

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; 33so, 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, 39and 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.

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.

This is now our 5th week looking at the Olivet discourse. This is the most comprehensive discussion of end times events until John receives the vision recorded for us in the book of Revelation.

And yet there's no new information here. Everything Jesus says has been said before in the prophets. But He's answering the disciples question which is caused by their confusion over Israel's, (and their's by extension), expectations concerning Messiah, and what He has told them will soon take place.

In view of the complete rejection by the nation and it's rulers, Jesus has told them that their house will be left desolated, and that He will not be seen again until they recognize who He is and receive Him saying *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*

If that wasn't offsetting enough for the disciples, when they point to the grandeur of the temple, He informs them that not one stone will be left upon another. It will be a waste place.

He's departing. The temple's going to be demolished. It's all too much for them. Their poor heads are exploding. Why did we give up everything to follow you? If you're leaving and the temple's going to be rubble, what are we doing? How does the promised Kingdom come? And When??

And Jesus launches into a very thorough and complete answer to their questions. Only the Sermon on the Mount has more dialogue at one place at one time than here I believe.

What the disciples didn't see, and indeed, the the apostles of the church with them, was that Daniel's 70 week prophecy is not contiguous after the end of the 69th week. There's a gap between the end of week 69 when messiah is cut off, and the final 70th week of years.

Some of you are like; What in the world is he talking about?? This is obtuse.

No, with the help of 20-20 hindsight, we clearly see now what they did not, and it's paramount to understand this in order to understand the Biblical category of future things. This is our baseline. So once again, please, turn to Daniel chapter 9.

This passage outlines Bible prophecy. It is foundational. Indeed, when Jesus pauses in the diorama that shows the activity of the anti-christ, He alludes to this passage when He says "let the reader understand". He takes us back to this baseline. He mentions Daniel by name.

*24“Seventy weeks have been decreed for **your** people and **your** holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. 25“So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks*

and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 26“Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. 27 “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

70 weeks of years until the end. The parousia. The Kingdom of God on earth. Everlasting righteousness. The anointing of the most Holy place.

It begins when a certain decree goes forth in 445 BC to rebuild the temple and smarter men than me have done the math and the end of the 69th week is when Jesus enters Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey. That's why He says, Oh Jerusalem, if you had known, IN THIS DAY, the things that bring peace . . . behold, your house is left to you desolate.

So, pinch yourselves. Here we are 2000 years later. What happened to the prophecy? Did anything significant happen 7 years after the cross?

No. What we understand now, that they did not, is that when Jesus was crucified, fulfilling the part about *to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness* the clock stopped.

Look again at the first few words of the prophecy; *Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city*

The prophecy is for national Israel. God's chosen people.

On the day that they murdered their messiah, that clock stopped, and with the resurrection of Jesus, the Church began. For 2000 years God has been dealing with the church. Ultimately the nations. All the tribes of the earth. This prophecy has been put on hold during that age.

Paul calls that a mystery. Something before unseen. The church is where God is at work. Israel is punished and scattered to the four winds. The church is God's focus. He's redeeming a people from every tribe on the earth for His names sake, and that has been ongoing since His resurrection from the dead and return to heaven where He rules the church at the right hand of God.

Well, then, what about Daniels prophecy? Daniel's people, Israel? Daniel's holy city, Jerusalem? Has God set them aside and forgotten them forever? Will this prophecy go unfulfilled?

No. No! That final week of years will be fulfilled, and I believe what marks the beginning of that clock ticking again is the removal of the church. What we dispensationalists call the rapture of the church.

The church age is a parenthesis, not seen by the old testament saints, nor even the apostles of the church. They all thought the Kingdom would come in their lifetimes. But it pleased God to gather a people from every nation for 2000 years during this parenthesis between the 69th week of Israel and the 70th week of . . . national Israel.

OK, so think about this. If what I've said is true, what meaning does Jesus words about coming like a thief in the night have. We have a time clock ticking. The abomination of desolations happens when? Half way. 1260 days to the end of what? This final week of years. 42 months. 1260 days. We're supposed to count. "let the reader understand" Jesus says. Put your thinking cap on and do some basic math. *So you are to know and discern* God says through Daniel. God expects us to figure these things out.

Lk. 19:41 *When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, 44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you*

did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

Israel should have known. We should know. The second coming is a known if you know when this week of years begins! So a "thief in the night" is not talking about the parousia. The second coming in glory.

What is the single unknown here? When the clock begins for Israel again. When the parenthesis of the church age ends and when that clock starts ticking is the unknown element here. Jesus meets His called out ones, His church in the air, and that moment, Israel's final 7 year countdown begins.

Thus, I submit to you that these warnings Jesus is about to give here are directed at US! The church, and people living right now! They make perfect sense then. The big unknown here is the removal of the church. The end of that age. The beginning of Israel's 70th week. After that, someone who has this information I'm giving you this morning can count months.

Why then would Jesus warn the church? The church is going up.

Yes, but sadly the churches, especially in America where it costs nothing to be a so-called christian, are filled with quasi-religious people who profess to be some brand of christian in name, but who do not have a personal love relationship with the Lord Jesus. No true engagement.

We've looked at Rev. 3:15,16 together before. The letter to the **church** at Laodicea. A most sobering passage for 21st century American evangelicalism.

15‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

Many good solid Bible scholars agree that these letters to the seven churches not only represent real letters to real churches in real places, but also they typify ages of the history of the church.

The final letter pictures a church; nominally, not saved. A church where the Lord Jesus stands at the door and seeks entrance. A lukewarm shallow church. A materially rich church with no spiritual substance. A church that will be; and the word here for spit is vomit, a church that will be vomited out of the Lord's mouth.

My personal belief, I'm not being dogmatic here, but I believe this vomiting of the so-called church, the lukewarm church with Jesus outside knocking on the door, happens at the rapture of the true church.

I've commented before about rock and roll churches with 4000 members and 3800 of them will meet on the Sunday after the rapture.

See if that idea doesn't resonate in these warnings to the so called church that we're going to look at in Matthew 24. Hopefully with that introduction the passages will seem very simple and straight forward.

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.

I am going to offer the most simple and inelegant interpretation of this passage you've ever heard.

If you read Hal Lindsay's book, late great planet earth, you will recall that he and many other dispensationalists have maintained that Israel is the fig tree. And therefore, at the minimum, when you see Israel back in her land, it's a great sign that the end times are upon us.

That spun out of control and we had books like 88 REASONS the RAPTURE will be in 1988. Well, because a generation in the Bible is 40 years, and 1948, plus 40 equals 1988, right. And nearly 70 years later, here we still are. Oops.

We also heard that the generation alive in 1948 was THE generation

Jesus was talking about when He said THIS generation. Baby boomers. But that generation is getting rather long in the tooth. And the context of the word generation here means a generation that includes mature adults. People in full stride in 1948. Movers and shakers. In other words, the generation that fought WWII. Again; Oops.

Then we've been taught that the word generation here just means race. The Jewish race will be alive when all these things take place. Duh. That seems sort of non plused. The whole book is about *that*.

Although, it is a miracle. All of their contemporaries have vanished from the earth. Hittites and Amorites are scarce. So, yes it is a miracle that proves the veracity of the Bible that Israel is alive and well. But it doesn't set any time period apart from any other. If you want to claim to be a jew and move to your homeland, Israel, they can check your DNA and tell if your claim is true. Or not. Modern science knows what jewish DNA looks like.

OK, or maybe this is a whole lot less picturesque. Maybe it's best to just take the words at face value and say, when you see baby leaves on your fruit trees, it's time to service the swamp cooler. Summer is knocking on the door.

33 so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door

What things. The rapture. False prophets and a worldwide religious system and a one world government and earthquakes. Wars and a false peace. Everything He just showed you in the dioramas.

God expects us to know enough about the prophecies in this book that we can figure out a few basics.

34 "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

What generation? The one that see's the rapture. That generation that remains, has seven years during which birthpains will get more intense

and more often until finally, the whole world is a waste place just before the Lord comes.

7 years is not a long time. The generation that sees it begin, will be the generation that see's it end. Unless they're part of the 1/2 of the worlds population that dies of the plagues and bloodletting.

35*“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.*

No power in the universe or beyond can reverse what Jesus has said.

We have supreme courts and governments entities that are telling us, this book is wrong. Science proves it's wrong. It's out of date. Written by goat herds missing half their teeth. Ignorant. Wrong headed. On the wrong side of history. “. . . deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed."

They're busying themselves overturning the words of this book. Boys and girls are the same. Biological differences mean nothing. Protecting the weak, whether they be the eldest or the babies, is not a priority. Marriage can be redefined. Personal autonomy is the current god.

We've set the words aside as though they are meaningless antiquated fables for the infirm of mind to ponder. The words of this book are no longer welcome for discussion in the public squares. Our nation has become arrogant. They know better than the words of this book.

Jesus says; 35*“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.*

Suddenly a lot of people will be missing. The earth will shake. The seas will roar. The house of card financial systems will collapse. The world will turn to anarchy. Wars. Murders. Then a man will miraculously put the chaos back together. The world will be in awe of him. He'll claim to be god. Jesus said so.

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, 39and 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.

I am going to perhaps approach this passage different than you've ever heard it approached before. Very simply and almost common sensically.

I think this is about the rapture. And we'll unpack a whole bunch of the words and phrases and try to support the logic that I think the Lord Jesus is presenting. So put your thinking caps on and fasten your seat belts for a few more minutes.

36“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

What day and hour? Well, the obvious answer is the parousia. The second coming. That's the context of the discussion.

But perhaps we've limited these terms too much.

Jesus used one word, the kingdom, to talk about all the different facets of a common diamond. We could define the kingdom as any time and any place and situation where Satan is deposed from rule and Christ has taken his place. The authority of God to reign as opposed to Satan who has been default ruler since the fall in Genesis 3.

So the kingdom can be talking about who's reigning in my heart, or it can be talking about a 1000 year reign on earth in Jerusalem on David's throne. Or it can be talking about the church in this current age.

We see Christ saying over and over the kingdom of God can be compared to: thus and thus, and He's illustrating some facet of a multi-faceted diamond.

In like manner, I am going to submit to you that when Jesus talks about the coming of the Son of Man, it can incorporate more than just the physical realization described in Revelation 19.

I can easily fit the rapture, and the events during the tribulation and the final appearing, all under a common title, similar to how we see Him treating the idea of kingdom. Many facets. One diamond.

That fits this discussion perfectly. 36*“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.*

OK, let's zoom in a little and inspect the facet of the second coming He's talking about. No one knows the day and hour but the Father.

That's a poor fit with Daniels 70 week prophecy because we do know, sort of, the day and hour. When the final week begins we're even told in days when it comes. Half way through, the abomination of desolation is seen by the whole world somehow, and we're told it lasts 1260 days. 42 months. Half of the seven year week of years.

So what Jesus says here is sort of in conflict with what Daniel says. In fact Jesus mentions Daniel the prophet and says "let the reader understand" in other words. Think a little bit. Do some math. 70 weeks. 490 years. 483 are used up. 7 left. Mid week abomination of desolation. We're expected to think these things through.

And then the next thing out of His mouth; no one knows the day and hour. Sort of counter productive. But think about a different facet of these truths.

No one knows the day or the hour that the church will be called out of this world, and the 7 year clock of Daniel's people's time, Jacob's trouble, starts ticking. Church age finished. Daniel's people's 70th week, begun.

OK, that makes perfect sense. The church has gone to sleep like the virgins we'll see next week, waiting for the bridegroom's summons.

2000 years have passed. For all we know, 2000 more might pass again. We don't think so, but, it's possible. The unknown is the rapture. After that, Daniels clock is started.

So the next time someone puts up a million dollars worth of billboards telling you what day the rapture will happen, you can have a good laugh (or cry) as it were, like I did. You can save your money when the next **88 reasons it's gonna happen in 1988** book hits the christian bookstores. The angels don't know. Jesus in His earthly visit did not know. Only the Father has that day and hour set on His calendar.

37“For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.

This is where everybody seems to stumble. The coming of the Son of Man. They can't broaden that reality out to mean anything except the physical arrival of Jesus in power and great glory when His feet touch the mount of Olives.

And that is an exceeding problem for what He's going to say next.

*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,*

I've heard everything from soup to nuts regarding what this means. The wickedness of Noah's generation etc. etc. Everything but the obvious face value.

People were living ordinary lives and doing ordinary things that people in non stressful situations do, on the day Noah went into the ark. Eating. Drinking. Marrying. Everyday life. Unconcerned! In spite of the fact that Noah witnessed to the warning of God for 120 years while he built a boat.

They ignored Noah. They ignored the message he received from God. They didn't believe in floods. No one had ever seen a flood before. They thought Noah was a nut job "on the wrong side of history" so to

Speak.

Is. 56:12 *"Come," they say, "let us get wine, and let us drink heavily of strong drink; And tomorrow will be like today, only more so."*

That describes Noah's generation, and it describes ours. Notice the precise wording here. 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*

Business as usual. Ignore Noah. Religious weirdo. Totally over-reacting. Building a boat. *tomorrow will be like today, only more so*

until what? Jesus says *until the day that Noah entered the ark*
Precise wording. What happened when Noah entered the ark?
Anybody recall that Sunday school lesson? When Noah went into the ark . . . God sealed the door . . . shut. Opportunity; over.

39and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Nobody thought much of it. Good riddance. Noah's inside his boat. What a bozo.

Do you remember what happened next. Actually it was seven days after the door was sealed. I did some silly math some years ago. If the tallest mountain, say 17000 feet had to be covered with water, in 40 days, what rate does it reach the 6 foot mark. Tallest man, 6 foot or so tall. When does the flood get to that person's air way. Answer, about 4 minutes.

Actually probably less. The Bible says the water burst forth from the deep. We can't even imagine. Water enveloped the population of the earth immediately.

39and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

The point of the comparison is the dual elements of willful ignorance,

God sealing the door shut, and then enveloping disaster. They understood when the water took them away. But it was too late then.

Clueless. Willful ignorance of 120 years of warning. Now think about this with me. More math. There's 2000 people in Tonopah. There's 20 of you in church. The warnings are ubiquitous. Go in Larry Whitney's book store and ask him for some old Bible he can't get 50 cents for and my guess is if your story was good enough, he'd gladly give it away free.

Probably you'd open it up and see the Gideon's stamp inside. Some Hotel's previous cast off. Worthless. Ubiquitous. The math is easy. 1% in church. 99% can't be bothered to walk across the street to worship our God. *39and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

The rapture is like the flood in several ways. The people around us are at ease. Business as usual. Ordinary people doing ordinary stuff. Tomorrow will be like today, except, more so. Today is ordinary. Tomorrow will be more so. Don't need God. Or His people. Or His book. Or His rules. There's some good sales at the grocery store this week.

In what sense is the rapture similar to when God sealed the door on the ark? I'm willing to go out on a limb here and say something different than most of you have heard before.

Listen to what Paul tells the thessalonians. *1Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the departure (the rapture, my words) comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 5Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? 6And you know what*

restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. 7For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 9that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

I believe with all my heart that Paul is telling the Thessalonian Christians that the folks who will perish with the anti-christ will do so because they willfully ignored and did not receive or love the truth available to them.

The parallel with Noah is stark. 120 years he builds the boat. A visible and I'm sure also an audible warning of God's intention to judge the whole earth.

No one listened. No one took it seriously. No one loved God or Noah. No one had seen a flood before. Jesus says "they didn't understand until it was too late." God sealed the door shut. The water came, and swept them away.

The warnings about the apocalypse are the same as the warnings to Noah's generation. God graciously waits. Hollywood is fascinated. People can't seem to get enough of apocalyptic movies. As the special effects get better, the movies get more terrifying. But it's just Hollywood. It's just fiction loosely based in ideas from an ancient book. Apocalyptic myths and fables.

Tomorrow will be like today, only more so. And then the rapture happens. The age of free grace is shut, just like the door on the ark was sealed.

You say, but but but Jim, aren't people going to be saved during the

tribulation?? Yes, by the millions. **BUT** I would submit that the ones who had the truth available to them and chose to live their autonomous lives just as they pleased and ignored and did not love the truth of God available to them, will fall right in with the delusions of the anti-christ.

People who were surrounded by the gospel and couldn't walk across the street to pay any attention to it at all, are like the people of Noah's time who watched him build that ark and refused to believe the judgement would ever happen.

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.

This is talking about the rapture. These folks are living their lives in the most ordinary of terms. Men working in fields. Women grinding wheat for the evening loaves for their families.

At the Parousia, the physical arrival of Jesus, the world has gone dark, the mountains are shaking down to the ground, melting like wax, meteorites are slamming into the earth which is reeling through space tottering off it's axis. The water is turned to blood. Terrifying chaos. Heart stopping terror.

Ladies grinding loaves and men working fields is a poor fit. Problematic to force this to be at the second coming. But it's a perfect fit for the end of the church age and the beginning of the final week. It pictures ordinary people living ordinary lives. Christians and non christians working side by side.

One of the parallel passages pictures people asleep in bed. One is taken, one is left. Even better. When the Lord comes and summons His church, it will be daytime on one side of earth, night time on the other.

The final week of years are the birthpangs for the birth. The kingdom of God on earth. The rapture flips the switch that starts that clock counting.

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.

I think we'll quickly end with these thoughts and then begin with them again, next week.

Therefore! Why is it there for? Therefore, since the rapture is the finality of the type of Noah. Since the rapture is like when Noah went into the ark, and God sealed the door shut. Therefore, since the churches in America are full of half hearted people who are like the virgins who are asleep while the little bit of oil they began with is burning out , , ,

Therefore, wake up church.

The possibility remains that people who think they're OK, will be left behind, the door will be shut, and the Lord Jesus will say, friend, I never knew you.

I have a beloved boss at work. An easy guy to like, who is looking at the direction the world is taking with some trepidation, but he says, Jim, if I see all this stuff happen, then I'll know you were right. Then I'll believe.

No, then the door will be shut. The time to believe is NOW.