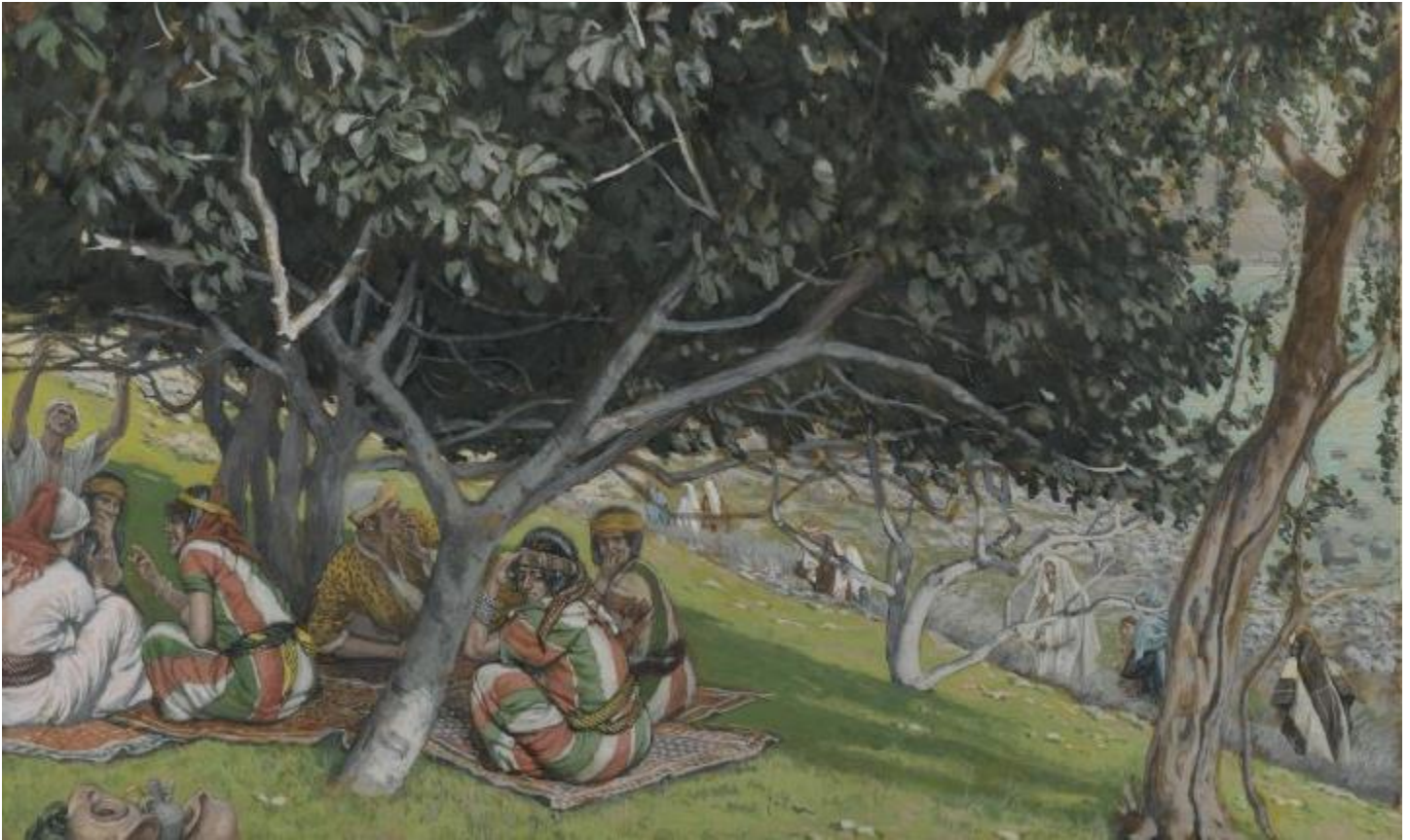


What Does Yeshua Say About the End Times - Part 7

In my last post, we began to unpack Yeshua's teaching regarding the Coming of the Son of Man. In this post, we continue to explore the signs He shared with His talmidim to identify the beginning of His millennial rule.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree



"Now let the fig tree teach you its lesson: when its branches begin to sprout and leaves appear, you know that summer is approaching. In the same way, when you see all these things, you are to know that the time is near, right at the door. Yes! I tell you that this people will certainly not pass away before all these things happen. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." ~ Matthew 24:32-35

Again, using a parable, Yeshua answered the talmidim' question regarding Yeshua's Second Coming (Matthew 24:3). The talmidim, like anyone living in Israel, knew when summer would come by observing the twigs and leaves of fig trees. Fig trees lose their leaves in winter (while most of the other trees in Israel do not), and they bloom in late spring (many of the other plants bloom in early spring). Yeshua chose the fig tree for this peculiarity; since its buds come late, it was a perfect example to picture the delay of the Second Coming.

The dry, brittle twigs getting tender with rising sap and the leaves coming out were certain signs that summer was near. Inherent in this process is patient waiting. There is no hurrying the natural cycle of the fig tree. So all believers must patiently await the Second Coming. In the same way that they could interpret the season by the leaves on trees, so the talmidim could know when these significant events would occur. When they saw ***all these things*** (referring to the events described in previous verses), they would know that the destruction of Jerusalem would soon follow.

Some scholars feel that the phrase **the time is near** refers to the coming desecration of the Temple. But this interpretation makes too abrupt an interjection in Yeshua's thought. Because Yeshua was reassuring the talmidim, it makes more sense that Yeshua was speaking of His Second Coming. Therefore, this verse means that the second coming of Yeshua is both certain and near. The fulfillment of Yeshua's prophecy would assure the talmidim that the other prophecies he had given regarding the end times would also come true.

The solemn phrase **yes, I tell you** introduces an important truth, an assurance like an oath. There are three views of the meaning of this verse: (1) It refers only to those alive at the time Yeshua spoke who still would be alive at the destruction of Jerusalem; (2) it refers to the end times only; (3) it refers both to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end times, the destruction of Jerusalem containing within itself the elements of the final end times.

Yeshua singled out **this people** (or generation) using the Greek word **genea**, which can refer both to those living at a given time as well as to race or lineage (therefore, he would be speaking of the Jewish race). That makes the third view above most likely. Yeshua used **genea** here to mean that the events of 24:1-28 would occur initially within the lifetime of Yeshua's contemporaries. Not that all the problems would stop at the end of their lifetimes, but that **all these things** would be under way, verifying what Yeshua had said. Yeshua explained that many of those alive at that time would witness the destruction of Jerusalem. In addition, the Jewish nation would be preserved and remain on earth, so Jews also would witness the end-time events (see also 16:28).

There could be no doubt in the talmidim' minds about the certainty of these prophecies. While **heaven and earth** as we know them would eventually come to an end, Yeshua's **words** (including all his teachings during His time on earth) would **never pass away** into oblivion. They were true and would remain for all eternity. This chapter opened with the talmidim admiring the durability and beauty of the Temple. But Yeshua countered with a different vision of durability: Only his **words** endure; only the truth of God survives. History is the story of change, the rise and fall of empires, the coming and going of societies, which, for a time, happened upon some happiness, then floundered upon some folly. What survives all this change? Not temples, not governments, and not even believing saints (who get sick and die like everyone else). Only **God's Word** endures. On that alone we stake everything. God's promises endure forever, and all who belong to Yeshua share in them. Take hope. Yeshua alone leads through change to a bright and buoyant future, full of everything good.

In my next post, we will learn that Yeshua warns everyone that no one knows the day or hour of His return.