FAITH PRINCETON SUNDAY SCHOOL

MATTHEW 24:32-51 THE OLIVET DISCOURSE (part 2)

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2026

MATTHEW 24:32-51 Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

MATTHEW 24

Parable of the Fig Tree

32 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; 33 so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. 34 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 37 For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

MATTHEW 24:32-51

Be Ready for His Coming

42 “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43 But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

45 “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 47 Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ 49 and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; 50 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, 51 and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.away and will betray one another and hate one another.

Enduring Word Commentary:

Matthew 24:32-51
Jesus' Olivet Discourse (part 2)

A. The destruction of the temple and its implications. (1-4)
B. The flow of history until Jesus' return. (5-14)
C. Jesus describes the sign of His coming and the end of the age. (15-35)

5. (32-35) Jesus speaks more regarding the timing of these events.

"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near; at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."

a. **Learn this parable from the fig tree**: The **fig tree** has a regular pattern. The leaves appear, and then summer follows. When you see the leaves, you know summer is near.

i. The **fig tree** was a common fruit tree in Israel. It is mentioned many times in the Old Testament, especially as a description of the abundance of the land. Sometimes figs or fig trees are also used as symbols or pictures. In passages like Jeremiah 24:1-10 and Hosea 9:10, figs or fig trees are used as a representation of Israel.

ii. However, most Old Testament references to the **fig tree** use it as simply an example of agricultural blessing. It seems that Jesus' reference here is not so much on the "figness" of the fig tree, but on the way that the fig tree follows reliable growth cycles related to the seasons. This is especially evident when this passage is compared with Luke 21:29-31: *Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near*.

b. **So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near; at the doors!** Jesus assured that when these signs appeared as He foretold (the abomination of desolation, followed by great tribulation, followed by signs in the heavens), His return to the earth *would* follow. When a fig tree buds, there is an inevitable result – summer is near and fruit is coming. In the same way, when these signs are seen, the coming of Jesus in glory with His church to this world will inevitably follow.

i. Really, it was just as Daniel prophesied in Daniel 12:11. The end *will come* 1,290 days after the abomination of desolation. Jesus assures that the agonies of the Great Tribulation will not continue indefinitely; they will have an end.

ii. Up to this point, Jesus has given an important outline for end-times events.

- There will arise catastrophes and persecutions, but those in themselves are not the sign of the end.
- There will arise a pivotal sign: the abomination of desolation.
- When the abomination of desolation appears, there are warnings to Israel to flee after the abomination.
- On the heels of the abomination of desolation comes great tribulation, and cosmic disturbances.

- In culmination, Jesus Christ will return in glory to the earth.

c. **Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place**: This statement of Jesus is one of the central reasons many have looked for all or most of the events of this chapter to be fulfilled in A.D. 70, approximately 40 years after Jesus spoke these words. Yet as previously argued, to assert this is to greatly stretch the most natural interpretation of the abomination of desolation, of the severity of the great tribulation, of the cosmic signs, and of the coming of the Son of Man. It is better to let those passages have their most natural meaning and to fit this promise into that framework.

i. The **generation** Jesus meant cannot be the generation of the disciples, because they never saw Jesus return in glory as described in Matthew 24:30. It is undoubtedly the generation that sees these signs. These events and Jesus' return won't be on some 1,000-year timetable, but will happen in succession.

ii. It has been suggested that the word **generation** could also be translated "race," and is a promise that the Jewish race would not be extinguished and would survive to the end. This would be a valuable promise, but some commentators (such as France) claim this is an embarrassingly wrong translation. Yet others – such as Adam Clarke, who strongly believed the events of this chapter were almost all fulfilled in A.D. 70 – writes, "*This race*; i.e. the Jews shall not cease from being a *distinct people*, till all the counsels of God relative to *them* and the *Gentiles* be fulfilled."

D. More on His coming, but from a different approach.

1. (36) Jesus says that the day and hour of His return is unknowable by men, and even unknowable by angels.

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."

a. **Of that day and hour no one knows**: Here, Jesus refers back to the original question of Matthew 24:3 (*what will be the sign of Your coming?*). His answer is somewhat unexpected, saying **of that day and hour no one knows**.

i. To give this idea the strongest emphasis, Jesus claimed that this knowledge was reserved for His **Father only**. If Jesus Himself – at least during His earthly ministry – did not know this **day and hour**, it emphasizes the foolishness of any later person making certain predictions regarding the prophetic timetable.

b. **No one knows**: Based on what He had told us about the abomination of desolation, we might have expected that the exact day and hour *could* be known. After all, Daniel set the day of Jesus' return as being exactly 1,290 days after the abomination of desolation (Daniel 12:11).

i. In this, there is a dilemma. How can the day of Jesus' coming be both completely unknown, and at the same time be known to the day according to Daniel 12:11?

2. (37-39) Jesus says that His coming will be when the world is as it was in the days of Noah.

"But as the days of Noah *were,* so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

a. **As the days of Noah were**: Jesus explained what He meant by **the days of Noah**. It means life centered around the normal things: **eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage**. In other words, life will be business as usual; reprobate perhaps, but usual.

i. **Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage**: Bruce notes that "Some charge these with sinister meaning: [**eating**], hinting at gluttony because often used of beasts, though also, in the sense of eating, of men…[**marrying and giving in marriage**], euphemistically pointing at sexual licences on both sides." Yet he comes to the conclusion, "The idea rather seems to be that all things went on as usual, as if nothing were going to happen."

ii. We should also remember that the days of Noah were also marked by violence and demonic oppression (Genesis 6:1-5).

b. **And did not know until the flood came and took them all away**: Those in the days of Noah were warned, and judgment eventually came. To those who had ignored the warnings, it came suddenly and unexpectedly.

i. "That the coming of the Son of Man takes place at an unknown time can only be true if in fact life seems to be going on pretty much as usual – just as in the days before the Flood." (Carson)

ii. In this, there is a dilemma. How can Jesus come to a "business-as-usual" world, and a world experiencing the worst calamities ever seen on earth?

3. (40-44) Jesus cautions His disciples to be ready for an unexpected coming.

"Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two *women will be* grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

a. **Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left**: Jesus here pointed to curious disappearances; to a catching away of some at the coming of the Son of Man (as also described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

i. "*Taken* is the same verb used, *e.g.*, in 1:20; 17:1; 18:16; 20:17; it implies to take someone to be with you, and therefore here points to the salvation rather than the destruction of the one 'taken'." (France)

b. **Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming**: Since the day and hour of this coming are unknowable, Jesus' followers must be on constant guard for His coming.

i. Here again is the Second Coming dilemma.

· Is it at an unexpected hour or is it positively predicted?

· Is it business as usual or worldwide cataclysm?

· Is it meeting Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) or is He coming with the saints (Zechariah 14:5)?

ii. William Barclay describes one aspect of the difficulty here: "It is in two sections and they seem to contradict each other. The first (verses 32-35) seem to indicate that, as a man can tell by the signs of nature when summer is on the way, so he

can tell by the signs of the world when the Second Coming is on the way... The second section (verses 36-41) says quite definitely that no one knows the time of the Second Coming, not the angels, not even Jesus himself, but only God; and that it will come upon men with the suddenness of a rainstorm out of a blue sky."

iii. The dilemma is resolved by seeing that there are actually *two* second comings. One is in the air, for the church – commonly known as the *rapture*. The other is to the world, coming with the church, commonly known as the Second Coming of Jesus. The "contradictions" in Matthew 24 (and much of the rest of prophecy) are often solved by seeing there are really references to "two" returns of Jesus.

c. **Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect**: We must not escape the emphasis. We must be ready, because His coming for us is without warning. Jesus follows with a few parables to drive home this point.

i. "Suetonius tells us that it was a piece of Julius Caesar's policy never to fore-acquaint his soldiers of any set time of removal or onset, that he might ever have them in readiness to draw forth whithersoever he would." (Trapp)

E. Parable of the two servants.

1. (45-47) The faithful servant.

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods."

a. **Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing**: Jesus told us that we must carry on with diligence while the Lord is gone. We must be that **faithful and wise servant** who takes care of his master's business while the master is away.

b. **Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods**: Jesus also promised that we will be rewarded for our diligence. The servants serve the master, but the master knows how to take care of and reward the servants.

2. (48-51) The evil servant.

"But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

a. **If that evil servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming"**: Jesus warns us of the attitude which says, "**my master is delaying his coming**." We must live in constant anticipation of Jesus' return, and that means being about our business for Him *now*.

i. The most dangerous lie is not "There is no God," not "there is no hell"; but the most dangerous lie of Satan is "there is no hurry." It is no small thing to say "Jesus is not coming today or for several years," because your system of prophecy demands it. We need to be ready for the *imminent return* of Jesus Christ.

b. **Begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards**: The evil servant,

who was not ready for the master's return, sinned in at least three ways.

· He was not about the business that the master left for him.

· He fought with and mistreated **his fellow servants**.

· He gave himself to the pleasures of the world instead of serving his master.

i. This emphasis on constant readiness is a challenge for the Christian today. It can be said that many Christians are not ready in the same three ways. Each reader should be greatly impressed by the urgency of Jesus' appeal.

c. **Cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites**: The faithful and wise servant was rewarded, but so was the evil servant. He was rewarded for His wickedness, and he would have the **portion with the hypocrites** he deserved.

i. **Cut him in two**: "The probable meaning is: will cut him in two (so to speak) with a *whip* = thrash him, the base slave, unmercifully. It is a strong word, selected to sympathy with the master's rage." (Bruce)

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