COGMA

Church of God Mission Academy

STUDY GUIDE
64

The Coming of Jesus Christ

STUDY GUIDE 3 OF 6:

The Son of Man Coming in the Clouds

An overview of fulfilled cloud imagery and the gathered elect.



Equipping and empowering for effective service
2 Timothy 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

Content

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

THEY SHALL SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING IN THE CLOUDS

LEARN A PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS

ONE SHALL BE TAKEN, AND THE OTHER LEFT

MATTHEW 25: THE WARNING CONTINUES

PENTECOST TO A.D. 70: ALL THESE THINGS FULFILLED WITHIN THAT GENERATION

CONCLUSION: THE SON OF MAN HAS COME IN POWER AND GREAT GLORY

Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

Contact and Links

Website: cogma.com.au

Email: admin@cogma.org.au

Radio COGMA: radiocogma.com

YouTube: youtube.com/@COGMAChannel

Facebook: facebook.com/profile.php?id=61585399471540

SEARCH THIS STUDY GUIDE

Windows: Ctrl + F | Mac: Cmd + F | Phone or tablet: use Search in your PDF reader.

PREFACE

BACK TO CONTENTS

The words of Jesus Christ concerning His coming in the clouds of heaven have often been understood as describing a future physical return to the earth. This interpretation has also influenced the understanding of the gathering of the elect, the parable of the fig tree, the one taken and the other left, and the warnings concerning watchfulness and judgement. Yet Jesus spoke these words to His disciples within a definite historical setting and established the timeframe in which they would be fulfilled.

Jesus declared in **Matthew 24:34**:

> *"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."*

This declaration must govern our understanding of His prophecy. Jesus did not identify an unknown generation thousands of years later, but spoke directly to people then living. His words concerning the coming of the Son of man therefore belonged within the same generation He identified.

The prophetic language of clouds, trumpets, messengers and gathering must be understood by comparing Scripture with Scripture. The New Testament reveals Jesus Christ as the Head of His redeemed people, the Church, and shows believers being brought into His one spiritual body by His Spirit. These truths provide the Scriptural foundation for understanding the imagery Jesus used.

Jesus fulfilled His promised coming at Pentecost in A.D. 31 when He came as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people. The New Covenant reality is Jesus Christ dwelling within everyone who is born again. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70 was a distinct event within that same generation, bringing the visible Temple-centred former covenant order to its historical end.

This Study Guide examines the coming of the Son of man in the clouds, the gathering of God's people and the fulfilment of Jesus' prophetic declarations. It will also consider the parable of the fig tree, the one taken and the other left, and the continuing spiritual principles of watchfulness, faithfulness and obedience. These principles remain important throughout the Gospel Day and are expressed through the indwelling life of Jesus Christ.

Our purpose is to understand the words of Jesus Christ within the timeframe He established, allow Scripture to explain the prophetic language He used and recognise the fulfilment of His promises.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must the coming of the Son of man be read within the generation Jesus addressed?

Personal Reflection

Do you approach the coming of the Son of man with fear because you imagine a future physical event rather than Christ's fulfilled promise?

Action Step

Identify one fear or assumption you need to release. Explain how you will respond to Christ's present indwelling life when that concern returns.

INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

BACK TO CONTENTS

The words of Jesus Christ concerning His coming in the clouds of heaven have often been interpreted as describing a future physical return to the earth. Yet Jesus spoke these words to His disciples within a definite historical setting, and He established the generation in which His prophecy would be fulfilled. We must therefore understand His language according to Scripture rather than transfer His words to a future generation He did not identify.

Jesus declared in **Matthew 24:30-31**:

> *"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*

The clouds, trumpet, messengers and gathering of the elect must be understood through the prophetic language of Scripture. These expressions direct our attention to the revelation of Jesus Christ, the proclamation of the Gospel and the gathering of God's redeemed people into His one spiritual body. They do not require another physical coming of Jesus Christ through the natural sky.

Jesus also established the timeframe of the prophecy.

Jesus declared in **Matthew 24:34**:

> *"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."*

The words *"all these things"* include the coming of the Son of man in the clouds described only a few verses earlier. Jesus therefore placed this declaration within the lifetime of the generation He was addressing. His prophecy must remain within that timeframe rather than being transferred to another generation thousands of years later.

Jesus Christ fulfilled His promised coming at Pentecost in A.D. 31 when He came as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people. The New Covenant reality is Christ within every born-again

believer, not an absent Saviour awaiting a future physical return. His coming brought His own life and presence into His spiritual body.

With the audience, timeframe and spiritual nature of His coming established, we can now examine the meaning of His declaration: *"They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."*

Personal Response

Key Truth

How should the Bible guide our understanding of Jesus' prophetic cloud language?

Personal Reflection

Have you focused more on the image of clouds than on the people in whom Christ reveals His glory?

Action Step

Identify a believer you have failed to value properly. Explain how recognising Christ's one redeemed body will affect your attitude or care towards that person.

THEY SHALL SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING IN THE CLOUDS

BACK TO CONTENTS

After speaking of the tribulation, the darkening of the sun and moon, and the shaking of the powers of heaven, Jesus described the coming of the Son of man. This is one of the most frequently misunderstood parts of Matthew 24 because the word *"clouds"* is often assumed to mean ordinary atmospheric clouds. We must therefore allow Scripture to explain the prophetic language Jesus used.

Jesus said in **Matthew 24:30-31**:

> *"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*

These words cannot be removed from the timeframe Jesus gave only a few verses later. He said that *"this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."* The coming of the Son of man in the clouds is included within *"all these things."* Therefore, whatever the clouds represent, the coming described here was fulfilled within the generation Jesus was addressing.

The Order of Jesus' Prophecy

The order of Jesus' words must be respected. Before describing the coming of the Son of man in the clouds, He spoke of what would follow the tribulation.

Jesus said in **Matthew 24:29**:

> *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:"*

The Stars Represent the Ministry

Jesus was not describing physical stars falling from the sky or the material universe being shaken. He was using symbolic language to describe spiritual conditions, including a fallen ministry. Scripture provides the explanation of the stars.

John wrote in **Revelation 1:20**:

> *"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."*

The stars represent the messengers of the churches, the ministry entrusted with proclaiming God's Word. **Revelation 1:20** identifies what the stars represent; the language of falling describes departure from their spiritual position of truth. A fallen ministry is therefore pictured, not stars dropping from the physical sky.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does **Revelation 1:20** *help explain the stars in prophetic language?*

Personal Reflection

Are you inclined to accept a teaching because the minister is admired rather than because the Bible establishes it?

Action Step

Choose one teaching to examine without relying on the speaker's reputation. Explain how you will remain respectful while letting God's Word correct your conclusion.

Paul Warned That Ministers Would Depart From the Truth

Paul warned the elders of the Church at Ephesus that danger would arise from among themselves. He was not speaking only about enemies coming from outside the Church. He addressed men whom the Holy Ghost had made overseers of the flock.

Luke recorded Paul's words in **Acts 20:28-30**:

> *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."*

The words *"of your own selves"* identify the danger within the ministry. Men entrusted with feeding the Church would speak perverse things and draw disciples after themselves. Instead of directing people to Jesus Christ, they would gather followers around their own authority and teaching.

John also warned believers about false prophets already working in the world. This danger was not confined to a distant future.

John wrote in **1 John 4:1**:

> *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."*

These warnings help explain the spiritual condition represented by falling stars. **Revelation 1:1** introduces what Jesus Christ *"signified"* to John, while **Revelation 1:20** identifies the stars as the messengers of the churches. The falling-star imagery in **Revelation 6:13, 8**:10-11 and 12:4 is understood through this connection with the ministry.

The fall is a departure from spiritual truth, not a movement through the physical sky. Ministers who once held to the truth turn from it and lead others into error. Recognising the same symbol does not require every vision to describe the same historical event or moment.

The Church belongs to Jesus Christ, not to its ministers. True ministry directs people to Him and serves through His indwelling life. A ministry that turns people from His truth to human authority has departed from its proper calling.

The Ecclesiastical Heaven Is Spiritual, Not Physical

The heaven must also be understood spiritually. Paul describes believers as already seated in heavenly places while they are still living upon the earth.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:6**:

> *"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:"*

These heavenly places describe the believer's spiritual position in Jesus Christ, not a physical location above the earth. We call this the ecclesiastical heaven, meaning the spiritual realm associated with the Church, its ministry and the revelation of God's truth. Believers share this life because Jesus Christ dwells within them.

Paul also spoke of this realm when describing visions and revelations.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 12:1-2**:

> *"It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven."*

Paul's subject is *"visions and revelations of the Lord."* The third heaven is understood here as the spiritual realm of revelation, not another physical level of the sky. This agrees with the heavenly position believers have in Christ.

The falling stars therefore describe a spiritual fall in ministry. They do not mean that God Himself loses His power, that His eternal dwelling collapses, or that the physical universe is destroyed.

Christ Came at Pentecost and Continues to Come to Those Who Believe

"Immediately after" must not be made to mean *"before"*. However, the revelation of Christ described after the tribulation must be distinguished from the beginning of His indwelling

presence at Pentecost. The promised coming explained through **Hebrews 9:28** and John 14 was fulfilled in A.D. 31, when Jesus Christ came as Spirit to dwell within His people.

Matthew 24:30 speaks of the sign appearing and people seeing the Son of man coming in the clouds. This is understood as the continuing revelation of Christ in His redeemed people, not His first arrival among them in A.D. 70. He had already come at Pentecost and continued to come to those who heard the Gospel, believed and were born again.

The Old Covenant Had Been Fulfilled

The Old Covenant had already been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. By Pentecost in A.D. 31, the New Covenant was established, and Jesus Christ had come as Spirit to dwell within His people. The continued existence of the Temple did not mean that the Old Covenant remained in force alongside the New Covenant.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 8:13**:

> *"In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."*

Notice the distinction between *"he hath made the first old"* and *"ready to vanish away."* The Old Covenant had already been made old, but the Temple, its priesthood, animal sacrifices and ceremonies had not yet disappeared. These visible practices belonged to the Old Covenant order, whose purpose had already been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70 brought the remaining Temple-centred Old Covenant order to its historical end. It did not establish the New Covenant or begin Christ's indwelling presence. Neither did it remove Jesus Christ, destroy His spiritual body or close the Gospel to Jewish people. Their hope remained in Christ, who continued to receive those who believed, bringing Jew and Gentile into the same salvation and the same body.

His Saving Presence Continues Throughout the Gospel Day

The clouds represent His redeemed people, the body in whom He dwells. Nevertheless, seeing Christ revealed through His people is not the same as personally receiving Him. Each person must believe and be born again.

The prophecy was fulfilled within the generation Jesus identified, but that fulfilment did not bring Christ's saving work through the Gospel to an end. Throughout the Gospel Day, the same Jesus Christ continues to make His abode within those who are born again. The Temple's destruction neither began His indwelling presence nor ended His coming to those who receive Him.

The Coming in the Clouds Appears Repeatedly

Matthew 24 is not the only place where Jesus used this language. Later, when He stood before the high priest, He again spoke about the Son of man coming in the clouds. His words were directed personally to the people standing before Him.

Matthew wrote in **Matthew 26:63-64**:

> *"But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."*

Jesus said *"I say unto you"* and *"shall ye see."* He was speaking directly to the high priest and those present at His trial. Once again, His language concerning the coming of the Son of man was addressed to people then living.

Mark records the same statement.

Mark wrote in **Mark 14:61-62**:

> *"But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."*

The repeated language is important. Jesus consistently described His coming in connection with clouds, and He spoke of it to people who were then present. Luke also records the same prophetic language.

Jesus said in **Luke 21:27**:

> *"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."*

Revelation uses the same imagery and connects it with those involved in the rejection of Jesus Christ.

John wrote in **Revelation 1:7**:

> *"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."*

Notice the words *"they also which pierced him."* The language again directs our attention to the generation involved in the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ Continues to Come to Those Who Receive Him

Revelation opens with repeated references to the coming of Jesus Christ. Verse 7 declares that *"he cometh with clouds,"* while verses 4 and 8 describe Him as the One *"which is to come."* These words must be understood together with what Jesus Himself taught concerning His coming.

John wrote in **Revelation 1:4**:

> *"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;"*

John also wrote in **Revelation 1:8**:

> *"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."*

These expressions use forms of the Greek verb ERCHOMAI. In verse 4, ERCHOMENOS is a present participle, describing the coming One. In verse 7, ERCHETAI is a present indicative, rendered *"he cometh."* Both are present-tense forms, although they are not the same grammatical form.

The meaning of Christ's coming must be established through His own words, not through grammatical tense alone. Jesus explained that He would come to the person who receives His words and make His abode with that person.

Jesus said in **John 14:23**:

> *"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."*

Jesus Christ fulfilled His promised return at Pentecost in A.D. 31, when He came as Spirit to dwell within His people. Throughout the Gospel Day, He continues to come to those who hear the Gospel, believe and are born again. The fulfilment at Pentecost did not end His coming to make His abode within those who receive Him.

This is not another Pentecost or a second work of grace after salvation. It is the same Jesus Christ giving His life to those who are born again. They receive Christ Himself and are complete in Him.

The Ascension Also Used Cloud Language

The same cloud imagery appears in the record of Jesus' ascension. As the disciples watched Him depart, Scripture does not simply say that He disappeared into the natural sky. It says that *"a cloud received him out of their sight."*

Luke wrote in **Acts 1:9-11**:

> *"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."*

This was not an ordinary physical cloud drifting through the atmosphere. It was a supernatural event in which *"a cloud received him."* The cloud therefore carries prophetic and symbolic meaning and must be understood by comparing Scripture with Scripture rather than assuming that it was simply an ordinary weather cloud.

Scripture later gives us the key to this cloud imagery. Hebrews describes the faithful people of God as *"so great a cloud of witnesses."* The cloud therefore symbolically represents the redeemed people of God, bringing the language of Acts 1 into harmony with the wider Scriptural use of cloud imagery.

This becomes especially important when the men in white apparel said that Jesus would *"so come in like manner."* His coming would again be associated with the cloud. This agrees with the words of Jesus in Matthew 24, where He spoke of the Son of man *"coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."*

Jesus Christ is the Head, and His redeemed people are His body. When He came at Pentecost as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people, He came in the cloud, in and with His redeemed body. The faithful people of God who had lived before Calvary were made perfect through His completed work, while those born again in the Gospel Day were joined to the same one body.

There are not separate redeemed peoples with different spiritual destinies. There is one body, one redeemed people and one Jesus Christ who is Head over all. Those who looked forward to His completed work and those who now look back to it find their salvation and perfection in the same Person.

The cloud of Acts 1 therefore points beyond a natural object in the sky. It symbolically represents the people of God through whom the indwelling Christ would be revealed. Jesus was received in the cloud, and He came in like manner in His redeemed people, His body.

This cloud imagery helps us understand the words Jesus used in Matthew 24. The Son of man coming *"in the clouds of heaven"* is understood in harmony with the redeemed people of God, the body of which Jesus Christ is the Head. The language therefore remains centred in Christ and His people rather than requiring a future descent through ordinary atmospheric clouds.

The repeated reference to clouds therefore requires us to ask an important question: What do clouds represent in the language of Scripture?

A Great Cloud of Witnesses

The writer of Hebrews gives us a clear biblical use of cloud imagery connected with God's people. Hebrews 11 describes faithful men and women who trusted God before the completed work of Jesus Christ. The next chapter begins by referring to those faithful people as a great cloud of witnesses.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 12:1**:

> *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,"*

The word *"wherefore"* connects this statement directly with the people described in Hebrews 11. The cloud is identified as a *"cloud of witnesses."* Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab and many others had lived by faith and looked forward to the fulfilment that would come through Jesus Christ.

The writer concludes Hebrews 11 by explaining their relationship to the promised fulfilment.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 11:39-40**:

> *"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."*

They had faith in what God had promised, but the completed redemptive work of Jesus Christ had not yet occurred during their lifetime. They looked forward to the fulfilment, while believers living after Calvary look back to the completed sacrifice. The direction of their faith was different in time, but the object and fulfilment were the same: Jesus Christ.

The Spirits of Just Men Made Perfect

Hebrews 12 continues by describing the spiritual assembly to which believers have now come. The faithful people described in Hebrews 11 are not presented as a separate redeemed people with a different spiritual destiny. They are included within the fulfilment accomplished through Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 12:22-24**:

> *"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."*

These truths stand together. Hebrews speaks of Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, *"the spirits of just men made perfect,"* Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant and His blood. They belong within one spiritual assembly centred in Jesus Christ.

The faithful people described in Hebrews 11 were not made perfect through the sacrifices of the former covenant. Their perfection depended upon the completed work of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice at Calvary provided the fulfilment towards which they had looked.

One Redeemed People in Jesus Christ

This does not create one redeemed people from the former covenant and another redeemed people from the New Covenant. Jesus Christ brought God's people together in Himself. The division that had existed under the former covenant was removed through His completed work.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:13-18**:

> *"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."*

Jesus *"made both one,"* made *"of twain one new man,"* and reconciled both unto God *"in one body."* There are not two continuing covenant peoples with separate spiritual destinies. There is one redeemed people in Jesus Christ.

Paul confirms this in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

The one body includes all who belong to Jesus Christ. Jew and Gentile are not preserved as separate spiritual peoples. They are brought by one Spirit into one body, and that body belongs to Jesus Christ.

Christ Is the Head and the Church Is His Body

Paul identifies that body directly. Jesus Christ is not separated from His people because He is the Head of the body and the Church is His body. This relationship helps us understand the prophetic cloud imagery being used.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:18**:

> *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."*

Jesus Christ is the Head, and the Church is His body. Therefore, when Scripture speaks prophetically of Jesus Christ coming in the clouds, the cloud imagery directs us to the redeemed people with whom He is identified. The body belongs to its Head, and the Church belongs to Christ.

The great cloud of witnesses is not separate from the people of God. Hebrews places the faithful of the former covenant, the Church of the firstborn, the spirits of just men made perfect, Jesus the mediator and His blood within one spiritual assembly. All find their fulfilment and perfection in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Came in the Cloud

There is an important distinction in the prophetic language concerning the coming of Jesus Christ. Scripture does not simply present Him as travelling beside clouds that are external to Him. The language describes the Son of man coming *"in the clouds of heaven."* That distinction agrees with the New Covenant reality of Jesus Christ being revealed in and through His redeemed people.

Paul uses similar language when describing the believer's spiritual position in Christ. The believer is not simply beside Christ as an independent person sharing the same location. His spiritual position, life and standing are found in Christ Jesus.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:6**:

> *"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:"*

Paul says that believers are seated *"in Christ Jesus."* Union with Christ is the reality being described. In the same way, we should not picture the cloud of Christ's coming as something simply travelling alongside Him.

Scripture connects the cloud with God's presence, His glory and His dwelling place. When Solomon's Temple was dedicated, the cloud filled the house and the glory of God was

manifested there. The cloud was therefore closely associated with God filling His appointed habitation.

The writer of Kings recorded in **1 Kings 8:10-11**:

> *"And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD."*

The cloud was associated with the glory and presence of God filling His dwelling place. Yet the physical Temple was never intended to be the final habitation of God. Scripture points beyond the natural building to the spiritual dwelling place God would establish in His people.

The Psalmist wrote in **Psalm 132:13-14**:

> *"For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."*

God chose Zion as His habitation. Under the New Covenant, Zion is no longer confined to a natural mountain or physical city. Zion is the spiritual people of God, the Church in whom Jesus Christ dwells.

Paul explains this New Covenant habitation.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:21-22**:

> *"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."*

The dwelling place is now a people. Born-again believers are built together as a holy temple and *"an habitation of God through the Spirit."* Jesus Christ personally dwells within His people as Spirit.

John presents the same truth through the symbolic vision of the New Jerusalem. The angel showed him the bride, the Lamb's wife, and then showed him the holy Jerusalem. The city is presented as possessing the glory of God.

John wrote in **Revelation 21:10-11**:

> *"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;"*

The bride, the holy Jerusalem, has the glory of God. The Church bears that glory because Jesus Christ dwells within His people. The glory of God's New Covenant habitation is not natural stone, architecture or ceremonial splendour. It is the indwelling Christ.

This brings the cloud imagery together. Under the former covenant, the cloud was associated with the glory and presence of God filling His dwelling place. Zion was identified as the habitation God desired, while under the New Covenant Zion is His Church and His people are His spiritual temple.

Revelation shows that same spiritual city *"having the glory of God."* Hebrews then describes the faithful people of God as *"so great a cloud of witnesses."* The cloud imagery is therefore connected with God's redeemed people, His habitation and the manifestation of His glory.

When Jesus Christ came on the Day of Pentecost, He came to dwell within His people by His Spirit. He came in the cloud, in His redeemed people, His body and His New Covenant habitation. He did not come as an isolated Person standing apart from His body.

Jesus Christ is the Head, and His redeemed people are His body. The Head and body belong together. His presence within His people is the continuing New Covenant reality.

The faithful people who had looked forward to the promised redemption were made perfect through His completed sacrifice. Those receiving the Gospel were brought into the same one body by one Spirit. There are not separate redeemed peoples, but one redeemed people whose life and salvation are found in Jesus Christ.

This gives fuller meaning to the prophetic declaration in **Matthew 24:30**:

> *"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."*

Jesus does not simply come with an external cloud beside Him. He comes in the cloud, in the redeemed people who are His body and His dwelling place. The Head is revealed in His body, the glory of God is revealed in His habitation, and Jesus Christ is revealed in the people in whom He dwells.

The Coming Was a Revelation of Christ in His People

This agrees with what Jesus had already promised concerning His coming. He said *"I will come to you,"* told His disciples that the Spirit *"shall be in you,"* and said that *"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."* His coming was therefore inseparable from His people becoming His spiritual dwelling and body.

Jesus did not leave His people waiting for Him to descend physically through natural clouds thousands of years later. He came at Pentecost as the Holy Spirit, joined His people to Himself and dwelt within them. Christ in His body became the continuing New Covenant reality.

His coming was therefore revealed through the people in whom He dwelt. The Head and the body were not separated. Jesus Christ had come to live within His redeemed people by His Spirit.

The Great Sound of a Trumpet

Jesus also said that His angels would go forth *"with a great sound of a trumpet"* and gather His elect. The trumpet must be understood according to the prophetic language of Scripture rather than as a literal musical instrument sounding from the natural sky. Scripture had already used trumpet language to describe the clear proclamation of God's message.

Isaiah wrote in **Isaiah 58:1**:

> *"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."*

Isaiah connects the trumpet with a voice proclaiming God's message clearly and openly. The trumpet gives forth a sound that carries the truth of God to those who must hear it. This helps us understand the *"great sound of a trumpet"* in **Matthew 24:31** as the proclamation of God's truth going forth.

His Angels Are His Messengers

Jesus also said that He would *"send his angels"* with the great sound of the trumpet. The Greek word translated *"angels"* is AGGELOS, which means messenger. Scripture uses this word for both heavenly and human messengers, so the setting must determine how the word is being used.

Jesus used AGGELOS when speaking of John the Baptist.

Jesus said in **Luke 7:27**:

> *"This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."*

John was a human messenger sent with God's Word. Scripture therefore does not require the angels of **Matthew 24:31** to be understood as celestial beings physically transporting people from one location to another. The meaning must be understood from the surrounding teaching.

In **Matthew 24:31**, the messengers are connected with the sounding of the Gospel trumpet and the gathering of the elect. Jesus Christ sends His messengers with His Word, the Gospel is proclaimed, and those who believe are gathered into Him. The emphasis is upon the message going forth and people responding to the truth of God.

The gathering is therefore accomplished through the Gospel. Christ is the One doing the gathering, while His messengers carry the truth through which people are called into His Kingdom and into His one body. The whole picture remains centred in Jesus Christ and the Gospel by which He gathers His people to Himself.

Jesus had already spoken of that widespread proclamation earlier in the chapter.

Jesus said in **Matthew 24:14**:

> *"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."*

The Gospel was the great message going forth among the nations. The trumpet was not calling people to gather physically into one geographical location. Through the proclamation of the Gospel, people were being called out of darkness and gathered into Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:13**:

> *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:"*

This gathering did not require people to be physically removed from one part of the earth and placed in another. God delivered them from the power of darkness and brought them into the

Kingdom of Jesus Christ. The gathering of the elect was therefore spiritual and centred in the Person of Christ.

Paul also explains how believers are gathered into one spiritual body.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

Through one Spirit, believers are brought into one body in Jesus Christ. The Gospel trumpet sounded through the proclamation of God's truth, and through that Gospel God gathered His people into Christ, His Kingdom and His body. The gathering was not into one natural nation, but into the one redeemed people of God.

The gathering Jesus described in **Matthew 24:31** belonged within the first-century generation He had identified. As the Gospel went forth from Jerusalem and among the nations, people were gathered into Jesus Christ from every direction. The elect were gathered *"from the four winds"* because the call of the Gospel was not confined to one natural nation or geographical people. Jesus Christ was gathering one redeemed people to Himself through the proclamation of the Gospel.

The fulfilment of that first-century prophecy did not bring the proclamation of the Gospel to an end. The Gospel continues throughout the Gospel Day, and those who believe continue to be brought into Jesus Christ and His one body. This continuing Gospel work does not extend the prophecy of Matthew 24 beyond *"this generation."* The prophecy was fulfilled within the timeframe Jesus gave, while the Gospel through which He gathers people into Himself continues throughout the Gospel Day.

The Timeframe Remains Unchanged

We must finally return to Jesus' own controlling statement. Whatever meaning is given to the clouds, the coming of the Son of man in **Matthew 24:30** remains within the timeframe Jesus established for the whole prophecy. His own words determine when *"all these things"* would be fulfilled.

Jesus said in **Matthew 24:34**:

> *"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."*

The coming of the Son of man in the clouds was included within *"all these things."* Jesus said that all these things would be fulfilled before that generation passed. Therefore, the coming described in Matthew 24 was fulfilled within that generation.

The clouds are not a reason to move the prophecy into our future. Scripture gives us the spiritual language needed to understand them. Jesus Christ came in the cloud, He came in His body, and He came among and within His redeemed people.

The one body of Christ embraces all who are perfected through Him, whether they looked forward to His sacrifice before Calvary or look back to His completed work during the Gospel

Day. All are brought together in the same Jesus Christ and belong to the same redeemed people.

The next words of Jesus provide another clear indicator that the fulfilment belonged to the generation then living. He turned to the familiar picture of a fig tree and said, *"Now learn a parable of the fig tree."*

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do the cloud of witnesses and one body explain Christ's coming in His people?

Personal Reflection

Does someone's background, nationality or previous religious association affect the welcome you give a believer?

Action Step

Identify one barrier or prejudice to abandon. Explain how you will express fellowship with that believer because both belong to the one body of Jesus Christ.

LEARN A PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

BACK TO CONTENTS

After describing the coming of the Son of man in the clouds, Jesus gave His disciples a simple illustration to help them recognise when the fulfilment of the things He had foretold was near. He turned their attention to the fig tree and to something they already understood from ordinary life. The illustration was simple, and Jesus Himself explained how it was to be applied.

Jesus said in **Matthew 24:32-35**:

> *"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."*

The meaning of the illustration is given by Jesus Himself. When the branch of the fig tree becomes tender and begins to put forth leaves, people know that summer is near. In the same way, when the disciples saw the things Jesus had described, they were to recognise that the fulfilment was near.

"When Ye Shall See All These Things"

Once again Jesus spoke directly to the disciples before Him. He said *"when ye shall see all these things,"* showing that those who were listening to Him were expected to recognise the events He had described. The prophecy was not being redirected towards people living thousands of years later.

This agrees with the direct language Jesus had already used throughout the chapter. He had told them *"Take heed that no man deceive you," "ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars,"* and *"they shall deliver you up to be afflicted."* He had also said *"when ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation."*

Now Jesus gathered the whole sequence together with the words *"when ye shall see all these things."* The repeated direct address is important because it keeps the prophecy with the people to whom it was originally given. Those disciples were being prepared to recognise its unfolding within their own generation.

The Fig Tree Was an Illustration of Nearness

Jesus explained the fig tree plainly. When leaves appeared on the tree, people knew that summer was approaching. The visible condition of the tree allowed them to recognise that something expected was now near.

Jesus then applied the illustration to His prophecy with the words, *"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."* The subject of the parable is therefore nearness. The events Jesus had described would allow His disciples to recognise that the fulfilment was approaching.

The words *"even at the doors"* strengthen this point. Jesus was not placing the fulfilment in a distant and unknowable age. As the signs appeared, those disciples would know that the things He had foretold were near to their conclusion.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does the fig tree illustration teach about recognising nearness?

Personal Reflection

Have modern political interpretations of the fig tree caused you to overlook Jesus' own explanation of nearness?

Action Step

Name one prediction you need to reconsider. Explain how you will compare it with Matthew 24 and respond calmly instead of being driven by fear.

The Fig Tree Does Not Move the Prophecy Into Modern Times

The parable has sometimes been interpreted as though the fig tree represents the modern nation of Israel and its leaves represent political events in the twentieth century. That interpretation moves the fulfilment of Matthew 24 away from the generation Jesus addressed and places it almost two thousand years later. Jesus Himself does not give that explanation.

He said, *"When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh."* He then explained the comparison: *"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near."* The fig tree is the natural illustration, while *"all these things"* are the signs His disciples were to recognise.

We do not need to supply another meaning when Jesus has already explained His own parable. The appearance of leaves indicated that summer was near, just as the events He had foretold would indicate that the fulfilment was near. The illustration therefore reinforces the timeframe already established rather than creating a new one.

"All These Things" Remain the Controlling Expression

Jesus again used the words *"all these things."* This expression has followed the prophecy from its beginning and connects the judgement announced in Matthew 23 with the events described throughout Matthew 24. The same wording appears both before and after the detailed prophecy.

Jesus had said in **Matthew 23:36**:

> *"Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."*

Now He told His disciples that when they saw *"all these things,"* they would know that the fulfilment was near. In the very next verse He said that *"this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."* The wording forms a direct connection between the signs, the fulfilment and the generation He had identified.

The disciples would see the signs, and those signs would show them that the fulfilment was near. The generation then living would not pass until all the things Jesus had described had occurred. *"All these things"* must therefore remain together within the timeframe Jesus gave.

"My Words Shall Not Pass Away"

Jesus concluded this part of His teaching with a declaration concerning the certainty of His words. Jerusalem, the Temple and the established religious order may have appeared secure and permanent, but their apparent strength could not prevent the fulfilment of what He had spoken. His words were more certain than the structures in which people had placed their confidence.

Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."* What He had foretold would certainly come to pass. The Temple could be destroyed and the established order could disappear, but the words of Jesus Christ could not fail.

This remains an important principle for believers throughout the Gospel Day. Circumstances may appear permanent, religious traditions may be deeply established and human institutions may seem unchangeable, but the Word of Jesus Christ remains true. Our confidence must rest in Him and in what He has spoken.

The fig tree therefore does not carry Matthew 24 into a future generation. Jesus used it to teach His disciples that when they saw the events He had foretold, they should recognise that the fulfilment was near. He then gave the statement that settles the timeframe: *"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."*

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does the fig tree not move the prophecy beyond the generation Jesus named?

Personal Reflection

When circumstances appear uncertain, do you trust the promises of Jesus or the apparent permanence of outward institutions?

Action Step

Name one circumstance that is unsettling you. Explain what you will change in your response because the words of Jesus remain dependable.

THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS

BACK TO CONTENTS

Jesus brought His prophetic teaching to a decisive statement concerning its timeframe. After describing the destruction connected with Jerusalem, the great tribulation, the prophetic shaking of the heavens, the coming of the Son of man in the clouds and the signs by which His disciples would know that the fulfilment was near, He told them when all these things would be completed.

Jesus said in **Matthew 24:34-35**:

> *"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."*

These words are not a minor detail at the end of the prophecy. They establish the boundary within which everything Jesus had described must be understood. He said *"This generation shall not pass"* and connected that generation directly with the fulfilment of *"all these things."*

The statement is complete and definite. Jesus did not leave the timeframe open for another generation to be supplied later. His own words establish when the things He had described would be fulfilled.

Jesus Had Already Identified the Same Generation

Matthew 24:34 is not the first time Jesus used this expression in the setting we have been studying. Before leaving the Temple, He had already pronounced judgement upon the people before Him and identified the generation upon whom that judgement would come. Matthew 24 continues from that same setting.

Jesus said in **Matthew 23:36**:

> *"Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."*

Then, after giving the prophecy on the Mount of Olives, Jesus said, *"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."* The two statements stand on either side of the prophecy. Before Matthew 24 He said *"All these things shall come upon this generation,"* and near the conclusion of Matthew 24 He said that the same generation would not pass until *"all these things"* were fulfilled.

Jesus therefore identified the generation before the disciples asked their questions and confirmed the same generation after describing the events. The meaning should not be moved

away from the people who heard Him. The prophecy remains within the generation Jesus Himself identified.

"This Generation" Means the Generation Then Living

The expression *"this generation"* is used elsewhere by Jesus in Matthew, and its meaning is clear from the people He was addressing. He used the expression when speaking directly about those who were hearing His words and rejecting the truth placed before them.

Jesus said in **Matthew 12:41-42**:

> *"The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."*

Jesus was speaking about the people then hearing Him and rejecting the greater revelation standing before them. *"This generation"* referred to His contemporaries. The expression did not point towards an unidentified generation in the distant future.

Jesus used similar language again in **Matthew 16:4**:

> *"A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed."*

Again, Jesus was speaking about the generation He was confronting at that time. There is therefore no reason to change the meaning when we arrive at **Matthew 24:34**. Jesus was still speaking to people living within that same generation.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does Jesus' use of 'this generation' elsewhere clarify **Matthew 24:34***?*

Personal Reflection

Does expecting an unfulfilled sign prevent you from recognising what Jesus placed within His own generation?

Action Step

Identify one belief or expectation you have carried. Explain how you will examine the relevant verses and change the way you speak about Christ's coming.

"All These Things" Means All These Things

The words *"all these things"* must also be allowed to stand. Jesus did not say that some of the prophecy would be fulfilled within that generation while the greater part would remain for people living thousands of years later. He said *"till all these things be fulfilled."*

That expression gathers together the prophecy He had just given. The warnings concerning deception, persecution and the Gospel witness before the end belonged within that generation. The tribulation, the prophetic shaking, the coming of the Son of man in the clouds and the signs by which the disciples would recognise that the fulfilment was near also belonged within that generation.

Jesus gathered the whole teaching under the expression *"all these things."* Nothing within Matthew 24 can therefore be removed from the generation He identified and transferred to another generation thousands of years later. His own words keep the prophecy together.

There Is No Unfulfilled Remainder in Matthew 24

This conclusion is important because many interpretations divide Matthew 24 into fulfilled and unfulfilled portions. The destruction of the Temple may be placed in A.D. 70, while the coming in the clouds, the fig tree, the days of Noah or the one taken and the other left are moved into a distant future. Jesus did not make that division.

He said *"all these things."* His statement requires us to understand the entire prophecy within the generation He addressed. We should not divide what Jesus Himself gathered together.

Similar events can occur repeatedly throughout history. Wars continue, deception continues, persecution continues and false teaching continues. Their continued occurrence does not mean that the prophecy Jesus assigned to His generation remains unfulfilled.

The prophecy belonged to that generation, while its spiritual principles continue. Fulfilment and continuing instruction must remain distinct. We do not need to move the prophecy into our century in order for its warnings to remain valuable.

Fulfilled Prophecy Strengthens Confidence in Jesus Christ

Recognising fulfilment does not reduce the importance of Matthew 24. It demonstrates the certainty and faithfulness of the words of Jesus Christ. He told His disciples what would happen and placed those events within their generation.

He foretold judgement upon Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. He warned His disciples about what they would experience, told them what they would see and instructed them when to flee. He described the tribulation and used prophetic language concerning His coming before declaring that their generation would not pass until all these things were fulfilled.

What Jesus said came to pass. This is why He immediately added, *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."* The structures around them could fall, but the words of Jesus Christ could not fail.

His words are dependable. Fulfilled prophecy therefore strengthens our confidence in Jesus Christ rather than weakening the importance of His teaching. What He declares will come to pass.

Prophecy Fulfilled, Principles Continuing

We must continue to preserve the distinction between fulfilment and application. Matthew 24 was fulfilled within the generation Jesus identified, and we are not waiting for another fulfilment of the prophecy. Yet its warnings continue to instruct believers throughout the Gospel Day.

We must take heed that no one deceives us, remain faithful when truth is opposed and refuse to place confidence in religious structures rather than Jesus Christ. We must listen carefully to

His Word and live watchfully and faithfully. These principles remain powerful because the truth of Jesus Christ continues to govern the lives of His people.

The historical prophecy does not have to be transferred into our century for its spiritual instruction to remain relevant. Jesus spoke to them, the prophecy was fulfilled within their generation, and the principles continue to instruct us. That distinction allows us to respect both the historical setting and the continuing value of His words.

But of That Day and Hour Knoweth No Man

Jesus had established the timeframe of the prophecy by declaring that *"this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."* He then made an important distinction between knowing the generation in which the fulfilment would occur and knowing the precise day and hour. The disciples could know the broad period without knowing the exact moment.

Jesus said in **Matthew 24:36**:

> *"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."*

The disciples had originally asked Jesus, *"Tell us, when shall these things be?"* His answer gave them the broad timeframe because the things He had foretold would be fulfilled within their generation. However, knowing the generation did not mean that they knew the exact day and hour when those events would reach their appointed fulfilment.

Jesus therefore gave them both truths. The generation was identified, but the precise day and hour were not. These statements agree with one another because one establishes the general timeframe while the other shows that the exact moment remained unknown.

Matthew 24:36 does not require Jesus to change subjects or move His teaching thousands of years into the future. He was still answering the same disciples within the same prophetic setting established throughout Matthew 23 and 24. The destruction of Jerusalem, His coming, the end of the age and the events connected with that first-century transition remained within the generation Jesus had identified.

His disciples were therefore not given an exact calendar date for the fulfilment of everything He had foretold. This explains why Jesus immediately moved into warnings concerning readiness and watchfulness. They knew the period in which these things would occur, but they were not to presume that they knew the precise moment.

The distinction is clear: the generation was known, but the exact day and hour were not.

Having established the controlling timeframe, we can now examine another part of Matthew 24 that has frequently been removed from that setting and used to teach a future rapture: *"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."*

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can the generation be identified while the exact day and hour remain unknown?

Personal Reflection

Is your idea of watchfulness dominated by predicting a date rather than living faithfully through Christ's life within?

Action Step

Identify one present responsibility you have neglected. Explain how you will respond faithfully now without trying to earn or maintain salvation by effort.

ONE SHALL BE TAKEN, AND THE OTHER LEFT

BACK TO CONTENTS

After declaring that *"this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled,"* Jesus continued His warning by comparing those days with the days of Noah. He then spoke of two people together, with one taken and the other left. These words have often been used to teach that believers will one day disappear from the earth in a future rapture while everyone else is left behind.

Jesus did not change His audience, generation or subject. His words must continue to be understood within the first-century setting He had already established. The one taken and the other left belong within the same prophecy Jesus said would be fulfilled before that generation passed.

Jesus said in **Matthew 24:37-41**:

> *"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left."*

Jesus was describing a separation. People could be working beside one another and appear outwardly similar, yet their relationship to what God was doing could be entirely different. The comparison with Noah helps us understand the seriousness of responding when God reveals truth.

The Days of Noah Were Days of Decision

Jesus first directed His disciples to Noah. Life continued normally while Noah prepared the ark and his generation continued eating, drinking, marrying and carrying on with ordinary life. The problem was not those normal activities, but that people continued without responding to the warning God had given them.

Noah believed God and entered the place God had provided for safety. Others continued outside until the opportunity had passed and judgement arrived. The difference was not outward appearance or ordinary daily activity, but whether they responded to what God had revealed.

Jesus used that history while speaking to the generation before Him. The Gospel would be preached, people would be called into Jesus Christ, and judgement would eventually fall upon the order that had rejected Him. Hearing God's warning required a response then, just as hearing God's truth requires a response now.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does the comparison with Noah show about hearing God's warning and responding?

Personal Reflection

Could a familiar daily routine allow you to hear Jesus' Word without allowing it to correct your conduct?

Action Step

Identify one habit you need to reconsider. Explain how you will respond to the truth you have heard instead of treating it as background information.

"Taken" Does Not Mean Physically Removed From the Earth

The word *"taken"* in **Matthew 24:40** does not describe believers disappearing physically from the earth. The Greek verb is PARALAMBANŌ, which carries the thought of receiving or taking someone to oneself.

It is important to notice that Matthew does not use the same Greek word in the previous verse when he says that the flood *"took them all away."* In **Matthew 24:39**, the expression *"took them all away"* comes from AIRŌ, meaning to take away or remove. In **Matthew 24:40**, however, the words *"one shall be taken"* come from PARALAMBANŌ, which carries the thought of taking or receiving someone to oneself.

The English expressions may appear similar, but the Greek words are different. We should therefore not assume that because those destroyed by the flood were *"taken away"* in verse 39, the person *"taken"* in verse 40 must also be taken in judgement. Verse 40 uses PARALAMBANŌ, the same verb Jesus used when He spoke of receiving His people unto Himself in **John 14:3**. This distinction helps us keep the two statements separate and understand each according to the word Jesus used.

Jesus used this same verb when explaining His coming to His disciples.

Jesus said in **John 14:3**:

> *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*

The words translated *"receive you"* come from the same Greek verb, PARALAMBANŌ. Jesus was speaking of receiving His people unto Himself, and His promise was fulfilled when He came as the Holy Spirit and brought believers into the New Covenant reality of union with Him. The one who is *"taken"* is therefore received into Jesus Christ, while the one who is *"left"* remains outside that saving relationship through unbelief.

This is not a picture of one person suddenly disappearing from a field while another looks on. Jesus was describing the spiritual separation produced by the Gospel during the generation He

was addressing. One would receive the reality God had provided in Jesus Christ, while another would remain outside through unbelief.

The Gospel Created the Separation

After His resurrection, Jesus commanded that the Gospel be proclaimed throughout the world. He also described the response that would separate those who believed from those who refused Him. The separation would occur through the response people made to the Gospel.

Jesus said in **Mark 16:15-16**:

> *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."*

The contrast is clear. The Gospel is preached, one person hears and believes, while another hears and refuses to believe. The person who believes is baptised into the saving reality of Jesus Christ, while the person who refuses the Gospel remains condemned through unbelief.

The baptism Jesus speaks of here is not water producing regeneration. Scripture identifies the baptism by which the believer is brought into Christ's body. This baptism is accomplished by the Holy Spirit at salvation.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

The believer is brought by *"one Spirit"* into *"one body."* That body belongs to Jesus Christ, and Paul identifies it directly as the Church. The baptism that brings the believer into that body is therefore a spiritual work of God.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:18**:

> *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."*

Jesus Christ is the Head, and the Church is His body. When a person believes the Gospel and is baptised by one Spirit into one body, that person is being brought into Jesus Christ and His New Covenant people. The baptism of **Mark 16:16** is therefore the saving baptism of the Holy Spirit, not an outward water ceremony producing spiritual life.

From Pentecost the Choice Became Immediate

The generation Jesus had addressed entered a decisive period when the Gospel Day began at Pentecost in A.D. 31. Jesus Christ had completed His redemptive work, had come as the Holy Spirit and was now dwelling within His people. The Gospel then began to call people into the fulfilled New Covenant reality found in Him.

The Gospel was first proclaimed in Jerusalem and among Jewish people who had lived under the former covenant. They were being called to receive the fulfilment that had come in Jesus Christ rather than remain attached to the shadows that had pointed towards Him. Those who believed were received into Him, while those who refused remained outside Him.

Luke records what happened when people responded to the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost.

Luke wrote in **Acts 2:41**:

> *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."*

Luke later wrote in **Acts 2:47**:

> *"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*

The Lord Himself was gathering people into His Church. This was not a physical gathering into another geographical place because those who believed continued living in the natural world. Spiritually, however, they were being brought into Jesus Christ and added to His body.

One Spirit, One Body, One New Covenant People

The Gospel was not creating another natural Jewish group alongside the former covenant order. Jesus Christ was forming one New Covenant people through the new birth. Jew and Gentile would enter the same body through the same Spirit.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

Natural descent did not determine who entered the body of Christ. The decisive matter was the response to Jesus Christ through the Gospel, and all who were born again were brought by one Spirit into one body. Those who believed were received into Christ, while those who refused remained outside through unbelief.

There were not two continuing covenant peoples moving forward beside one another. The New Covenant people of God were found in Jesus Christ. The gathering produced by the Gospel was therefore into one spiritual body.

The Former Covenant Was Ready to Vanish Away

This Gospel separation was taking place while the visible Temple-centred former covenant order still remained. The New Covenant had already been established in Jesus Christ, yet the Temple and the outward Jewish religious order continued visibly during the transitional generation. Hebrews describes that former order as approaching its disappearance.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 8:13**:

> *"In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."*

The first covenant had already been made old. The New Covenant had already been established, yet the outward Temple-centred order remained visible for a period and was *"ready to vanish away."* Its continued outward existence did not mean that the former covenant remained God's continuing covenant reality.

The Jewish people of that generation therefore faced a real choice. They could receive the Gospel and enter the fulfilled New Covenant reality in Jesus Christ, or they could reject the

Gospel and remain attached to the former covenant order that was passing away. This is the setting in which the words *"one shall be taken, and the other left"* must be understood.

Unbelief Left People Outside

Scripture had already established the same principle through the wilderness generation. God had provided what His people needed, but unbelief prevented many from entering what He had placed before them. The problem was not a failure in God's provision but their refusal to believe.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 3:18-19**:

> *"And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."*

They *"could not enter in because of unbelief."* The generation addressed by Jesus faced the same fundamental issue because the fulfilment had now come in Jesus Christ. The Gospel was being proclaimed, and the Spirit was bringing believers into one body.

Those who believed entered the reality God had provided in Christ. Those who refused remained outside because of unbelief. This agrees directly with the words of Jesus in **Mark 16:16**: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."*

What Was Left Behind?

The popular rapture teaching reverses this setting by teaching that believers will someday be physically removed from the earth while unbelievers are left behind for a future tribulation. Matthew 24 is not describing such an event. The one taken was received into Jesus Christ through the Gospel and baptised by one Spirit into His one body, while the one left remained outside Christ through unbelief.

During the transitional generation from Pentecost to A.D. 70, this distinction became increasingly visible. People were being gathered into Jesus Christ while others continued to place their confidence in the former Temple-centred covenant order. That visible former order was *"ready to vanish away."*

In A.D. 70, Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed, and the visible Temple-centred former order came to its historical end. Those who had rejected Jesus Christ were left with the very order that had reached the end of its appointed purpose. The issue was not a future disappearance of believers from the earth but whether people would receive the living reality already offered to them in Jesus Christ.

Jesus had already used the language of death earlier in the same teaching.

Jesus said in **Matthew 24:28**:

> *"For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together."*

The former Temple-centred order had become a carcase because the reality to which its shadows pointed had come in Jesus Christ. Its continued outward existence during the transitional generation did not restore its former covenant authority. The choice was between the living reality in Jesus Christ and remaining attached to what was passing away.

Those who received the Gospel were brought into Christ, while those who refused the Gospel remained outside through unbelief. The separation was spiritual, covenantal and real. It was not a future physical disappearance of believers from the earth.

No Future "Left Behind" Event Is Required

Matthew 24:40-41 therefore provides no foundation for a future secret removal of believers from the earth. Jesus had already said that *"all these things"* would be fulfilled within that generation. The one taken and the other left belong within that same prophecy and timeframe.

There is no reason to detach these two verses from everything Jesus had just said and place them thousands of years into the future. They must be interpreted within the audience, events and generation Jesus had already identified. The words *"one shall be taken, and the other left"* belong within the same first-century prophecy as the Temple, Jerusalem and the tribulation.

The expression *"caught up"* in 1 Thessalonians 4 belongs to a different Scriptural setting and must be understood within that setting. It must not be imported into Matthew 24 and then used to change the audience, subject or timeframe Jesus gave. Each portion of Scripture must first be understood within its own context before conclusions from one part are applied to another.

The Principle Still Remains

The historical fulfilment belongs to the first century, but the spiritual principle continues. Two people can appear close outwardly while standing in very different spiritual relationships to Jesus Christ. Outward closeness does not mean that both have responded to the truth in the same way.

One person may receive truth while another rejects it. One may enter the life God provides in Christ while another remains attached to religious tradition. The continuing question is whether a person has received Jesus Christ through the new birth and now possesses His life within.

Jesus therefore continued His warning with a call to watchfulness. He had identified the generation in which the prophecy would be fulfilled, but He had not given His disciples the precise day and hour. Their responsibility was therefore to remain watchful and ready for the fulfilment He had foretold.

Jesus said in **Matthew 24:42-44**:

> *"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."*

These words continue the same warning Jesus had been giving His disciples throughout the chapter. They knew the generation in which the events would occur, but they did not know

the precise moment. Jesus therefore told them to watch and be ready rather than presume that they could calculate the exact time.

The expressions *"your Lord doth come"* and *"the Son of man cometh"* do not introduce another coming thousands of years later. Jesus was still speaking to the same disciples within the same prophetic setting and timeframe. His warning remained connected with the events He had said would be fulfilled within *"this generation."*

The immediate warning belonged to that generation, while the principle of watchfulness continues to instruct believers throughout the Gospel Day. We must hear the Word of God, respond to Jesus Christ and remain faithful to what He has revealed. That faithfulness is the expression of His indwelling life within those who are born again.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does receiving people unto Christ explain 'one shall be taken'?

Personal Reflection

Have you treated salvation as something secured by being near Christian people rather than personally receiving Jesus Christ?

Action Step

Examine where you place your confidence. Explain the response you need to make to Christ, who receives believers into Himself through the new birth.

MATTHEW 25: THE WARNING CONTINUES

BACK TO CONTENTS

Matthew 25 does not begin a new conversation with a different audience or move Jesus' teaching into another generation. The chapter continues the instruction Jesus had been giving His disciples on the Mount of Olives. The chapter division was added later, so Matthew 25 must be read as a continuation of the setting already established in Matthew 23 and 24.

At the end of Matthew 24, Jesus repeatedly warned His disciples to watch and remain faithful. He then continued that same warning through the illustrations recorded in Matthew 25. The audience and the prophetic setting remain unchanged.

The Call to Watchfulness Continues

Jesus concluded the parable of the ten virgins with a direct warning.

Jesus said in **Matthew 25:13**:

> *"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."*

This language continues what Jesus had already said in Matthew 24. He had told the same disciples to watch because they did not know the exact time when the events He had foretold would reach their fulfilment. Matthew 25 does not introduce a different coming or move the fulfilment into another generation.

Jesus had said in **Matthew 24:42**:

> *"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."*

The immediate warning belonged to those disciples, while the principle of watchfulness continues to instruct us. Believers throughout the Gospel Day must also live watchfully and faithfully. Our need for watchfulness, however, does not move the first-century prophecy into our future.

The Ten Virgins Teach Readiness

In the parable of the ten virgins, all ten knew that the bridegroom was expected. Five were prepared when the time came, while five were not. Jesus used the parable to teach the seriousness of being ready when the appointed time arrived.

Those disciples had heard His warnings and were responsible for believing and acting upon what He had told them. The continuing principle is equally serious because hearing truth is not enough if we refuse to respond to it. God calls His people to live faithfully in the light He has given them.

Readiness is not produced by fear concerning a future rapture. True readiness is found in possessing spiritual life in Jesus Christ and walking faithfully through His life within. The believer is ready by living in the reality God has already provided in Christ.

The Talents Teach Faithfulness

Jesus then gave the parable of the talents, moving the emphasis from watchfulness to responsibility. Each servant received something from his lord and was responsible for what had been entrusted to him. The issue was not whether every servant received the same amount, but whether each one would be faithful.

Jesus said in **Matthew 25:14-15**:

> *"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey."*

That principle continues throughout the Gospel Day. God gives His people opportunities, abilities and responsibilities, and He expects faithfulness with what He has entrusted to them. What He gives us is not to be buried through fear, neglect or unbelief.

The life of Christ within the believer is to be expressed faithfully in service, obedience and love. Faithful conduct does not obtain or complete salvation. It is the fruit and expression of the life of Jesus Christ already dwelling within the born-again believer.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do the virgins and talents continue Jesus' call to readiness and faithfulness?

Personal Reflection

Does a responsibility entrusted to you reveal carelessness, fear or a tendency to postpone what you know should be done?

Action Step

Name that responsibility and the response required. Explain how you will serve faithfully through Christ's life within instead of waiting for an outward sign.

The Son of Man Coming in Glory

Jesus then spoke again of the Son of man. His words continue the prophetic language of authority, glory, judgement and separation already used in Matthew 24. The setting and audience have not changed.

Jesus said in **Matthew 25:31-33**:

> *"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left."*

These words must remain within the prophetic setting Jesus had already established. In Matthew 24 He had spoken of the Son of man coming *"with power and great glory,"* and He had declared that *"this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."* Matthew 25 does not provide a reason to move that coming into another generation.

The emphasis is upon the authority of Jesus Christ to distinguish those who belong to Him from those who do not. He is the King and Judge, and His judgement reveals the true relationship people have with Him. The imagery continues the warning Jesus had been giving His disciples.

The Separation Does Not Require a Future General Judgement

The separation of the sheep and the goats does not require a future scene in which the whole human race is raised together and assembled before Jesus Christ to discover whether they are saved or lost. Jesus was continuing the same prophetic teaching and warning He had already given His disciples. The imagery of separation must therefore remain within the setting and timeframe already established.

The Gospel itself brings people to a point of judgement and separation. Those who receive Jesus Christ through the new birth are brought into His life and His body, while those who reject Him remain outside that life. Jesus Christ knows those who are His, and His Word reveals the true spiritual condition of every person.

Matthew 25 therefore does not overturn the timeframe already established in Matthew 24. The imagery of the King separating sheep from goats continues the same first-century prophetic setting while also teaching a continuing spiritual truth. Jesus Christ distinguishes

those who belong to Him from those who do not, and that distinction remains real throughout the Gospel Day.

Judgement During Life and the Final Sentence

God's judgement operates throughout our physical lives. His Word reveals our condition, exposes sin and calls us to respond to Jesus Christ. While we live, we can repent, believe and be born again.

Paul also connects accountability before Christ with what we do during our physical lives.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:10**:

> *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."*

The Greek word BĒMA, translated *"judgment seat,"* describes a raised platform used by a judge. Here it expresses Christ's authority to judge; the word itself does not establish when judgement occurs. *"Appear"* translates a form of PHANEROŌ, meaning to make manifest or reveal. Paul is speaking of our lives being revealed before Christ.

"The things done in his body" directs attention to our conduct during this earthly life. These words identify the deeds being judged, while Jesus' own teaching establishes that judgement already confronts us while we can still respond.

Jesus said in **John 3:18**:

> *"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*

The final sentence is the settled outcome of that judgement. Physical death ends the opportunity to change our spiritual condition; it does not begin another trial or provide another opportunity to receive Christ.

Jesus said in **Matthew 25:46**:

> *"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."*

These words declare an enduring outcome, not simply a temporary separation. The believer already possesses eternal life in Christ; physical death does not begin that life or separate the believer from Him. Judgement operates while we can still respond to God, whereas the final sentence confirms the spiritual condition in which we leave this life.

Jesus Identifies Himself With His People

An especially important principle appears in the judgement described by Jesus. He identifies Himself closely with those who belong to Him, so that the treatment of His people reveals something about a person's attitude towards Christ Himself. This agrees with the New Covenant revelation that the Church is His body.

Jesus said in **Matthew 25:40**:

> *"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."*

Jesus Christ is not separated from His people. He lives within those who are born again, and His life is expressed through them. Love for Jesus Christ must therefore be seen in how we treat others, particularly those who belong to Him.

This principle continues powerfully throughout the Gospel Day. Christianity is the life of Jesus Christ within the believer, and that life must bear fruit in conduct towards others. The way we live should agree with the Person who dwells within us.

The Immediate Warning and the Continuing Principle

Matthew 25 must therefore be read in the same setting as Matthew 24. We first identify the original audience, preserve the timeframe Jesus had already established and recognise the fulfilment within that generation. We can then receive the continuing spiritual instruction contained in His teaching.

The prophecy belonged to them, while the principles continue to teach us. We must be ready, watchful and faithful with what God has entrusted to us. We must recognise Jesus Christ in His people and understand the seriousness of accountability before God.

None of these continuing truths requires us to move the prophecy into our own generation. Jesus was preparing His disciples for events approaching within their lifetime while teaching principles that would remain valuable throughout the Gospel Day. Fulfilled prophecy and continuing spiritual instruction can therefore remain together without changing the timeframe Jesus gave.

We can now bring the entire first-century chronology together, from Christ's coming at Pentecost in A.D. 31 to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70. The events belong within the generation Jesus identified, while their spiritual lessons continue to instruct His people.

All these things were fulfilled within the generation Jesus identified.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does Jesus' identification with His people connect faithfulness with love?

Personal Reflection

Have you ever overlooked someone in need because their situation interrupted your routine or preferences?

Action Step

Identify a person you could serve with humility. Explain how the indwelling life of Christ should govern your practical response to that person's needs.

PENTECOST TO A.D. 70: ALL THESE THINGS FULFILLED WITHIN THAT GENERATION

BACK TO CONTENTS

The prophecy of Matthew 24 must now be brought together within the timeframe Jesus Himself established. He had declared that *"all these things"* would come upon the generation then living, and He later confirmed that *"this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."* The period from Pentecost in A.D. 31 to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 shows how the events Jesus foretold were fulfilled within that generation.

It is important not to treat Pentecost and A.D. 70 as though they were the same event. Christ's promised coming was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, while the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple occurred later. These were distinct events within the same first-century period, with A.D. 70 bringing the visible Temple-centred former covenant order to its historical end.

Pentecost: Jesus Christ Came to His People

Before His crucifixion, Jesus had promised His disciples that He would come to them. His promise was personal and directed to the people who were then listening to Him. He also explained that the Spirit who was presently with them would come to dwell within them.

Jesus said in **John 14:18**:

> *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."*

Jesus also said in **John 14:17**:

> *"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."*

Before His departure from their visible presence, Jesus told those same disciples that the fulfilment was only days away. They were commanded to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the promise they had already heard from Him. The promised coming of the Holy Ghost was therefore directly connected with what Jesus had told them before His crucifixion.

Luke wrote in **Acts 1:4-5**:

> *"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."*

Then Pentecost came, and the promised indwelling presence became their experience.

Luke wrote in **Acts 2:1-4**:

> *"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

Jesus Christ had fulfilled His promise. The One who had been with His disciples came to dwell within them as Spirit. The Gospel Day had begun, and the New Covenant reality was now being experienced by His people.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does Pentecost fulfil the promise Jesus gave His disciples?

Personal Reflection

Do you seek Christ as though He has not yet come, even though He fulfilled His promise at Pentecost?

Action Step

Identify one concern in which you have treated Jesus as absent. Explain how you will depend upon His promised presence within those who are born again.

The New Covenant Was Already Established

The destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 did not create the New Covenant. Jesus Christ had already completed the redemptive work through His sacrifice, and Pentecost had brought the promised indwelling presence into the experience of His people. The New Covenant reality was already present before the physical Temple was destroyed.

The writer of Hebrews described the former covenant as already old while something connected with that visible order was still approaching its disappearance.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 8:13**:

> *"In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."*

The distinction is important. The first covenant had already been made old, yet the Temple, priesthood and former Jewish religious practices remained outwardly visible for a period of time. The New Covenant had been established before the visible former order disappeared.

The reality had come in Jesus Christ. The continued existence of the Temple did not mean that God's people were still waiting for the New Covenant to begin. Christ had completed His work, and His people had received His indwelling Spirit.

A Generation of Transition

From Pentecost until A.D. 70, the Gospel went forth while the Temple still stood. Jewish believers who had lived their whole lives under the Law of Moses were being brought into the understanding of what Jesus Christ had accomplished. The book of Acts records this transitional setting as the Gospel spread from Jerusalem into the surrounding regions and among the nations.

Many Jewish believers continued to live among people deeply attached to former covenant practices even though salvation was now found fully in Jesus Christ. The continued presence of those practices did not mean that God was maintaining two covenant ways of salvation. There was one Gospel, one Spirit and one body in Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:14-16**:

> *"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:"*

Jew and Gentile were not being preserved as two separate covenant peoples. Jesus Christ had *"made both one"* and reconciled both unto God *"in one body."* The Gospel was bringing people into the one New Covenant people of God in Jesus Christ.

The Forty-Year Transition Within That Generation

Jesus had already identified *"this generation"* before the Day of Pentecost. He was speaking of the people then living who heard His warnings concerning Jerusalem, the Temple and the things that would come upon them. The generation had therefore already been identified before the first-century transition began.

Within that generation, an important transition began at Pentecost in A.D. 31 and continued until the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70. This period covered approximately forty years and provides an important parallel with Israel's forty years in the wilderness, which Scripture itself describes in terms of a generation. The comparison does not establish the timeframe because Jesus had already done that through His own words. It illustrates the seriousness of a generation being given opportunity to hear God, respond to His truth and enter the reality He had provided.

The Psalmist wrote in **Psalm 95:10**:

> *"Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:"*

The wilderness generation had left Egypt but failed through unbelief to enter what God had placed before them. In the first century, another generation was confronted with the fulfilled reality in Jesus Christ. From Pentecost onward, the Gospel proclaimed Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the promises and shadows.

Jesus' declaration concerning *"this generation"* remains the foundation of the prophecy. The approximately forty-year period provides a parallel with another generation identified in Scripture, rather than a separate basis for calculating the timeframe.

A.D. 70: The Visible Former Order Came to Its End

Jesus had foretold exactly what would happen to the Temple. The buildings His disciples admired would not remain standing. Their destruction would occur within the generation He had identified.

Jesus said in **Matthew 24:2**:

> *"And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."*

In A.D. 70, Jerusalem was conquered and the Temple was destroyed. The physical centre of the former covenant religious order was removed. The destruction brought the visible Temple-centred order to its final historical end.

That destruction did not make the sacrifice of Jesus complete because His sacrifice had already been completed. It did not begin the Gospel Day because the Gospel Day had already begun at Pentecost. It did not establish the Church because the Lord had already been adding the saved to His Church.

A.D. 70 therefore did not create the New Covenant reality. It brought to an end the visible Temple-centred order that had continued during the period of transition. The reality in Jesus Christ had already come.

One Generation, a Complete Fulfilment

The events can therefore be followed in their proper order. In A.D. 31, Jesus Christ completed His redemptive work and came on the Day of Pentecost as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people. From A.D. 31 to A.D. 70, the Gospel went forth while the visible former order continued during a period of transition.

Then, in A.D. 70, Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed as Jesus had foretold. These events were distinct, but they all belonged within the same first-century generation. The chronology remains within the timeframe Jesus Himself established.

This is why Matthew 24 must not be divided so that part of its prophecy is fulfilled in the first century while other portions remain thousands of years in the future. Jesus did not give that division. He said, *"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."*

By A.D. 70, all the things Jesus had placed within Matthew 24 had been fulfilled within the generation He identified. There is no unfulfilled remainder of Matthew 24 waiting for a future generation. The prophecy is fulfilled, while its spiritual principles continue to instruct God's people.

The fulfilment confirms the certainty of the words of Jesus Christ. What He foretold came to pass within the timeframe He gave. His words remain dependable because *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."*

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must Pentecost and the Temple's destruction remain distinct within one generation?

Personal Reflection

Do outward religious practices receive more of your confidence than Christ's completed New Covenant work?

Action Step

Identify one practice or assumption you need to test. Explain how you will honour Christ as the reality rather than relying on the former shadow.

CONCLUSION: THE SON OF MAN HAS COME IN POWER AND GREAT GLORY

BACK TO CONTENTS

The teaching of Jesus Christ concerning His coming in the clouds must be understood within the generation He addressed. His words concerning the gathering of the elect, the fig tree, the one taken and the other left, and the warnings of Matthew 25 all belong within the same prophetic setting. Jesus did not divide these declarations between His own generation and another generation thousands of years later.

Jesus declared in **Matthew 24:34-35**:

> *"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."*

These words establish both the timeframe and certainty of the prophecy. The expression *"all these things"* includes the events Jesus had just described, including the coming of the Son of man and the gathering of the elect. His declaration must therefore govern our understanding of the entire prophecy.

The prophetic language of clouds, trumpets and messengers must also be understood through Scripture. The great cloud of witnesses, the proclamation of God's message and the gathering of believers into one spiritual body direct us towards a fulfilment centred in Jesus Christ. The gathering was not a future physical removal from the earth but the saving work through which people were brought into Him.

The parable of the fig tree reinforced the nearness of the fulfilment. Just as its leaves showed that summer was near, the signs Jesus gave would enable His disciples to recognise that the events He had foretold were approaching. The parable did not introduce another generation thousands of years later.

The words concerning one being taken and the other left must likewise remain within the same prophetic setting. They describe the separation between those who received Jesus Christ and those who remained outside through unbelief. The warnings concerning watchfulness, faithfulness and judgement continue to instruct believers throughout the Gospel Day without transferring the historical prophecy into our future.

Jesus Christ fulfilled His promised coming at Pentecost in A.D. 31 when He came as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people. The New Covenant reality was established, and the Gospel began gathering people into His one spiritual body. Everyone who is born again receives the indwelling Christ and belongs to that body.

The later destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70 was a distinct event within the generation Jesus identified. It brought the visible Temple-centred former covenant order to its historical end after Jesus Christ had already completed His saving work and come to dwell within His people. The destruction of the Temple did not establish or complete the New Covenant.

These events fulfilled the prophecy within the generation Jesus identified. There is no unfulfilled remainder of Matthew 24 awaiting another physical coming of Jesus Christ. His words were fulfilled within the timeframe He Himself established.

For believers today, the importance of this teaching is found in the Person who has fulfilled His promises. Jesus Christ is not absent from His people while they wait for Him to return. He lives within everyone who is born again, and His life is expressed through their faithfulness, love and obedience.

The Son of man has come in power and great glory. His Word has been fulfilled, His redeemed people are one body in Him, and His indwelling life remains the present reality of the Gospel Day.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do the clouds, gathering and generation together explain the fulfilled prophecy?

Personal Reflection

Has studying prophecy changed only your information, or has it also changed your trust in Jesus and your treatment of His people?

Action Step

Name one personal response that this module calls for. Explain what you will change in attitude or conduct because Christ has come and lives within His body.

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

How does the Bible explain the clouds in which the Son of man comes? Show how the gathering of the elect and 'this generation' help you understand His coming.

2. Understanding

How does the fig tree illustrate nearness? Explain why the unknown day and hour do not change the generation Jesus identified.

3. Personal Reflection

How has the teaching about one redeemed people challenged an assumption or attitude you have held towards another believer? Explain the Bible verses that have influenced your understanding.

4. Response to Truth

How should the certainty of Christ's fulfilled coming and His present life change the way you approach a responsibility, a relationship or a fear? Identify the response that needs correcting.

5. Action Step

Identify one believer whom you need to treat with greater love or respect as part of Christ's one body. What attitude or action will you change, and when will you begin? Explain how the life of Christ within guides that response.

6. Early Response

Have you begun the change towards the believer identified in Question 5? If yes, describe the change and what you have learned. If not, explain what has held you back and the response you intend to make.

7. Ongoing Practice

What could help you keep the warnings about the virgins and talents in mind when you consider your responsibilities? Explain how faithful service relates to the life of Christ without earning or completing salvation.

8. Doctrinal Clarity

How do Christ's coming at Pentecost, His continuing life in believers and the Temple's destruction in A.D. 70 differ? Explain how this distinction helps you understand Matthew 25's warnings about judgement.

9. Living the Truth

Someone uses the fig tree to predict a future physical return and says faithful service can wait. How would Jesus' words about the generation and Matthew 25 help you answer? Explain what this means for the way you view service now.

10. Final Response

How do the clouds, the gathering and the warnings of Matthew 24 and 25 help you understand Christ's fulfilled coming? Explain what now seems important in your own trust and response to Him.