

“WHEN” YOU SHALL SEE YOU WILL KNOW

(A MATTHEW 24–25 STUDY)

PART 8

Introduction

Jesus has just finished His end-time narrative. The disciples’ questions have been answered. An end-time **template** (see Appendix I) of sequenced events was outlined. A post-tribulation Advent was riveted into the prophecy. The nature of His coming was uniquely portrayed.

Now – Christ begins to present “anchor points” to help one develop a correct eschatological perspective!

- Preterists are motivated in the coming verses to use the “one generation” **time** to justify a past fulfillment of this prophecy *only*. Matthew 24, however, describes **two** ends!
- The Second Advent has yet to occur. The 70 A.D. destruction of the temple application is now of secondary importance. The global language in the narrative suggests that Christ’s deepest interest is in **our** time.¹
- His imperative to review the abomination/desolation prophecies in Daniel, directing one to the “time of the end,” adds boldness to one’s understanding!

Jesus chose to make the **first** “anchor point” relate to time. When events occur in a distinct way, it is time for Jesus to return!

Parable of the Fig Tree

“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” (Matthew 24:32-33).

- The fig tree in Bible lands had two crops:
 - In June on old wood
 - In August/September on new wood.
- The old wood figs were a delicacy and were called the “firstripe” figs (Hosea 9:10, Micah 7:1 RSV).²
- Christ’s words are focused and accurately describe the fig crops:
 - The baby fruit buds begin to appear in February before the leaves and new wood growth.
 - The leaves and new wood appear in April and May.³
 - The first crop is ready for harvest (June) after those leaves and new wood appear!

¹ Turner, David L.; *Matthew* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 584.

² SDABC8, Bible Dictionary, p. 348.

³ Tenney, Merrill C.; *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Zondervan; Grand Rapids, MI – 1937), vol. 2, p. 534.

Jesus relates that new wood and leaves to His prophetic end-time events.

- When “**all** these things” are seen
- Summer – harvest time is near, right at the door.

There has been debate regarding the meaning of “**all these things**.” Since that statement might contextually include the Second Coming in His narrative (which wouldn’t be logical), scholars have concluded that this statement **must** refer to only the “preliminary signs.”⁴

- That analysis is affirmed in Luke’s record:
*“And when these things **begin** to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.... So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand”* (Luke 21:28, 31).
- Since the prophetic narrative is sequenced and covers a period of time, the **preliminary signs** of earthquakes, pestilences, famine, wars and celestial events collectively **begin** the time of the eschatological end. **When** they occur like a lady in labor (an exponential curve) (Matthew 24:8), they signal that:
 - Our redemption draws near
 - The kingdom of God is close
 - The summer harvest is about ready
 - Jesus’ coming is imminent – “**even at the doors**”
 - Those five collective signs are shown to have begun in the 1978–1980 window!

Christ then introduces another fascinating time period!

This Generation

The Master often used the phrase “this generation” (Luke 7:31, 9:41, 11:29-32, 50-51; 16:8; 17:25), signifying a “category of people who are resistant to the purpose of God.”⁵

- In Matthew’s, Mark’s and Luke’s prophetic narrative, He uses it as **a timing marker** for an apocalyptic end!
- “*Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be **fulfilled**”* (Matthew 24:34).
- “*Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be **fulfilled**”* (Luke 21:32).

These messages assure us that an end is certain! There, that “generation” word means everything to our study!

The Second Coming has just been presented (24:29-31). The context suggests that all will be ready for His return **within a generation** from when those signs **begin**!

“So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand” (Luke 21:31).

⁴ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 586.

⁵ Green, Joel B.; *The Gospel of Luke* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 742.

In Luke's book, God's kingdom is presented in three ways:

1. "Not yet" come – will come in the future (Luke 11:2, 14:15, 19:11)
2. It is already here (Luke 10:9, 11; 11:20; 17:21; 19:11; cf. Matthew 3:2, 10:7; Mark 1:15)
3. When the consummation or Second Coming occurs (Luke 21:28)

The latter is contextually implied in our prophecy as an "anchor point" and beautifully described in Revelation 11:15:

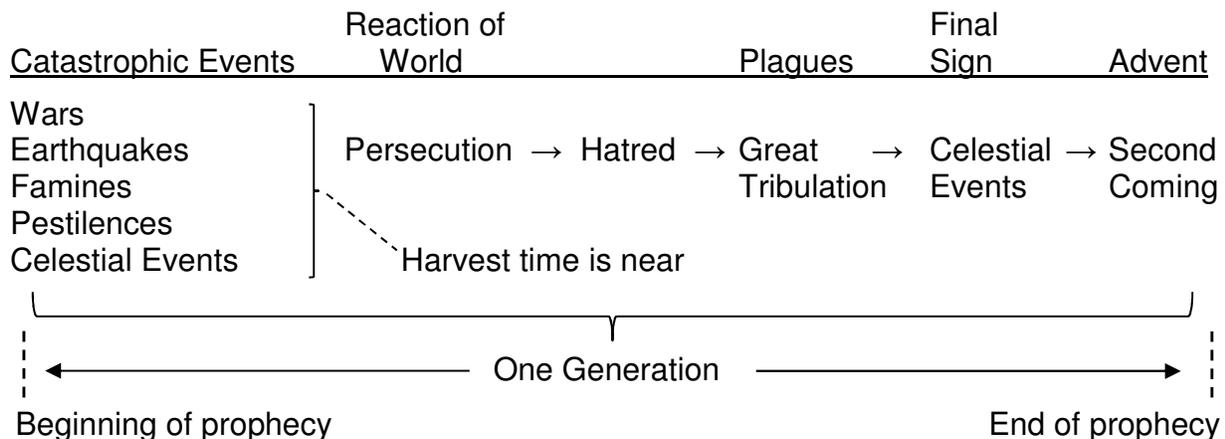
"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

Again, Luke notes its **consummation** in an earlier verse!

- "And when these things **begin** to come to pass" (Luke 21:28a).
- In one generation your hope will be complete.

"When" "all" these things come to pass (vv 4-28) (are **finished**) at the end of a generation – He is ready to "walk through the door."⁶

We can construct a distinct sequence of events related to time:



An objective point in time can be made that distinctly announces this onset.

"this generation" – a deeper look:

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew 24:34).

- Though the word "generation" (*genea* – G) has a range of Biblical meanings, it consistently refers to a time span of a single human generation.⁷
- This reveals that the eschaton is not "delayed" indefinitely.

⁶ Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 585.

⁷ Nolland, John; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), pp. 988-989.

- The noted events signal when this ***sequenced timetable*** begins.

The “end” comes within a “***climactic generation.***”⁸

- Since the fall of Jerusalem occurred 40 years after Christ’s first application of this prophecy, it is felt that the same “final generation” of 40 years is also associated with the Second Advent after those initial “signs” (a 40-year generation).

The fall of Jerusalem guarantees the same timing completion of the eschatological events in a climactic generation.

- Jerusalem’s destruction is a type of that end.
- ***Contextually, the generation that sees the events Jesus gave, associated with the “beginning of the end,” will experience the end!***⁹

When the signs start, the end is in sight. It does not transcend over many generations. All is accomplished in this final generation. The tribulation of 66-70 A.D., ending the initial 40 years, telescopes into the future *parousia* (Second Coming). That 40-year “climactic generation” will also end with a three-and-a-half-year period (Daniel 12:7; Revelation 11:2-3, 13:5).¹⁰

The “beginning” of the generation period is to be as distinct as the new wood and leaves of the fig tree parable!

- What ***clue*** did Jesus give to ***know*** that the sequenced events have begun?
- It would be like a lady in labor (Matthew 24:8).
 - The collective signs would be ***trending together*** and ***could be affirmed***.
 - ***It would be clear*** that the trend was firmly established.
- No cry of a delay would then be proper.

*“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this ***they willingly are ignorant***” (II Peter 3:3-5a).*

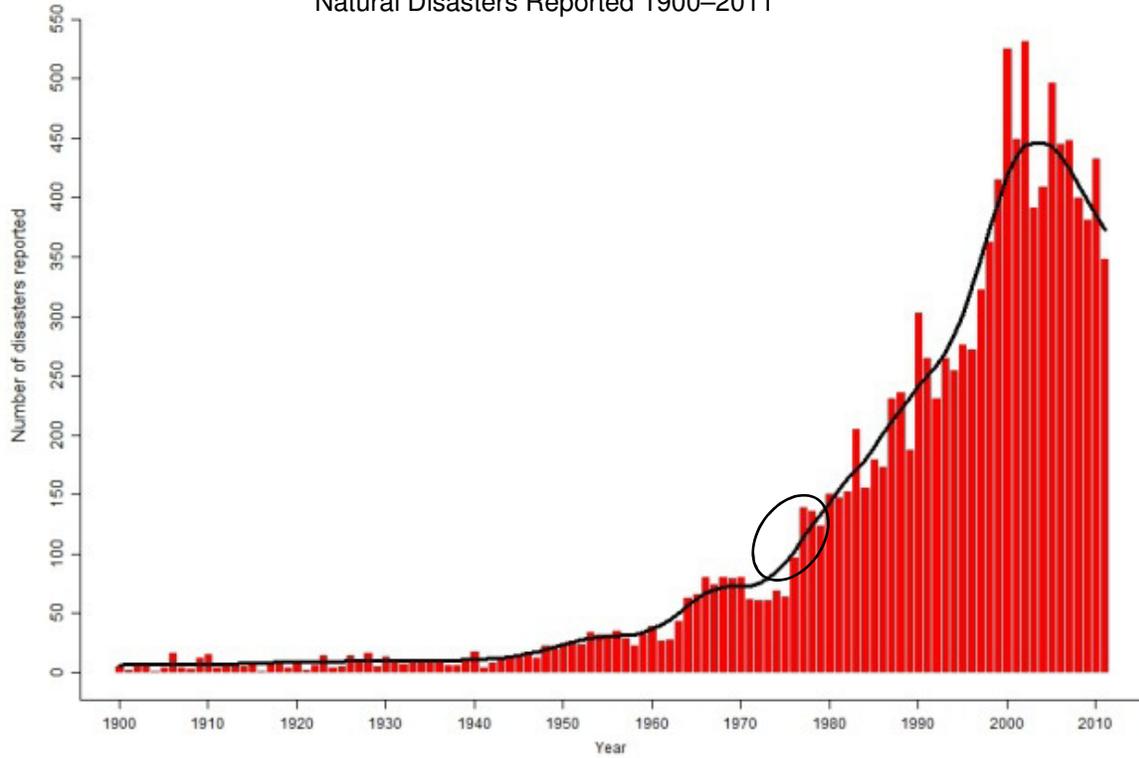
- We have reviewed this “starting point” previously!
- See Part 2 of this series.
- See also Appendix II) for the greater meaning of “one generation.”

⁸ Keener, Craig S.; *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 589.

⁹ Bock, Darrell L; *Luke*, vol. B (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI – 1996), p. 1691.

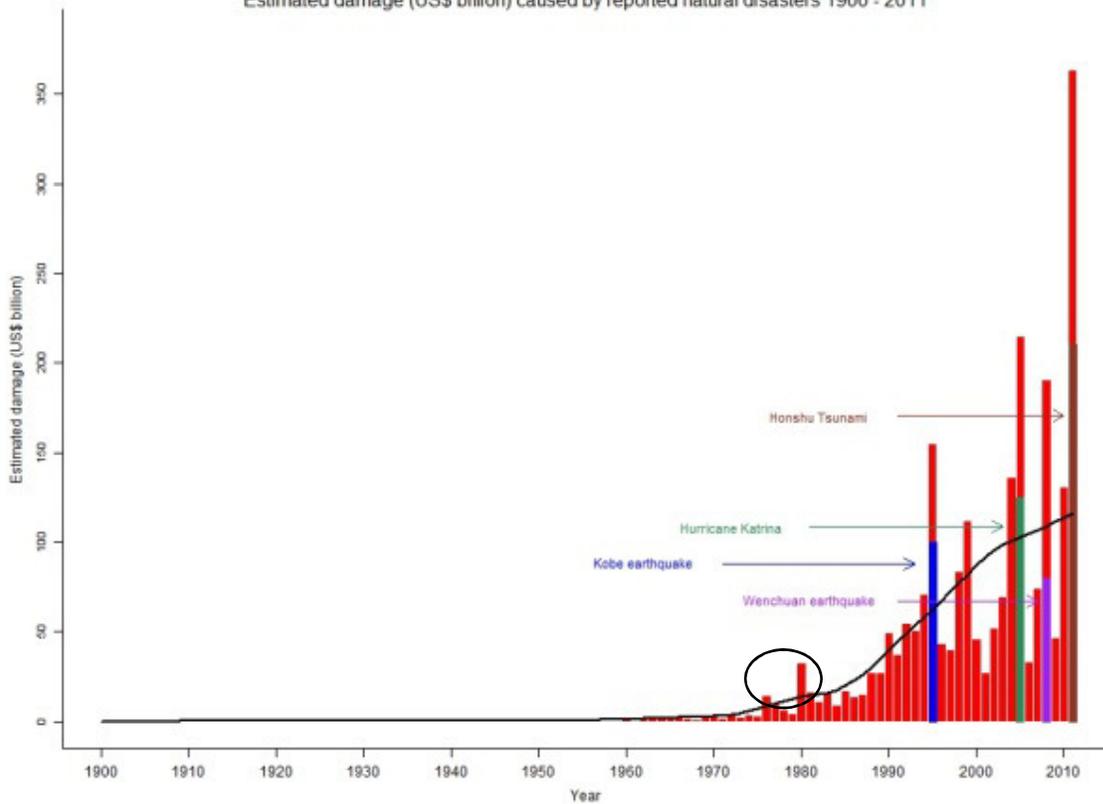
¹⁰ Keener, *op. cit.*, pp. 578, 589.

Natural Disasters Reported 1900–2011



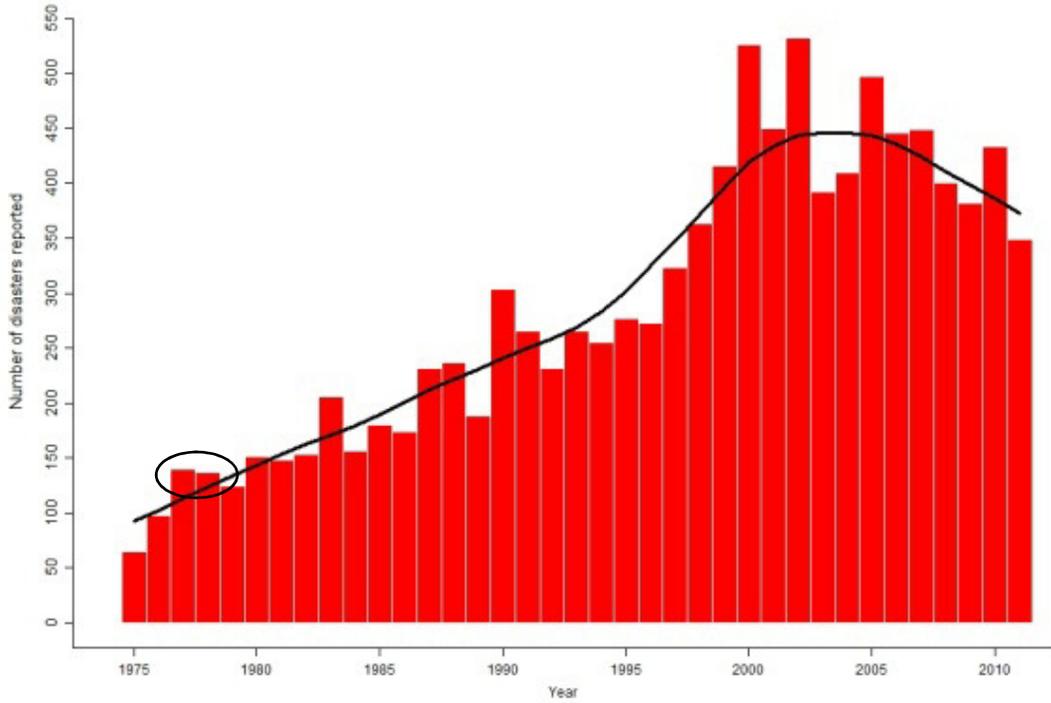
EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database - www.emdat.be - Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussels - Belgium

Estimated damage (US\$ billion) caused by reported natural disasters 1900 - 2011



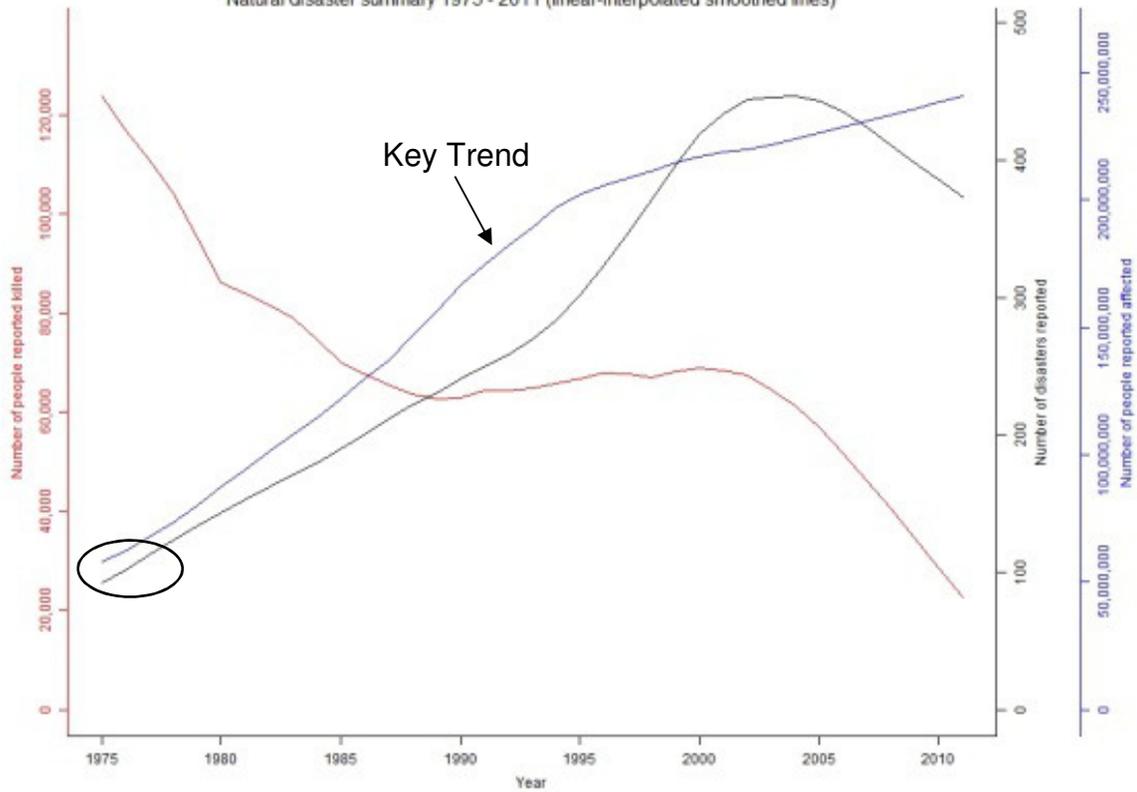
EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database - www.emdat.be - Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussels - Belgium

Natural disasters reported 1975 - 2011



EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database - www.emdat.be - Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussels - Belgium

Natural disaster summary 1975 - 2011 (linear-interpolated smoothed lines)



EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database - www.emdat.be - Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussels - Belgium

Jesus now makes a divine affirmation statement:

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

- Heaven and earth, seemingly so permanent, could end – terminate (cf. Isaiah 51:6, II Peter 3:7)
- But this prophecy – given in His own **words** – will endure forever.

This heralds a divine principle: Christ’s words in this prophecy are authoritative, precise and predictive of the future end.¹¹

- Creation is less permanent than truth (cf. Matthew 5:18, Luke 16:17).¹²
- The temporary nature of creation was observed in the Old Testament (Psalm 102:26, Isaiah 51:6, Jeremiah 4:23-26, Amos 9:8).

But this prophecy is ***firmly established***.

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¹¹ Hagner, *op. cit.*, p. 716.

¹² Bock, *op. cit.*, p. 1692.