

Matthew 24:32-33 Commentary

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THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)

Click chart to enlarge

Matthew 24:32 "Now **learn** the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near: Apo de. tes sukes **mathete** (2PAAM) ten parabolen hotan ede o klados auts genetai (3SAMS) apalos kai ta phulla ekphue (3SPAS) ginokete (2PPAI) hoti eggus to theros.:

- Mk 13:28,29 Luke 21:29-31, Isaiah 34:4

KJV Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

NET "Learn this parable from the fig tree: Whenever its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.

ESV "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.

NIV "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.

NLT "Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near.

YLT 'And from the fig-tree learn ye the simile: When already its branch may have become tender, and the leaves it may put forth, ye know that summer is nigh,

ASV Now from the fig tree learn her parable: when her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh

PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

Parallel passages:

Mk 13:28 Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.

Lk 21:29-30-note Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near.

Now (de) - At the present time or moment. **Now** is used especially in conversation to draw attention to a particular statement or point in a narrative. Hiebert remarks that "**now** is transitional, marking the turn to the concluding hortatory section."

Jesus the Creator now presents a picture that portrays His coming. One can envision Him pointing to one of the fig trees on the Mount of Olives, for it was spring when plants He created bloom, including the fig tree.

Wiersbe reminds us of the value of prophecy - The purpose of prophecy is not to entertain the curious, but to encourage the consecrated.

Learn ([3129](#))(**manthano** is related to the noun **mathetes** = disciple, literally a learner! The shut mind is the end of discipleship!) has the basic meaning of directing one's mind to something and producing an external effect. **Zuck** writes that according to **manthano** "learning is a matter of a pupil acquiring knowledge of content through a teacher to the extent that such knowledge is experienced in the life." Jesus uses the **aoist imperative** which is a command that conveys a sense of urgency. "Do this now" is the idea. Don't delay! It is very important to ponder this parable and fully grasp its meaning.

MacArthur says **manthano** "refers to teaching, learning, instructing, and discipling. Paul is referring here to his personal instruction and discipling of the Philippians... **Manthano** means to genuinely understand and accept a teaching, to accept it as true and to apply it in one's life. It was sometimes used of acquiring a life-long habit. Paul declared that he had "learned [manthanō] to be content in whatever circumstances" he was in (Phil 4:11). That sort of learning is much more than mere head knowledge; it involves genuine acceptance of a truth and determination to live a life consistent with it. Jesus wanted the disciples to learn in their inmost beings what He was teaching, to understand and receive it with regard to its great importance." (MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

MacArthur - Parables had a two-fold purpose in Jesus' ministry. When unexplained, they concealed truth; when explained, they revealed truth. When Jesus gave a parable to the multitudes or to the unbelieving religious leaders without also giving an explanation, it was a riddle to them. When He gave a parable to His disciples and explained it, it was a vivid illustration that made a truth clear and understandable. (See Mt 13:10-11, 13, 16-23)... In light of the fact that Jesus' parables were given for the sake of helping the disciples understand His teaching, it is evident that He told the parable from the fig tree to give them further light about His second coming. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

Parable (symbol) ([3850](#))(**parabole** from **para** = beside, near + **ballo** = throw, cast; English "parable") is literally a throwing beside or placing of one thing by the side of another (juxtaposition as of ships in battle in classic Greek). The metaphorical meaning is to place or lay something besides something else for the purpose of comparison. (Mt 24:32, Mk 13:28, Mk 3:23, Lk 14:7). An illustration (Mt 13:3). In Hebrews 9:9 the idea is of something (OT Tabernacle) that serves as a model or example pointing beyond itself for later realization and thus a type or a figure.

Wuest notes **parable** "is an illustration thrown in alongside of a truth to make the latter easier to understand... The Greek word means "that which is thrown alongside of something else" to explain it. Thus, (**Ed**: referring to Heb 9:8-9) the tabernacle was an object lesson used to explain spiritual truth. As long as it remained an object lesson, thus a recognized institution, it was clear that the actual tabernacle to which it pointed was not yet in use. The tabernacle in Israel, and later, the temple, remained that object lesson during the history of Israel, until the veil of the temple was rent." ([Hebrews by Wuest - excellent](#)) Even so the blooming of the fig tree is a clear object lesson.

Hiebert explains that "The fig tree was a recognized symbol of Israel (cf. Mk 11:14), but there is no indication that the reference here has an intended symbolic meaning. The reference seems to be to the literal tree; that Luke so understood the reference seems clear from his added "and all the trees" (Lk 21:29). The olive and the fig were common trees in Palestine, but since the olive is an evergreen, only the fig tree could be used to teach the intended lesson."

Neil D. Nelson notes that the **fig tree** "is not a type of Israel (**Ed**: Some say the budding symbolizes Israel becoming a nation in 1948 but such an interpretation is completely unfounded!). Jesus instead used it to make a straightforward analogy. (This is evident in the Luke parallel where Jesus said: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees." Any deciduous fruit tree would make the same point.) Just as the budding fig tree inevitably results in a harvest of figs, so the events of Mt 24:4-25 will inevitably usher in the judgment of the Son of Man at His coming. "**This generation**" will pass away in judgment when Christ returns, but Matthew extends the promise that Israel will be preserved and will enter into the kingdom. ([Journal of Dispensational Theology - Volume 11:33 Aug 2007](#))

Figs in Israel - The fig tree sheds its leaves in winter, at the end of which, even before the tree is covered with leaves, the *paggim* ("green figs," Song 2:13) begin to develop in the form of small fruits, which are really tiny flowers covered with a soft skin, and which continue to grow during the summer months. Hosea (9:10) compared the young nation of Israel in the heyday of its glory to *bakkurot* ("first-ripe figs"), which are delicious and eagerly sought after (Isa. 28:4; Jer, 24:2). Not all the *paggim* reach the ripened stage, some falling off or withering (Isa. 34:4). Figs that ripen at the end of summer have an inferior taste (Micah 7:1), as do those that burst when overripe (Jer. 29:17). Figs were dried in the sun and were either left whole or cut up and pressed (develah, 1Sa, 25:18; 1Chr 12:40). The word *kayiz* (2Sa 16:1-2; Jer., 40:10, 12), which may refer to summer fruits as a whole, signifies primarily dried figs (cf. Isa. 16:9; Tosef., Ned. 4:1-2). ([Fig - Jewish Virtual Library](#))

MacArthur - Jews were used to the fig tree's functioning as an illustration. Jotham used it in his story shouted to the inhabitants of Shechem from the top of Mount Gerizim (Jdg. 9:10-11); Jeremiah saw two baskets of figs in his vision after Nebuchadnezzar took

captives from Judah to Babylon (Jer. 24:1-10); Hosea used it as a figure in his prophecy about Israel (Hos. 9:10); and Joel used a splintered fig tree to illustrate the devastation of Judah by a plague of locusts (Joel 1:4-7). Few figures would have been better known to the disciples than that of the fig tree, which Jesus Himself had used on numerous other occasions as a teaching aid (see Mt. 7:16; 21:19; Luke 13:6-9)... Even children knew that a budding **fig tree** meant it was spring and that summer would soon follow, when the ripened figs would be harvested. Throughout the gospel of Matthew, the figure of harvest represents judgment, the time of separating unbelievers from believers and of condemning the unbelievers to judgment (Mt 3:12, 10, 9:37, 38, 13:30)... In all of those instances, the harvest symbolizes a time of rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked. In this present parable of the fig tree Jesus was simply illustrating to the disciples that, when the signs He had just been describing begin to transpire, the time of His return will be very near. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

When its branch has already become tender - **When** is an **expression of time** and that (the timing of these events in Mt 24:15-29) is the major message of Jesus' parable. **When** (or whenever) in this context refers to the point in time which will be determined by the condition of the tree, that condition being "When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near." (NLT) The young shoot becomes tender and succulent because of flowing sap which is followed by sprouting of the leaves.

Tender (527)(**hapalos**) literally means yielding to pressure and in the NT is used of sprouting branches, those that are soft and tender. **Hapalos** was used in secular Greek of "fresh" fruit, of "tender" meat, of soft to the touch (speaking of the body) and figuratively of something that was soft or gentle (as a gentle laugh) or something that was soft or delicate. The only two uses are Mt 24:32 and Mark 13:28.

Liddell-Scott-Jones - I soft to the touch, tender: in Homer mostly of the human body, i.e. the life of young animals; of persons, delicate; of flowers; of raw fruit; of tender meat; soft-boiled, of eggs, of a gentle fire. Metaphorically - soft, gentle, delicate, In bad sense, soft, weak

Hapalos - 8x in Septuagint - Ge 18:7 ("tender"); Ge 27:9 ("young goats"); Ge 33:13 ("frail"); Dt 28:54 ("refined"), Dt 28:56 ("refined"); 1Chr 22:5; ("inexperienced"); 1Chr 29:1 ("inexperienced"); Isa 47:1 ("tender")

Puts forth (1631)(**ekphuo**) literally means to cause to grow out and so to generate or cause to grow. "To give rise to something by a physical process" (BDAG), to generate. The only 2 uses are Mt 24:32 and Mk 13:28 with no uses in the Septuagint. **Ekphuo** is in the which pictures the fig tree in the process of budding and sprouting leaves.

Liddell-Scott-Jones - 1. generate: mostly of the male, beget, 2. rarely of the female, bear, 3. generally, produce., of seed, germinate, D. 24.154. Passive with plural and aorist, to be engendered, born from, a born tattler. Grow, of hair; spring, take rise, of muscles.

You know that summer is near - Figs ripened in the summer. This is the message conveyed by the budding fig tree, an early sign that summer was nigh.

Know (1097)(**ginosko**) means they would know by experience. Most of Israel was an agriculturally oriented society, and they understood the signs of summer in plants. In this case, it was common knowledge that the budding fig tree signaled the nearness of summer.

[Lift Up Your Heads, Rejoice](#)

Lift up your heads, rejoice,
Redemption draweth nigh;
Now breathes a softer air,
Now shines a milder sky;

The early trees put forth
Their new and tender leaf;
Hushed is the moaning wind
That told of winter's grief.

Lift up your heads, rejoice,
Redemption draweth nigh;
Now mount the laden clouds,
Now flames the darkening sky;

The early scattered drops
Descend with heavy fall,
And to the waiting earth

The hidden thunders call.

Lift up your heads, rejoice,
Redemption draweth nigh;
O note the varying signs
Of earth, and air, and sky;

The God of glory comes
In gentleness and might,
To comfort and alarm,
To succor and to smite.

He comes, the wide world's king,
He comes, the true heart's friend,
New gladness to begin,
And ancient wrong to end;

He comes, to fill with light
The weary waiting eye;
Lift up your heads, rejoice,
Redemption draweth nigh.

Matthew 24:33 even so you too, when you see all these things, **recognize** that He is near, right at the door: houtos kai humeis hotan idete (2PAAS) panta tauta **ginoskete** (2PPAM) hoti eggus estin epi thurais.

- **When** - Mt 24:3
- **Recognize** - Eze 7:2-14 Heb 10:37 Jas 5:9 1Pe 4:7

KJV So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that **it** is near, even at the doors.

NET So also you, when you see all these things, know that **He** is near, right at the door.

ESV So also, when you see all these things, you know that **He** is near, at the very gates.

NIV Even so, when you see all these things, you know that **it** is near, right at the door.

NLT In the same way, when you see all these things, you can know **His** return is very near, right at the door.

YLT so also ye, when ye may see all these, ye know that **it** is nigh -- at the doors.

ASV even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that **He** is nigh, even at the doors.

BBE Even so, when you see all these things, you may be certain that **He** is near, even at the doors.

CJB In the same way, when you see all these things, you are to know that **the time** is near, right at the door.

CSB In the same way, when you see all these things, recognize that **He** is near-- at the door!

JESUS IS "KNOCKING" AT THE DOOR

Parallel passages:

Mk 13:29 "Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door.

Lk 21:31-note "So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.

Even so ([houto](#)) means in this way, in this manner just described. In context Jesus is clearly referring to the preceding parable. The idea is "in the way described (in the parable of the fig tree)."

You too - This does not take a doctorate in theology to grasp. As discussed below, when the events described, especially the dramatic visual event in Mt 24:15 occurs, this will begin the final countdown of the last 3.5 years of this present age. At that time it will be clear to everyone who has *spiritual eyes* to see and is alive on earth that the coming of the King (with His Kingdom) is about to occur.

When - expression of time - When is when? Recall Matthew's earlier words "And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, **when** will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Mt 24:3)

When you see - Notice that these will be things that are visible to the eye! I do not think it is an accident that the last time Jesus used the phrase "**When you see**" is found in Mt 24:15. In fact these two verses are the only uses of this phrase in Matthew. They are perfectly paralleled in Mark 13:14 and Mark 13:29. As discussed below, this would support that one of the things they would see would be the sign in Matthew 24:15. Luke 21:31 also has the phrase "Even so you, too, **when you see** these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near."

All these things - What things? What has Jesus just described? All these things could take one all the way back to Matthew 24:4 and include everything in between. However most of those things described are not specific "timing" signs, which is what the parable of the fig tree becoming tender and sprouting leaves calls for (i.e., a clear sign that "summer is near."). And so as we read back through Matthew 24, clearly the most specific visible sign is found in Mt 24:15 ("**When you see...**"). So one of the "**these things**" would be the revelation of the **abomination of desolation** which marks the "beginning of the end," the beginning of the unprecedented, never to be repeated Great Tribulation (Mt 24:21). He goes on to warn that false Christs and false prophets will abound. Finally He says that **immediately after the Tribulation**, the cosmos will experience chaos, which indicates a clear sign that His coming and the end of the age are very near. And remember if you are holding to a 70AD fulfillment of Mt 24:15-22, it is very clear that the cosmic signs of Mt 24:29 have not yet occurred.

John MacArthur on all these things - When the context is studied carefully, Jesus' application of the parable is as unmistakable as its analogy is uncomplicated. **All these things** can only refer to what He has been talking about-the birth pains (Mt 24:4-14), the abomination of desolation (Mt 24:15), the need to flee because of the impending perils (Mt 24:16-28), and the catastrophic upheaval of the universe (Mt 24:29). Those **things** will indicate that **He is near**, just as the budding fig tree indicates that summer, the harvest time, is near. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

Kent Hughes makes an interesting comment that "All they had to do was watch Jerusalem for the details he described and they would know." The problem with that statement is that it disregards the other very clear, earth and heaven shaking signs of the times (Mt 24:29-note, Mk 13:24-25, Lk 21:25 calls them **signs**). God is not a God of confusion so when He says they are signs, they are guideposts showing that His return is nigh. These signs did not occur when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD.

He is near (literally "it is near")- There is no specific subject of the verb "**is**". The translations are divided between the subject being "**it**" or "**He**," the former referring to an event, the latter to a person. In the parallel account of the parable of the fig tree in Luke 21:31 it reads "Even so you, too, when you see these things happening, recognize that **the kingdom of God is near**." This of course creates no problem with interpreting Matthew 24:33 as a "**He**" because a **kingdom** must have a King and His Name is Jesus. Notice that the translations above are divided between "it" and "He" but most favor the latter translation. On the other hand even "it" would be fine, because compared with Luke's passage, it signifies the **Kingdom**, which in turn signifies a **King**!

Near (1451)(**eggus - see below**) means near in space or near in time. In context the emphasis is primarily on **near** in time.

Recognize (1097)(**ginosko**) means to know by experience. When you experience **all of these things**, they are like the sound of someone "knocking at the door!" Either **HE** is near or **IT** is near (the end of the age, the timing of which corresponds to His return).

NET Note - The verb *ginoskete*, "**know**" can be parsed as either present indicative or present imperative. In this context the imperative fits better, since the movement is from analogy (trees and seasons) to the future (the signs of the coming of the kingdom) and since the emphasis is on preparation for this event. Jesus is urging the the reader to realize what is happening.

Right at the door (cp Mk 13:29) - **Right** is added by NAS. The common figure of speech **at the door** expresses nearness. It does not tell us how near. In fact James used the phrase to describe "the Judge is standing **right at the door**." (James 5:9) In that context the idea would be that the return of Jesus is always imminent, but it does not tell us how close it is.

Hiebert notes that more literally the Greek reads "*upon the doors* (plural)" where "*upon*" "pictures the subject so near as in fact already located on the doorstep."

Weber - An observer could watch a **fig tree** begin to produce leaves (and green fruit) in late spring as a sign that summer is near. In the same way, an observer of history who knows the preceding teachings of Jesus was now equipped to know when the Messiah's coming is near, right at the door. This implies immediacy, but still not a specific time. (Holman New Testament Commentary)

Near (1451)(**eggus**) means near in space - either at or to a short distance away (Lk 19:11, Ge 19:20; 45:10) or near in time - a short time away in the future, **imminent** (Mt 24:32-33, 26:18, Jn 2:13). Comparative = *egguteron* = nearer (Ro 13.11); superlative = *eggista* = nearest, closest.

Eggus is used metaphorically - "peace to those who were **near**" referring to Jews. (Eph 2:17) Of Gentiles who have been saved having "been brought **near** by the blood of Christ." (Eph 2:13). "The LORD is **near** to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth." (Ps 145:18)

Liddell-Scott-Jones - (I) of Place, near, nigh, at hand: freq. in Hom., c. gen., hard by, near to; nearer to grief, (II) of Time, nigh at hand, (III) of Numbers, etc., nearly: generally, nearly, almost, not nearly, i. e. not by a great deal, nothing like it. not so.. nor yet nearly so; mostly. of Qualities, coming near, very near death. of Relationship, akin to.

Thayer has the following...

1. of place and position;

a. properly: absolutely, John 19:42, Luke 19:11; John 3:23; John 6:19,23; John 11:18,54; John 19:20; Acts 1:12; Acts 9:38; Acts 27:8.

b. tropically; those who are near of access to God, i.e. Jews, and those who are alien from the true God and the blessings of the theocracy, i.e. Gentiles: Eph 2:17 (cf. Isa 57:19); to be brought near, namely, to the blessings of the kingdom of God, Eph 2:13 (**so with the rabbis not infrequently to make nigh is equivalent to make a proselyte**) near thee, i.e. at hand, already, as it were, in thy mind, Ro 10:8 from Dt 30:14

2. of Time; concerning things imminent and soon to come to pass: Mt 24:32; 26:18; Mk 13:28; Lk 21:30,31; Jn 2:13; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55; Rev 1:3; 22:10; of the near advent of persons: of Christ's return from heaven, Php 4:5 (in another sense, of God in Ps 145:18; near, at the door, Mt 24:33; Mk 13:29; , near to being cursed, Heb 6:8; soon to vanish, Heb 8:13.

Eggus - 31x in 31v - **NAS Usage:** close(1), near(27), nearby(1), nearer(1), ready(1).

Matthew 24:32 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; 33 so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is **near**, right at the door.

Matthew 26:18 And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is **near**; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'"

Mark 13:28 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is **near**. 29 "Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is **near**, right at the door.

Luke 19:11 While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was **near** Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.

Luke 21:30 as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now **near**. 31 "So you also, when you see these things (Lk 21:25-29) happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.

John 2:13 The Passover of the Jews was **near**, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

John 3:23 John also was baptizing in Aenon **near** Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized--

John 6:4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was **near**.

19 Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing **near** to the boat; and they were frightened.

23 There came other small boats from Tiberias **near** to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

John 7:2 Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was **near**.

John 11:18 Now Bethany was **near** Jerusalem, about two miles off;

54 Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country **near** the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.

55 Now the Passover of the Jews was **near**, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves.

John 19:20 Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was **near** the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek.

42 Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was **nearby**, they laid Jesus there.

Acts 1:12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is **near** Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

Acts 9:38 Since Lydda was **near** Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us."

Acts 27:8 and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a place called Fair Havens, **near** which was the city of Lasea.

Romans 10:8-note But what does it say? "THE WORD IS **NEAR** YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART "-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,

Romans 13:11-note Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is **nearer** to us than when we believed.

Ephesians 2:13-note But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought **near** by the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 2:17-note AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE **NEAR**;

Philippians 4:5-note Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is **near**.

Hebrews 6:8-note but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and **close** to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.

Hebrews 8:13-note When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is **ready** to disappear.

Revelation 1:3-[note](#) Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is **near**.

Revelation 22:10-[note](#) And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is **near**.

Eggus - 48v in the Septuagint -

Ge 19:20; 45:10; Ex 13:17; 32:27; Lev 21:2; 25:25; Num 27:11; Deut 2:19; 4:46; 30:14; 32:35; 34:6; Jdg 3:20; Ruth 3:12; 1Kgs 8:46; 2Chr 6:36; Esther 1:14; 9:20; Job 6:15; 13:18; 17:12; 19:14; Ps 15:3; 22:11; 34:18; 38:11; 85:9; 119:151; Ps 145:18; Prov 27:10; Eccl 5:1; Isa 13:6; 57:19; Jer 12:2; 25:26; 35:4; 48:16, 24; Ezek 6:12; 23:12; 30:3; Dan 9:7; Joel 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; Obad 1:15; Zeph 1:7, 14;