived in sequence. 30 “they sprout leaves... summer is near”

What I know by Scripture. 21:31-32

God is always here. 31 “the kingdom of God is near”

God has a timeline. 32 “this generation”

What I know by faith. 21:33

Everything of this world is temporary. 33 “Heaven and earth will pass away”

Everything of God’s Word is eternal. 33 “My words will never pass away”

How the universe functions. Luke 21:29-33

God has His hand on the natural environment. 21:29-30

God operates in cycles. 29 "Look at the fig tree and all the trees"

God operates for fruit. 30 "they sprout leaves... summer is near"

God has His hand on the human environment. 21:31-32

God operates with patience. 31 "know that the kingdom of God is near"

God operates with justice. 32 "all these things have happened"

God has His hand on the eternal environment. 21:33

God operates to a plan. 33 "Heaven and earth will pass away"

God operates to eternity. 33 "My words will never pass away"

Life and death in a tumultuous world. Luke 21:29-33

Principle: what looks dead will spring to life. 21:29-30

Life can look hopeless. 29 "Look at the fig tree and all the trees"

Life can look hopeful. 30 "they sprout leaves... summer is near"

Practice: what promotes death will fall down dead. 21:31-32

Life is within you. 31 "know that the kingdom of God is near"

Life is not in the world. 32 "all these things have happened"

Power: what generates life will live forever. 21:33

Life is not here. 33 "Heaven and earth will pass away"

Life is right here. 33 "My words will never pass away"

Hope when you are hurting. Luke 21:29-33

There is clarity in Jesus' parables. 21:29-30

Acknowledge your hurts. 29 "Look at the fig tree and all the trees"

Hold on to hope. 30 "they sprout leaves... summer is near"

There is comfort in the world's problems. 21:31-32

Don't be isolated from people. 31 "know that the kingdom of God is near"

Do be separated from problems. 32 “all these things have happened”

There is change in the Lord’s program. 21:33

Hold on with open hands. 33 “Heaven and earth will pass away”

Hold on with open heart. 33 “My words will never pass away”

6

Into every life... Luke 21:29-33

There are seasons in every life. 21:29-30

There are seasons of pain. 29 “Look at the fig tree and all the trees”

There are seasons of pleasure. 30 “they sprout leaves... summer is near”

There are struggles in every life. 21:31-32

We are never alone. 31 “know that the kingdom of God is near”

There are always difficulties. 32 “all these things have happened”

There are successes in every life. 21:33

We have to go through the valleys. 33 “Heaven and earth will pass away”

Beyond the valleys are mountain tops. 33 “My words will never pass away”

7

The passing parade. Luke 21:29-33

Things that have passed away. 29-32 “all these things have happened”

We need to learn from the past. 30 “you can see for yourselves”

We need to learn for the present. 31 “when you see... know”

Things that will pass away. 33 “Heaven and earth will pass away”

This universe is passing away. 33 “will pass away”

This universe is preparation. 31 “Kingdom of God is near”

Things that never pass away. 33 “My words will never pass away”

God’s Word is edifying. 33 “My words”

God’s Word is enduring. 33 “will never pass away”

Other possible titles

Do you see what I see? (Christmas carol)

What? Me worry. (Mad magazine)

Is a tree smarter than you?
 I'm glad its them and not me
 Truth and consequences
 Cause and effect
 Where is God when things go pear-shaped?
 Surviving a world that has gone amok
 Hope for a hurting world
 When the battle chooses you
 Today is not the final chapter
 Look for the signs – signs of life
 Unperturbed in a disturbing world
 How to be stable when everything around you is falling apart

Parallel accounts

Matthew 24:32–35	Mark 13:28-31	Luke 21:29-33
<p>³²Now learn this lesson from the fig tree:</p> <p>As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near.</p> <p>³³So also, when you see all these things, you will know that He is near, right at the door.</p> <p>³⁴Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.</p>	<p>²⁸Now learn this lesson from the fig tree:</p> <p>As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near.</p> <p>²⁹So also, when you see these things happening, know that He is near, right at the door.</p> <p>³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.</p>	<p>²⁹Then Jesus told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees.</p> <p>³⁰When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.</p> <p>³¹So also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.</p> <p>³²Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.</p>

Commentary

The context for this parable is Jesus' prophecy that the Jerusalem temple would be demolished to the point that not one stone would be left upon another (Luke 21:5-6). In response, the disciples asked for the signs of the temple's impending destruction (Luke 21:7). Jesus gave them an extensive list of signs that they would see (Luke 21:8-24). He also digressed to tell them briefly about His Second Coming (Luke 21:25-28) which was in answer to a subsequent question asked by the disciples (Matthew 24:3). Now, Jesus uses a parable to return to His answer to the disciples' question about signs prior to the destruction of the temple. (See the overview at the beginning of the Olivet Discourse.)

Fig tree

"Jesus told them a parable: 'Look at the **fig tree** and all the trees.'" v 29

Some people believe the fig tree is a symbol that always refers to Israel. From this assumption they then wrongly believe that Jesus words only refer to Israel in the future. Matthew 24:32 and Mark 13:28 both shorten Jesus' sentence. But Luke includes Jesus' full statement which includes the additional words, "...and all the trees."

Even if Jesus was referring to Israel, in this parable His lesson applies equally to every other nation as "all the trees." There is nothing specifically about Israel here in Jesus' teaching.

Idea: make fresh, or dried, figs available after the service.

Know

"...you can see for yourselves and **know... know** that the kingdom of God is near" v30-31

In both verses, the word "know" is γινώσκω [Strong's 1097] which means 'to know through personal experience'. One does not require mystical insight, esoteric knowledge, nor theological training. The facts speak for themselves.

This γινώσκω 'knowledge by experience' is different from οἶδα [Strong's 1492] which refers to 'insight, perception, awareness'. The use of γινώσκω shows that the apostles would see the destruction of the temple with their own eyes. Whereas οἶδα insight would be required if they were to understand an event in the distant future.

These things

"...when you see **these things** happening" v31

All "these things" is Jesus directing the disciples' attention to His prophetic words which Luke recorded in v8-24. These are the signs of the impending destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, which occurred in the year 70 AD.

Kingdom of God

“...know that the **Kingdom of God** is near” v31

We note in passing that there is absolutely no difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. The term ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ is used exclusively by Matthew, and is his respectful way of speaking to a Jewish audience, but the parallel passages in Mark, Luke, and John, show that they use the term ‘Kingdom of God’ in exactly the same context. Hence, the terms are identical and interchangeable.

The Kingdom of God is Jesus’ favourite topic and He often spoke of it. Those who are of a pedantic nature may take those words that indicates the Kingdom is “at hand” or “near”, and attempt to argue that the Kingdom was Potential, but not Actual. Such an argument cannot be supported from Scripture. So, let us open the Word of God to such texts as may clarify the actual presence of the Kingdom.

- Jesus said, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.” (Matthew 23:13, NIV) Note that, at the end of this verse, Jesus clearly states the present opportunity to enter in. The Kingdom was not a theological theory, but a present reality, into which people were already streaming.
- Again, the words of Jesus, “But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Luke 11:20) Again, note the reality of the Kingdom.

Let us look beyond the Gospels, and into the latter part of the New Testament. There we find that the Kingdom of Heaven / Kingdom of God remains present – even after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus; and beyond the Day of Pentecost. Note

- “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 14:17)

The Kingdom of Heaven / Kingdom of God during Jesus’ ministry – and beyond, into the life of the believer, is an ever-present reality for us today.

When nation rises against nation; in the midst of earthquakes, famines, and pestilences; and even when they seize you and persecute you; within all these things the Kingdom of God is still the dominant force in the world.

Is near

“...know that the Kingdom of God **is near**” v31

We have just seen that the Kingdom of God is always present. So, how does the destruction of the temple (v6) and the many preceding signs (v8-24) provide evidence that the Kingdom is near?

Only Luke records Jesus' words that the Kingdom is near. Matthew 24:33 and Mark 13:29 both omit any reference to the Kingdom, but they both include an element that Luke omits. Matthew and Mark both include the personalised statement of imminence. They both record, "...know that He is near, right at the door."

Putting all three reports together, there is no contradiction. Instead, we are given an illumination insight. This tells us that "He" is "the Kingdom of God". He is, of course, Jesus. He is the King over the Kingdom of God. Without the King, there would be no Kingdom.

So, what does the destruction of the Jerusalem temple tell us about Jesus, and about the Kingdom of God? It tells us much that should strike fear into our hearts. It warns us that we are too complacent about the urgency of the Kingdom. It forewarns us that the King rules with a rod of iron to smash all who defy Him (Psalm 2:9). The Kingdom of God must not be regarded as a crutch for the weak, nor a myth for the feeble-minded. The Kingdom does not exist for my comfort and convenience. The Kingdom is the power and glory of God which none can withstand. The King is the Mighty Warrior who rides forth in victory. When all these warning signs occur, as they have done in full, bow down and tremble before the Lord of all the earth.

This generation

"...**this generation** will not pass away until all these things have happened." v32

A generation means just what you think it means. Grandparents, parents, and children, are three generations. A standard tool of Biblical interpretation is, the Note of First Mention, where the first time a word, topic, or doctrine is mentioned in Scripture, that first mention is the key to understand how to interpret that concept throughout the rest of Scripture. In the New Testament the first mention is, "there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David" (Matthew 1:17), thus a generation is the step from parent to child. In the Old Testament the first mention of the word 'generation' was when God said to Noah, "I have found you righteous in this generation." (Genesis 7:1) Thus, a generation cannot mean, as some mistakenly suggest, a race of people or a people group, because before the flood there were no nations, and no racial groups, and no separate ethnicities. Throughout Scripture a generation means a normal generation. Hence, God could say to Abraham of only one clan, "your descendants after you, for the generations to come". Thus, multiple generations means each step from parent to child, within a people group. Also, within that clan, Joseph "saw the third generation of Ephraim's children" (Genesis 50:23) showing again that each generation is a step from parent to child. Another example, is God's warning, "punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" (Exodus 20:5). In every example, a generation only means the step from a parent to child. In chronological terms, a generation is generally regarded as 40 years.

Therefore, this text, Luke 21:29-33, must refer to that generation that both heard Jesus' words and saw the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. Jesus spoke this prophecy in the week leading up to Passover 30 AD. Roman legions broke through Jerusalem's defences in the week before Passover 70 AD, and they then ransacked the city and temple.

Any attempt to make the word 'generation' mean anything other than its normal use of a parent to child step, is an attempt to manipulate the Word of God into a predetermined human and unbiblical position. Such false doctrine must be rejected.

Music and songs

Songs about lessons from trees

Though the fig tree does not blossom

Songs about judgement

When He rolls up His sleeves... Our God is an awesome God

Songs about God's Kingdom being near

Hear the call of the Kingdom, (Getty)

Let Your Kingdom come, Ot 12

Live for the Kingdom, Ot 15

The Lord's Prayer (Thy Kingdom come)

This Kingdom, Ot 47

Songs about time

God is good all the time... And through the eyes of faith (Don Moen)

Now is the time, (Bullock)

To every generation

To everything - turn, turn, turn... a time to weep (Pete Seeger)

Troublesome times are here... Freedom we all hold dear (Winsett)

Songs about the reliability of God's Word

Ancient words, Ot 94

Every promise of Your Word (Getty-Townend)

Firm foundation... I put my hope in Your holy Word, MP 999

Red letters (D C Talk)

So many books (Michael Card), Ot 81

The Book (Michael Card)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, Ot 63

Thought starters for personal reflection or group discussion

1. When you look at nature, what do you find most interesting?
 2. What are some of the attributes of God that you can learn from looking at nature?
 3. What are some of the attributes of God that you cannot learn from looking at nature?
 4. Imagine the response of the disciples to the news of all the terrible things that would occur in their lifetime (v31). Also see Matthew 27:25.
 5. When bad things happen, why do we need the confidence that the Kingdom of God is near us (v31)?
 6. Since this whole world is going to pass away (v33a), how can the reliability of Jesus (v33b) words help us?
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