

Addressing specific refutations that the “fig tree” cannot represent Israel in the Mat.24; Mar.13; and Luk.21 passages:

1. First and foremost, the interpreter must do a word study on the use “fig tree”, used 32x in the OT/NT.
 - A. “Trees” are used to represent “people” and specific trees (fig, olive) as well as a “vine” and “bramble/thorn bush” represents a “king/national ruler” over people of a nation. Jdg.9:7-12; cp. 1Kgs.4:21-25; Mic.4:4
 - B. Metaphorically used of one’s own possessions, business or way of life. 2Kgs.18:31; Pro.27:18; Isa.36:16; Zech.3:10
 - C. Used literally. SOS 2:13; Isa.34:4; Jer.8:13; Joel 1:12; 2:22; Hab.3:17; Hag.2:19; Joh.1:48,50; Jam.3:12; Rev.6:13
 - D. Used symbolically of national Israel. Hos.9:10; Joel 1:7 (*Clear reference passages*)
2. Since Christ commands the disciples to “Behold/pay attention to” (Luk.21:29) and to “learn/ascertain/discover (a/a/imperative μαθησάτω) the parable from the fig tree” (Mat.24:32; Mar.13:28), it would behoove the student to research any other parable in which a fig tree is used (only 1x Luk.13:6-9 – *The fig tree clearly = Israel*) or of any other possible occurrence in which a fig tree is used to teach a lesson (the cursing of the fig tree of Mat.21:18-22; cp. Mar.11:12-14 – *Again, the fig tree clearly = Israel*) which can also be compared to Mat.21:21 & Mar.11:20-23 that equates removal of “this mountain” being cast into “the sea” with the curse of the fig tree. Also cp. Luk.17:6 where a sycamore/mulberry tree is uprooted and cast into the sea (mulberry and fig trees are of the same Nettle family).
3. All other uses of the “fig tree” are literal in the NT.
4. The cursing of the fig tree occurs on Tues. AM of Passion Week and actually is not found totally withered until Wed. AM per Luke’s account.
5. At most then, the Olivet discourse is no more than a day since the miracle of the fig tree “from” which the disciples could “learn” a lesson “from the fig tree”.
6. The argument that if one holds to the fig tree in the discourse as referring back to the earlier “cursing” of the fig tree, then one must take the stand that Israel will never be a nation again (since He says “no longer shall there ever be fruit from you” Mat.21:19 cp. Luk.11:14), is not a true statement.
7. This stand rejects the principle and understanding that Israel will re-emerge as a nation. Hos.6:1-2
8. While the cursing of the fig tree taught the reality behind the then current commonwealth of Israel being utterly destroyed in 70AD (*As the 2nd commonwealth it never again produced “fruit”*), it does not mean ipso facto that the lesson of the “curse” is what is in view in the discourse, though there is obviously a tie between what the two lessons taught.
9. Rather, in fact, the focus of both the “curse” and the parable is the “fig tree” itself and what it represents, which must be understood before a lesson can be gleaned.
10. This false approach tries to argue that the lesson of the previous “curse” has to apply to the parable in the discourse, rather than just acknowledging that the “fig tree” is the subject and another lesson is now being taught with regard to it.

11. Another argument that a parable is not a “sign”, denies what a parable is, that being a story that points to a higher moral/spiritual principle.
12. A sign points to something that will follow or to something that is greater.
13. Based upon the above documented word study of the use of “fig tree”, the boundaries of what the significance of the “fig tree” as used in the parable has been set, and out of all its uses, only does making the “fig tree” representative of Israel make any sense in Jesus discourse of Mat.24; Mar.13; Luk.21
14. For those who seek to make the “fig tree” represent anything other than what scripture reveals it to be, hermeneutically isolate themselves from allowing scripture to interpret scripture.
15. Those who claim that the parable is simply a lesson to teach that as a literal fig tree and all the trees (Luk.21:29ff) put forth their leaves is a physical reality to denote a change in season, and thus it only emphasizes that as it is sure that trees will put on leaves each season = the surety of the reality of all of the events in the discourse to be fulfilled, ignore Jesus own example on how to interpret a parable cp. the example of the sower and the soils of Mar.4:2-8 and **His** interpretation of the parable in vs.13-20.
16. In other words, “the fig tree illustration” is a parable or it is not. If it is then it is Biblically incumbent upon the interpreter to interpret it as a parable and not “white wash” it under their own agenda.
17. In Jesus interpretation of the example parable, He equates every physical ingredient of the parable to a higher spiritual representation and thus reveals the “lesson” of the parable. Cp. Luk.8:4-15
18. Those who interpret the parable of the “fig tree and all the trees” as stated in point 15 ignore the necessity to equate “the fig tree”, “the fig tree’s branch becoming tender”, “all the trees”, “putting forth leaves” and “summer”, with the higher spiritual principles they are designed to represent and fail miserably, hermeneutically and Biblically to interpret the parable.
19. Those who interpret parables in the false fashion as being discussed, adhere to the class of interpreters that say only the “big picture” of the parable is what is to be found and are refuted by Christ Himself.
20. Those who interpret the parable of the “fig tree” in the Olivet discourse as “the fig tree = national Israel”, “its tender branch = the extension of national Israel as seen in its reestablishment of the 3rd commonwealth in 1948”, “its putting forth leaves = the new immigrants of the nation via the Zionist movement” and “that summer is near = that when the aforementioned occurs then the millennial age is near”, stand on solid documentable and hermeneutical grounds and **follow** Christ’s example on how to interpret a parable.
21. Note: Jesus uses a fig tree 3x in the gospels to teach a lesson. The two other times apart from the passage we are dealing with, the fig tree beyond doubt represents Israel. Now the “can’t know” crowd says all of a sudden it only represents a literal tree. What a cop out and “blindness” that occurs to those who don’t really seek the truth in the matter.
22. Another misrepresentation by those who refute Israel as the fig tree is a misrepresentation of the phrase “this generation/γενεά οὗτος”.

23. They recite all of the uses of “this generation” in the gospels and claim that because it refers to the generation at the 1st advent in all cases (other than as we claim in Jesus Olivet discourse Mat.24:34; Mar.13:30; Luk.21:32), then it is technical and then must always refer to the 1st advent generation and thus interprets its meaning in the discourse.
24. The phrase “this generation” is used 20x in the NT, 18x in the gospels.
25. Heb.3:10 uses it clearly in reference to the Exodus generation.
26. Therefore, it is documentable that it is not “technical” in all cases of its use.
27. Furthermore, a clear understanding of the use of the demonstrative pronoun further indicates that it is not technical, but indeed is governed by the context in which it is used: The demonstrative pronoun functions to call attention with special emphasis to a designated object/subject, whether near/οὐτος or remote/ἐκεῖνος and whether the object/subject is in the actual vicinity of the speaker or is in the immediate or remote vicinity of literary context. In the literary context, οὐτος is used to refer to what immediately precedes in context and ὅδε is used to refer to what immediately follows in context. Cf. “A Manuel of the Greek NT”, Dana and Mantey p.127 para.136 and “A Grammar of the Greek NT”, A.T. Robertson p.702 para. 7. Only by context can one determine whether the writer is speaking of someone/thing in his vicinity or something in the literary context of his writing.
28. The same advocates perpetuating this interpretation of “this generation” as technical do the same thing in the phrase “all these things/οὐτος πάντα” indicating that the events of its use of Mat.23:36; 24:2 is technical and interprets its use in Mat.24:3,8,34 cp. parallel passages.
29. Again, an understanding of the grammar of the Greek and use of the demonstrative pronouns does not substantiate this exegetically.
30. In addition, this phrase is used 14x in the NT and only 4x can one even come close to interpret “all these things” referring to events as indicators that the speaker is dealing with the time frame of the 1st advent or 2nd. Cp. Mat.6:33; 13:34, 51, 56; Mar.10:20; Luk.16:14; 18:21; 24:9; Joh.15:21; Act.7:50
31. A general summary of Mat.24:1-34:
 - A. Vss.1-2, Christ responds to the continued “blindness” of the disciples regarding His previous teaching.
 - B. Vs.1 indicates their admiration of the beauty of the temple buildings physically, which is an indication of their lack of spiritual reality.
 - C. Vs.2 Jesus responds “Do you not see all these things”, and clarifies the future reality that will occur in 70AD.
 - D. “All these things” refers back in the literary context of Ch.23 cf. vss.32-39, and His teaching regarding the –V of Israel corporately and its destruction.
 - E. Vs.3, the disciples spin off with their understanding of His teaching and ask Jesus a two fold question: “When” will these things be and “what” is the sign of His coming AND the end of the age.
 - F. It must be understood that under the “what” of their question that “the sign” equates or correlates His coming with the end of the age.

- G. It is His visible appearance/coming that marks the end of the age of Israel/Daniel's 70th week/tribulational period.
- H. It also must be understood that in the disciple's frame of thinking, they equate His coming and the end of the age of Israel as occurring within their own life time (to include the destruction of the temple vs.2), as they erroneously reject the necessity of the cross, His death and resurrection. Ex. Mat.16:23 that denotes Peter's mindset to deter Jesus from the cross.
- I. In addition, the disciples still have their eyes on the erroneous assumption that He is here in the 1st advent to establish the Millennial Kingdom. (This is the mindset of practically all of the Jews, a indisputable fact presented in the gospels.)
- J. It is the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom that the disciples (and the rest of Judaism) are looking for, which colors the intent of their question that could be rendered, "When will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming and establishing your earthly kingdom and ending our present age of Israel's oppression"?
- K. In other words, they do not understand the time elapse that must occur between the destruction of the temple/Jerusalem and the conclusion of the age of Israel and establishment of the millennial age.
- L. To understand their erroneous frame of reference is key to fully interpret Jesus response.
- M. Jesus response, does not follow their erroneous thinking, but accurately presents the correct eschatology (note the use of ἀποδρίνομαι in vs.4 cp. vs.2).
- N. His discourse is outlined as follows:
 - 1) General events that will precede the end of the age. Vss.4-8
 - 2) The 7 year tribulational period. Vss.9-14
 - 3) Prediction of the rise of Antichrist and false christs. Vss.15-28
 - 4) Events that occur at the very end of the age/tribulation. Vss.29-31
 - 5) A parable concerning the fig tree (and as Luke inserts, "all the trees"). Vs.32
 - 6) A statement to recognize the imminence of His coming. Vs.33
 - 7) A reference to a specific time frame called "this generation" in connection with all the events articulated previously. Vs.34
- O. Other pertinent observations of His discourse must be recognized:
 - 1) He does not answer the disciple's question in the order it is asked i.e., "when" and "what".
 - 2) Rather, all of the emphasis of His response from vss.4-31 centers on "what" will happen.
 - 3) Not until vss.33-36 (which immediately follows the parable) does He bring in the issue of "when/time period".
 - 4) The entirety of His discourse from vss.4-41 is prophetic and deals with future eschatological events (not to depreciate the eschatological significance in His teaching for the remainder of His discourse vss.42-52 through chapter 5).

- 5) All of the events Jesus discloses function as “signs” and point towards “what” will happen in connection with His coming and end of the age.
- P. The question proposed among theological circles is, “What is the specific “sign” of His coming and the end of the age as asked by His disciples in vs.3”?
- Q. Vs.30 designates what that “sign/event” is, as seen in, “and then (at the end of the tribulation) the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky,...”.
- R. Again, the importance of the frame of thinking, in which the disciples asked their question, is key to the significance of “the sign”.
- S. The phrase “of the Son of Man” is a genitive of apposition and equates His person as the sign and could be translated, “the sign being the Son of Man...”.
- T. He then attaches two actions directly to “the sign” i.e., “it *will appear in the sky*” and mankind will mourn and “visually *see the Son of Man* (as the sign) *coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory*”.
- U. Therefore, the specific sign revealed is the visible appearance of Christ coming in a flame of fire with His armies at His return/2nd advent. 2Thess.1:7
- V. Technically then, His appearance marks the tail end of the Age of Israel and answers specifically “what” is the sign that marks “the end of the age” of vs.3 and that **is** His coming/appearance.
- W. It also answers the **intent** of the disciple’s question as to “what” will occur to mark the establishment of His Millennial Kingdom.
- X. That the focus of vs.30 indeed is on the end of the age and resultant Millennial Age is further supported by context in vs.29, “But immediately *after* the tribulation...” cp. vs.31 where the gathering of the elect corresponds to the separation of the sheep from the goats which occurs after He takes His throne indicating His ordination as King of the new Millennial Kingdom. Mat.5:31-33
- Y. Therefore, vs.30 serves to directly address any erroneous “sign” that the disciples are looking for to indicate the establishment of Christ’s kingdom.
- Z. Jesus informs them that any assumption they may have that the Millennium will occur during Jesus 1st advent of humility, physical fleshly state and weakness, while still on this planet and apart from all of the other events that He has foretold, is bogus.
- AA. Rather, a period of history must first be fulfilled, a transformation of His earthly state into a glorified state must occur and if He is to “appear and come” from heaven, He obviously must depart from them and ascend to heaven, another principle they failed to GAP. Joh.16:16-18
- BB. This is the irony of “the sign” and that is He is “the sign”, but not under the state and condition and erroneous perception in which they view him.
- CC. This is also the irony of the disciples question of “what is the sign of Your coming”, in that under their false misconceptions of Jesus at the 1st advent in connection with the millennial kingdom, they fail to recognize that it

literally **is** His coming, but at the 2nd advent (after His resurrection and ascension), that ushers in the new kingdom.

- DD. But, even after all of these events are articulated by Christ to include the specific “what will occur” to close the Age of Israel (vss.30-31), He still has not answered the “when/time” of His coming and resultant end of the age.
- EE. While “His Parousia” does say “when” the Age of Israel is over, it doesn’t reveal when/any historical time frame in which that key sign will occur.
- FF. In other words, none of these events, including the premier “sign” orients His listeners to “when” in history they will occur.
- GG. This is where the parable of the “fig tree” is now inserted in vss.32-34.
- HH. While exegetically “the sign” of vs.3 is “the sign” of vs.30, it does not depreciate the significance and uniqueness of the parable of the “fig tree”, also as a sign.
- II. While the parable may not be technically “the sign” that marks the premier event/sign of the last day of the age of Israel ushering in the Millennium, it still is “a sign” that marks the time period in history “when” “all these things take place”.
- JJ. Following a correct interpretation of the parable in vs.32, it is the re-establishment of Israel as the fig tree in 1948 that is the only sign that Jesus gives to specifically designate “when” in history that all the “whats” of vss.4-31 will occur, “**when** its branch...”.
- KK. As it is the only event disclosed to answer the “when” of the disciple’s question, it is of itself the premier “what” that will occur in this regard. (*Remember, all of the events function as indicators or signs.*)
- LL. It is not until “this generation” of humanity who observes the reestablishment of Israel in its place historically, under the eschatological framework of context, that “all these things” of vss.33-34 (which looks back to the preceding literary context of vss.4-32 – including the parable), will be fulfilled up to the conclusion of Daniel’s 70th week.
- MM. Jesus answers the “when” of the disciple’s question in vss.32-34 as follows:
- 1) He introduces the issue of time under the terms, “when”, “summer” and “near” (vs.32), “when” and “near” (vs.33) and “this generation” and “until/ἕως – temporal conj. marking the end of a time period” (vs.34)
 - 2) It is the reestablishment of Israel that indicates that “summer/the Millennium” is near/close at hand/imminent. Vs.32
 - 3) He further declares that “His coming” is imminent when “all these things” occur. Vs.33
 - 4) “All these things” in literary context refers to the preceding context to include the parable of the “fig tree” in vs.32.
 - 5) He declares that there will be a representation of humanity that exists “when” the time period of the “fig tree” is instituted that will experience “all these things” to include His return at the 2nd advent and institution of His Millennial reign. Vs.34 (This obviously

- would include the event of the rapture that occurs 7 years prior the 2nd Advent.)
- 6) To assume that “all these things” refers back to the disciples question ignores that they don’t ask when “all” these things will happen, but simply “these things”.
- 7) To apply “all these things” back to Jesus statement regarding the temple in vs.2 denies that Jesus is dealing with a totally different time frame.
- NN. In vs.35 Jesus in no uncertain terms declares that all He has said is the gospel truth and there is nothing in history that can change them.
- OO. Even Christ under kenosis at the 1st advent did not know the exact time of His return (vs.36), but He did know that the fig tree must put “forth its leaves” before the 2nd advent could occur.
- PP. The phrase, “*But of that day and hour...*” indicts two periods of time regarding the 2nd advent that Jesus was not privy too.
- QQ. The word “that/ἐκεῖνος” is a remote demonstrative pronoun and indicates that the time period of the prophecy espoused is “**far away/far removed**” from the time of the discourse.
- RR. This is in light of those who claim that the time frame of “this generation” is the existing generation of the 1st advent.
- SS. In the concept of time, A day is obviously longer than an hour and an hour is a shorter portion within the day.
- TT. Unless one knows the day of the event, then obviously they cannot know the hour.
- UU. One can conclude then, that if Jesus did not know when in history Israel would reemerge as a nation and thus the time period in which these events would occur, then He would not know when the 2nd advent would occur.
- VV. The fact the Jesus deals with the disciples question specifically in the two categories of “when” and “what” will happen is further followed by Paul’s teaching as to the last days in 1Thess.5:1 “*Now as to the “duration of” times and “events of” of the epochs/ages/seasons, brothers, you have no need of anything to be written to you.*”
- WW. Whereas Paul is emphasizing the rapture, Christ includes the remainder of the Age of Israel i.e., Daniel’s 70th week.
32. Finally, those who adhere to the false doctrine of imminence say that we neglect to mention “all the trees” in Luk.21:29.
33. It is only Luke’s account that includes the other trees with the fig tree.
34. As the fig tree represents Israel as a nation, then the obvious emphasis of other trees is to represent other nations other than Israel.
35. “All the trees” is reference to all the other nations (especially key players) that must be in place along with Israel for the concluding events of the discourse to be fulfilled.
36. It is noted that those who reject “the fig tree” as being Israel are the same crowd that rejects USA (a “tree”) in prophecy.
37. Present day history itself vindicates the interpretation of the “fig tree”, otherwise what’s all the international fuss over the Jews being back in the land.

38. Are we to say that Israel in the land today has no prophetic or Biblical significance, its only Israel.
39. One could ask, what position of imminence is the safest Biblically and spiritually:
- A. That the “fig tree” does not represent Israel and we can’t know the rapture generation or
 - B. The “fig tree” does represent Israel and we can know the rapture generation.
 - C. Assuming the “can’t know” crowd is correct, then those of the “can know” crowd need to re-study their Bibles.
 - D. How the “can’t know” crowd can prove they are right is when present day Israel is either removed again as a nation or we can all wait and see if more than two generations pass since her reemergence.
 - E. In that case, we are proven wrong, and make our adjustment.
 - F. In the meantime, we will continue to pursue and analyze the truth in this regard.
 - G. However, if the “can know” crowd is correct, then the rapture will occur within this generation.
 - H. In that case, oops, sorry to the “can’t know” crowd, there will be no time to make any adjustments.
 - I. They prove that indeed there are believers who are “asleep” spiritual in the context of knowing the time period with regard to the rapture as Paul so aptly puts it in 1Thes.5:1-11.
 - J. How will Christ deal with those at the Bema who have rejected this major prophetic truth and orientation to His plan for the saints in the last days?
40. Without Israel in the land as a nation, you cannot nor do not have the necessary historical setting for the tribulation to occur (Daniel’s 70th week) nor the establishment of the Millennial Age, and that is what Christ has been talking about in His discourse.
41. To say that Christ knew that Israel would be destroyed in 70AD on one hand, but claim Him as ignorant to the necessity of her being in the land for the tribulation and 2nd advent to occur, is an accusation that if believers would think about it, ought to experience shame at the Bema if they don’t repent.
42. In other words, do believers really think that Christ was so stupid as to think He could return at any time after His death or during the current generation when He knew that Jerusalem must be destroyed (cp. Mat.23:34 where He understands prophets, wise men and scribes will be sent before Jerusalem’s destruction and cp. the other parable of the “fig tree” where He understands a lapse of time will occur before the destruction, Luk. 13:6-9), and then the Jews dispersed to the four corners of the earth and regathered (Isa.11:12), therefore, Israel must reemerge as a nation, the tribulation must occur with the institution of the antichrist, as well as the necessity for the armies of the North, South, East and West being in place as well as all the other prophetic players, blah, blah, blah, and all this could feasibly happen within “this current generation”.
43. What? Jesus only thought that God would punish Israel for a few years for rejection of their Messiah and then bingo, reward them with the Millennium?

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44. One last point of consideration for the “can’t know” crowd, “ISRAEL IS IN THE LAND TODAY, RIGHT NOW AND HAS BEEN SINCE 1948, AFTER ALMOST 2000 YEARS OF DISPERSION, DEAL WITH IT---BIBLICALLY”, those of the “can know” crowd already has.