

**Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ**  
**Jesus Curses the Fig Tree and Cleanses the Temple**

Last time...the Triumphal Entry, Jesus hailed as the King of Israel

Matt 5:17

Zech 9:9

Ps 118:25-26

Is 43:15        *I am* the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King.

Followers acclaimed the king and enemies protested

Thus far the Romans were silent

They do not see Jesus as a political or military threat

They see Him as a “religious man”

The 1<sup>st</sup> Day of the Final Week

This time...Jesus acts in accordance with Is 43:15 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Day of the Final Week

We will be in Mark 11 and Matt 21

**Mark 11:12-18**

v12    And on the morrow:

    The day after the Triumphal Entry...

    4 days before Passover...

    the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the Final Week

    Jesus and His 12 disciples are returning to Jerusalem from Bethany

.v13    seeing a fig tree...nothing but leaves...time of figs was not yet:

    From Bethany to Jerusalem...maybe near Bethphage?

        beth = house

        Bethel = house of God

        Bethlehem = house of bread

        Bethany = house of dates

        Bethphage = house of figs

    On the way to Jerusalem, a hungry King sees a fig tree

    Not an unusual sight – Judea/Israel was a land absolutely covered with fig trees

Deut 8:7-8 For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey.

This particular fig tree had leaves, but upon closer inspection, had no fruit  
Did Jesus expect this fig tree to have fruit?

After all, “The time/season of figs was not yet”

Well, there are different kinds of fig trees in Judea/Israel

On one type, figs appear in the spring before the leaves appear

Remember our timestamp: Passover...March/April

On several other types, leaves appear first and then figs in June or  
Aug – Nov

Would Jesus know the difference?

Of course...He created them both

At Passover, would Jesus look for fruit on a fig tree that was

“figs (spring) then leaves” or “leaves then figs (summer)”?

Did Jesus expect this particular fig tree to have fruit?

Yes

Was Jesus right/fair in His expectation?

Yes

Did the fig tree have fruit?

No

The day after His Triumphal Entry as King of Israel, a day of great exuberance and a day of much resistance, Jesus picked this particular fig tree for a teaching moment

v14 Jesus answered...His disciples heard:

Jesus answered – examined the fruitless fruit tree and “concluded”:

No man eat fruit of you hereafter forever.

Matt 21:19 Let no fruit grow on you henceforth forever.

Jesus cursed the fig tree that

- was all leaves and no fruit
- was not bare but was barren
- was all show (leaves) and no substance (fruit)

And His disciples heard what Jesus said to that fig tree...  
just as they have heard Him speak to the wind and the waves on the Sea of Galilee...and the wind and the waves obeyed His words!

What do we make of this, Jesus

- speaking to the wind and waves?
- cursing a fig tree, an inanimate object?

Ps 19:1-4a     The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world

Is 49:13        Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted

Ps 96:11-12    Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice

Is 55:12        For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands

Rom 8:19-23 creature is NOT children of God

The Creator and His creation are on “speaking terms”!  
Poetic language, but...interesting.

Remember the types of fig trees in Judea/Israel

- Figs first then leaves
- Leaves first and then figs

Leaves being show/outward display of beauty and figs being desired substance...

- Desired substance first and then show/outward display of beauty
- Show/outward display of beauty first and then desired substance

This is a spiritual lesson

Substance = that which the Husbandman expects of a fruit tree...fruit

Gen 15:6

Heb 11:6

John 6:28-29

Righteousness by Faith = actions, doing vs saying (James 1:22)

Leaves being show/outward display of beauty and figs being desired substance...

- Desired substance first and then show/display of beauty – Israel
- Show/display of beauty first and then desired substance – the nations

Ps 96:10a Say among the heathen *that* the LORD reigneth

Is 27:6 He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit

Is 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles (Messiah)

Is 42:6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles (Messiah)

Rom 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith

Is 43:1a But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine

Is 43:12b therefore ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I *am* God.

Is 43:15 I *am* the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King

Is 45:21b *there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me

Is 49:6 It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. (Messiah)

Matt 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (Forerunner to Pharisees)

Context is, as always, essential to rightly dividing the Word of Truth

Substance = that which the Creator expects of a fruit tree...fruit  
Righteousness by Faith = actions, doing vs saying (James 1:22)

Fruitless “figs then leaves” tree:

The day after His Triumphal Entry, Jesus is saying Israel had a outward display of beauty/praise but is barren of fruit (faith in their King and Messiah)

This is why He wept/wailed/sobbed over the City (Luke 19:41)  
The Husbandman expects fruit, not leaves  
This tree (Israel) has no fruit...and is cursed

The lesson will be taught on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Day of the Final Week

Now, let’s continue with this day, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Day of the Final Week

v15-16 Jesus went into the temple...cast out...overthrew...not suffer:

Again, let’s remember the context: the day before,

- The Triumphal Entry and Jesus hailed as King of Israel
- The King’s inspection of His Father’s house (v11)

Now, on this day, Jesus cleanses the Temple the 2<sup>nd</sup> time

At the beginning of His ministry, John 2:13-22

The religious leaders defied the rebuke of Jesus and restored their lucrative money-making machine (at the expense of the people) in the Temple

The Temple is once again a very busy marketplace, a bustling bazaar,

- packed with Jews
- wherein the rich get richer and the poor get poorer

This Passover, in the Final Week, Jesus cleans house again

- casting out the sellers and the buyers
- overthrowing/turning over
  - the tables of the moneychangers
  - the seats/benches of the dove merchants
- not allowing anyone to schlep their goods thru the Temple, using the Temple as a shortcut for money-grubbing commercial traffic

As at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus at the end of His ministry attacks the corrupt mismanagement and misuse of the house of God by its unfaithful servants

The beauty of the sanctuary was stained by vile un-holiness...

and He judged righteously, His mouth as a sharp sword (Is 49:2a)

In His righteous indignation is seen the majestic presence of...the King of Israel

And He taught/rebuked/corrects/instructs the offenders with the Word of God (not the commandments of men that make void the Word of God)

v17 Is it not written:

The written Word of God...inspired (God-breathed), inerrant, infallible, profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness

Jesus teaches

Is 56:7 prayer = worship

Jer 7:11 den = hiding place

thieves...Matt 6:24

Jesus teaches...the Word of God, not the words of men

Who is Jesus, the King of Israel, referring to when He says, "My"?

- His Father, His Father's house
- His, the King's house

John 10:30 during His previous visit to Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles

v18 scribes and chief priests...sought...feared:

The corrupt money-makers

- did not take kindly to this disruption happening again on another Passover, one of the busiest and most profitable times of the year
- picked up on what Jesus meant by "My" house

They looked for a way to kill Him...

but they feared...frightened by/alarmed/awed by Him

Natural man seeks to destroy that which he fears

The power and money brokers' reasons for wanting to kill Jesus

- He was ruining their very lucrative business and threatening their world
- He was taking away their power over the people

Let's look at Matthew's account of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cleansing of the Temple by Jesus (Matt 21:12-17)

### Matt 21:12-17

v12-13 Jesus went into the temple of God:  
...and took charge in a very powerful and startling way

Note: this is how this is recorded in the Gospel of Luke also

v14 blind...lame...healed them:  
The rich and proud were driven away, the poor and humble entered...  
and Jesus did what Scriptures foretold the Messiah King would do

Is 35:4-6 Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *even* God *with* a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing

Prov 16:15 In the light of the king's countenance *is* life; and his favour *is* as a cloud of the latter rain (which brings fruit to the harvest)

Prov 19:12 The king's wrath *is* as the roaring of a lion; but his favour *is* as dew upon the grass (refreshing, nurturing)

Prov 20:26 A wise king scattereth the wicked,

v15-16 the wonderful things...children crying...sore displeased:  
Matthew records the reaction of the chief priests and scribes (children of the devil, John 8:44) to the wonder-full display of Jesus' righteous indignation:  
unrighteous indignation

The children had a radically different reaction than the self-righteous religious leaders: fervent outbreak of Ps 118:25-26 again

The religious leaders did not like this today any more than they did the day before during the Triumphal Entry, and have a similar response to Jesus –  
Do you hear what they are saying!!! (with a condemning, cutting edge)

“Of course I hear them (and I whole heartedly approve!)”

And taking them to task again for not knowing the Word of God, Jesus teaches  
the Word of God...Ps 8:2

Remember Matt 18:3

Children are:

- innocent
- pure
- defenseless
- dependent
- hopeful
- trusting
- simple
- sincere
- joyful
- enthusiastic
- without selfish ambition
- uncorrupted by money
- vocal

v17 left them...Bethany:

The end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Day of the Final Week

Jesus returns to Bethany, presumably to the house of MM&L

At the end of this day, Who is in charge at the Temple?

The King of Israel

The rich and proud oppressors are humiliated again,  
driven out by the King

The helpless suffering are healed,  
ministered to by their King



## Application

### 1. Jesus cursed the fig tree

We will see what happened and hear Jesus teach about this next week

But clearly, the Lord expects fruit in our lives!!

John 15:1-8

Righteousness by faith, NOT by works

Do we stand before God

- on our own merit, in sin?
- on Jesus Christ's merit, in Christ?

### 2. Jesus cleansed the Temple

Jesus is not good for religion, which is

- outward display of beauty
- control over the people
- oppression of the people

He upsets all the tables.

As a result, religion is hostile/opposed to Jesus.

Religion is of the world, not of God.

In Church History, the selling of indulgences

(reduced sentences in Purgatory for oneself and one's loved ones by giving money to the RCC)

to fund the building of beautiful cathedrals and works of art in a time of inescapable and life-taking poverty

Purgatory and indulgences: worldly brilliant schemes by "dens of thieves"

In our period of Church History, the American Church must take a very hard look at ourselves in the Light of this Scripture

Are there churches today...

houses of worship proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ...

that are busy marketplaces filled with sellers and consumers catering to the flesh (body and soul/emotions) more than catering to the spirit?

How much of the American church is built on the American business model?

- Consumerism, Consumer is king  
Ear-tickling, “make me feel good about me”  
Seeker-friendly “you-do-you”  
Fluffy, warm and fuzzy

1 Tim 1:3-4, 6-7

fables: Christian fiction

vain jangling: babble, random talk, stories

vs

the Word of God (entire counsel of God)

Pick-and-choose doctrine of the Bible to offer an attractive product to consumers in the marketplace of spirituality

“Entertain the goats rather than feed the sheep”

- Profit motive

Pastors Conference:

Why are we selling in our bookstores best-selling books that fail the “sound doctrine” test

(Acts 17:11 and 1 Thes 5:21) and are deceiving?

*Jesus Calling*

*The Prayer of Jabez*

*The Purpose Driven Life*

*The Purpose Driven Church*

Etc

If we didn’t sell those books, we wouldn’t make any money

It is OK to poison the flock with false teachings in order to make money?!

Omg, we are in trouble!!

- A business, a going-concern, using business means to grow  
An accounting term for a company that has the resources needed to continue operating indefinitely and a term that also refers to a company's ability to make enough money to stay afloat.

Why is there a coffee shop? (it is the motive that counts)

Why is there a bookstore?

Why are teachings/sermons/messages sold?

Trusting in filthy lucre or in the Lord, the Head of the Church?

Note: “filthy lucre” appears 5x in NT

Once in 1 Peter and 4x in Paul’s letters to pastors

Are there pastors and ministries who

- are not 1 Peter 5:1-3
- are 2 Peter 2:1-3

Is the American Church:

- Marketplace Christianity?
- Commercial Christianity?
- All leaves and no fruit?
- Not bare but barren?
- All show and no substance?
- Laodicea...lukewarm, wanting to feel better about themselves rather than feeling better about Jesus (on outside knocking)?

Jesus twice walked into the House of God, the Temple, and cleaned house in a very dramatic and startling way

Would Jesus clean house in churches today?

We need to check our motives

Where I stand:

- 1 Sam 3:19    And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground (every word!)
- 1 Tim 1:17    Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, *be* honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen
- 1 King 17:1    *As* the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand (in the face of apostasy)
- Jer 6:16        Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls (Old School)
- Prov 24:21    My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: *and* meddle not with them that are given to change (with the Lord, not the New School)