

Parable of the Fig Tree

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Throughout scripture the word "tree", or "trees", is often used symbolically to represent individuals and/or authorities in the physical or spiritual realm (see study: *The Tree of Life and River of Living Water*). However, in Christ's parable of the fig tree there are important lessons that apply to both realms simultaneously. In order to distinguish the difference in any given section of scripture, the context must be clearly identified. With this in mind we will see what, and/or who, Christ was actually addressing so that the core lessons can be learned.

Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.³³ So you also, when you see (perceive) all these things, know that it (he) is near, at the very doors.³⁴ Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled.³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away (Mt. 24:32-35; cf. Mk. 13:28; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Before examining the meaning/s associated with the fig tree, the chronology that Christ described should be explained. He said, "this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled". As all the events described from Matthew 24:3 to 31 were not fulfilled within the life time of Christ's disciples, the panorama he laid out must describe an extended period of time that will culminate in his return to rule this planet. Even after Christ's return, there will be a thousand-year period of reeducation and reconstruction; after which Satan (who was restrained for a thousand years) will be released for a short period of time (cf. Rev. 20:1-10). Therefore, "this generation that will by no means

pass away till all these things are fulfilled" can only apply to the last generation of mankind living during the time of Satan's final release, which is described in Revelation 20:7-10.

Consequently, the parable of the fig tree is an inset/pause that momentarily interrupts events that will unfold over an extended period of time. However, Christ's first interaction with a fig tree in Matthew 21:18-22 contains principles that apply to every generation. An important question related to this activity is whether the last generation of mankind will have learned the primary lesson behind Christ's encounter with the fig tree because most people who knew Christ during his ministry did not understand the meaning behind his action. In Christ's first encounter with a fig tree, he compared its poor physical condition to the spiritual condition of those in positions in authority; primarily the religious leadership under the influence of their spiritual father, Satan.

And seeing a fig tree by the road, he (Christ) came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again." And immediately the fig tree withered away (Mt. 21:19; cf. Mk. 11:20-24; Ed. note in parenthesis).

As Christ commanded the fig tree to wither close to the Passover, and because the Passover occurs during the Spring each year, there should have been some buds at the very least.

*And he (Christ) spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees."³⁰ **When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near** (Lk. 21:29-30; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

However, the fig tree during the Passover season had no buds at all. Why? Because if there were any buds, these would have represented the

beginning of the “fruits of repentance” on the part of the religious leadership, but they were collectively unrepentant. So even after a three-year period of teaching and interacting with the Jewish religious authorities, the primary leaders had no “buds” (fruits) on their figurative fig tree.

*But when he (John the baptizer) saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his (Christ’s) baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Therefore **bear fruits worthy of repentance**, ⁹and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones” (Mt. 3:7-9; cf. 12:33-37; 23:29-36; Lk. 3:8-9; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

“Figs” being associated with those in positions of authority, who are subsequently corrupted, is a common theme as confirmed by a number of Biblical texts.

*The Lord showed me (Jeremiah), and there were two baskets of figs set before the temple of the Lord, after Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and brought them to Babylon. ²One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe; and **the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten, they were so bad.** ³Then the Lord said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad, very bad, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad” (Jer. 24:1-3; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

*‘And **as the bad figs which cannot be eaten, they are so bad**’ – surely thus says the Lord - ‘**so will I give up Zedekiah the king of Judah, his princes, the residue of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and***

***those who dwell in the land of Egypt. ⁹I will deliver them to trouble into all the kingdoms of the earth, for their harm, to be a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse, in all places where I shall drive them’** (Jer. 24:8-9; emphasis added).*

*Thus says the Lord of hosts: Behold, I will send on them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like **rotten figs that cannot be eaten, they are so bad.** ¹⁸And I will pursue them with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence; and I will deliver them to trouble among all the kingdoms of the earth – to be a curse, an astonishment, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, ¹⁹**because they have not heeded My words, says the Lord, which I sent to them by My servants the prophets** (including many warnings and admonitions from Christ during his earthly ministry)... (Jer. 29:17-19a; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

Because the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes were so rotten, Jesus Christ predicted they would be completely removed from their authority, and this was pictured by the fruitless fig tree withering at Christ’s command. In fact, Christ was fulfilling some prophecies that foretold this event.

*How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us’? Look, **the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood.** ⁹The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. **Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord; so what wisdom do they have?** (Jer. 8:8-9; emphasis added).*

*“**I will surely consume them,**” says the Lord. **There shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things** (power and authority) **I have given them shall pass away from***

them" (Jer. 8:13; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

(Jn. 8:44; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Even from the beginning of man's history, those who walk contrary to God's will are associated with rotten fig trees. Symbolically speaking, Adam and Eve sought justification for the sin they committed by "covering themselves" with support from other rotten "fig trees" who were willing to excuse their sinful actions. These other rotten fig trees were spirit beings who shared "the garden" with Adam and Eve (cf. Gen. 2:16).

Any leader who rebels against God's word automatically falls into a category that can be compared to rotten fig trees. This is confirmed when Pharaoh of Egypt is compared to the rotten trees in the garden of Eden that are consigned to everlasting death pending their genuine repentance for the sins they have committed. These once "exalted spirit beings" who sinned will join all of unrepentant mankind in death, waiting for a future resurrection. This is described by the following figurative language.

*Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked (had sinned); and **they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings** (Gen. 3:7; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

*So that no trees by the waters ("waters" represent the life granted by God to each created being) may ever again **exalt themselves** for their height (pride), nor set their tops (ambitions) among the thick boughs (loyal angels of God), that no tree which drinks water may ever be high enough to reach up to them (to cause harm).*

It was the most charismatic and deceptive rotten tree "in the garden" that killed Adam and Eve. In other words, they consumed the anti-God value system espoused by a spirit being who was described as "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (cf. Gen. 2:17). By "eating of" this erroneous value system they sinned, which eventually led to their death; despite the effort they expended to justify their rebellious attitude/action (sewing fig leaves together). This same anti-God spirit being also "fed" the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes with attitudes and values that are contrary to God's word. Because they willingly accepted this "food" from Satan, they made him their "father" vicariously.

'For they have all been delivered to death, to the depths of the earth, among the children of men who go down to the Pit (grave)' (Eze. 31:14); Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

You (Jewish religious leaders) **are of your father the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning (i.e., influenced Adam and Eve resulting in their sinful decision and subsequent death), and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it

*To which of the trees in Eden will you then be likened in glory and greatness? Yet **you shall be brought down with the trees of Eden to the depths of the earth (in death)**; you shall lie in the midst of the uncircumcised (unrepentant sinners), with those slain by the sword (symbol of God's word). **This is Pharaoh and all his multitude**, says the Lord God (Eze. 31:18; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

While Christ was still on earth, he was compared to a "green tree". In contrast, the Jewish religious leadership was compared to a "dry tree" that produced no fruit of genuine repentance, which

resulted in their removal from power by 70CE and the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, Christ's action in cursing the fruitless fig tree was to confirm that he is the judge of all the earth, by delegation from his heavenly Father (Jn. 5:22, 27; Ac. 10:42), and that the religious leaders were guilty of murdering him; not to mention many other sins they committed that had negative effects on those who believed in their teachings (cf. Mt. 16:5-12).

And a great multitude of the people followed him (en route to his crucifixion), and women who also mourned and lamented him. ²⁸But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore, and the breasts which never nursed!' ³⁰Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"' (Lk. 23:27-30; Ed. note in parenthesis).

*"For **if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?**" (Lk. 23:31; KJV; emphasis added).*

As Christ pointed out in Luke 23:28-29, the self-serving and rebellious attitude of the Jewish leaders (dry tree) would lead to a grievous destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and tremendous suffering upon the residents. This dynamic continues today as human leaders feed their own self-interests with little concern about the effects their attitudes and actions are having, and will continue to have, on their own citizens. Christ stated this fact when comparing the leaders of this present evil age (cf. Gal. 1:4), with the leaders that will be ruling this planet following Christ's return.

But Jesus called them (his disciples) to himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them (their citizens), and

*those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶**Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave"** (Mt. 20:25-27; cf. Eze. 34:1-31; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

Therefore, it is incumbent upon the citizens of this world to pray "Thy kingdom come"; so that the "green and fruitful tree" (Jesus Christ) can return and remove all self-serving leadership from this earth (dry trees).

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:10; emphasis added).

The will of Almighty God cannot be done on earth until Christ returns and vanquishes every government of man because they are all under the influence of the "*god of this world*" to one degree or another (2Cor. 4:4). When Matthew 6:10 is fulfilled there will be lasting "peace on earth" because God's law and commandments will be taught, and enforced whenever they are contravened (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Zech. 14:16-19) (see study: *Peace Is Beyond Us*).

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