

THE LESSON OF THE FIG TREE

--MARK 11:12-21--

INTRODUCTION:

This Scripture has been a controversial passage that scholars have debated for centuries. First, the event that is recorded is the only miracle in the New Testament that involves destruction. Some have rejected this narrative because to them Jesus is acting as a spoiled child who did not get His way. Still others have rejected this passage because to them what Jesus did was unthinkable when He cursed a poor, innocent tree simply because it was fruitless. How do we answer these objections when we hold that the Scriptures are the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God?

In this passage, if the fig tree continued to be barren and useless, it would be cut down and used for firewood and no one would object. But when Jesus withers the tree with a word to teach an eternal spiritual lesson, the critics cry out. Jesus did not spitefully curse this tree because it didn't provide what it promised. The reason Jesus cursed the fig tree was because He wanted it to be an illustration of what was happening to Israel.

I. A FRUITLESS FIG TREE (Mark 11:12-14)

- a. This passage begins on the next day, the day after Jesus had ridden the donkey's _____ into Jerusalem.
- b. _____ trees are native to Israel, and the trees and the fruit are often mentioned in the Scriptures.
- c. Jesus reached the tree and despite its promising appearance, the tree had no _____ whatsoever.
- d. The fig tree was often used in prophetic writings to symbolize _____.
- e. When Jesus _____ the fig tree He was addressing the hypocrisy and unbelief of Israel.

II. A MISUSED TEMPLE (Mark 11:15-21)

- a. Having pronounced the curse on the fig tree, Jesus and His disciples continued on toward Jerusalem.

- b. The court of the _____ was a huge, paved area the length of three football fields and about 250 yards wide.
- c. The operations in the court of the Gentiles had become known as the Bazaar of _____.
- d. All this combined turned the _____ of God into a place of abuse and extortion.
- e. In an instant Jesus turn the Bazaar on Annas into complete _____. (Psalm 69:9)
- f. Not only had He sent the merchants and their animals and wares out of the temple, Jesus also stopped people from using the temple courts as a _____ for carrying goods into the city.
- g. Jesus did not just drive the merchants out, but as the chaos began to dwindle, Jesus gave His _____ for what He had done, and He used the Old Testament to do so. (Isaiah 56:7)
- h. But the noisy, smelly, busy "robbers' _____" that the temple had become was the exact opposite of the place where quiet, thoughtful, instructional, prayerful worship of God could take place. (Jeremiah 7:11)
- i. The religious leaders were _____ and outraged by the single-handed devastation of the temple marketplace by Jesus.
- j. Mark informs us that when _____ came they would go out of the city and return to Bethany where they were staying
- k. The next morning, Wednesday morning as they were returning to Jerusalem, Mark writes, "*As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree _____ from the roots up. Being reminded, Peter said to Him, 'Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.'*" (Mark 11:19–21, NASB95).
- l. Such a graphic illustration and a warning—a fig tree with full foliage but no fruit is now _____ and sagging.

CONCLUSION:

Beware of the sin of hypocrisy! How do we spot it? It comes when from the outside everything looks healthy, yet when we look closer there is no fruit. The Pharisees and the scribes looked righteous on the outside, but it was only self-righteousness and

because of this there was no fruit. Jesus repeatedly condemned the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, once in Matthew 15:7-9 Jesus quoted from Isaiah 29:13 and said to religious leaders, “*You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’*” (Matthew 15:7–9, NASB95) This is to be a lesson to us that we not only look healthy and lush on the outside, but when people get close they seen the fruit. Are you producing fruit? “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*” (Galatians 5:22–23, NASB95) Are our lives an invitation to meet a holy God? When He examines us will He find fruit?