

## Matthew 21:17-20 A Lesson From a Fig Tree

Introduction: In this text Jesus performs a miracle. He does not heal, but destroys. He does this to teach a lesson.

### I. Jesus unprovided for by the Jewish leaders.

- A. Jesus left the city and returned to Bethany to spend the night.
- B. The Messiah – King had come to Jerusalem and the Jewish leaders make no provisions for Him.
  - 1. They furnish no room, no meals, no provisions.
  - 2. He is not welcome in their city.
- C. The God of the temple has come to the temple and officials make no provisions for Him. (They would welcome a neighboring rabbi, but they rejected their God.)
- D. So Jesus went where He was welcome. (He was welcome in the home of disciples. They were not lavish, but that did not matter to Jesus.)

### II. Jesus looking to the fig tree for figs.

- A. In the morning as He returned to the city He was hungry, verse 18.
  - 1. He was anxious to get an early start and left before breakfast.
  - 2. But suddenly a hunger pang hit Him. (It must have hit the disciples too.)
  - 3. Keep in mind that He is both God and man.
- B. He saw a fig tree and turned to it for food, verse 19.
  - 1. In Israel fig trees put on figs before leaves.
  - 2. Since this tree had leaves it should have had figs.
  - 3. According to Mark the fig harvest had not yet begun.  
(After the harvest a tree would not be expected to have figs even though it had leaves.)
  - 4. This was the time of the Passover and there should have been some early figs already ripe.
- C. There was every reason to expect figs but there were none.
  - 1. There were no ripe figs, no green figs, no figs at all.
  - 2. There would be no figs at all this season.

### III. Jesus bringing judgment on the fig tree.

- A. Jesus pronounced judgment on the fig tree, verse 19.  
(The tree would bring forth no more fruit.)
- B. The fig tree withered and died.
  - 1. Matthew said that it withered “presently.”
  - 2. This means “soon” but not necessarily “immediately.”
- C. Mark tells us something that Matthew does not.
  - 1. He tells us that this judgment was pronounced on the tree before the cleansing of the temple.
  - 2. It was not until the next morning that the disciples discovered that the tree was withered.
- D. They marveled that the tree was dead, verse 20.  
(It was dead even to the roots – Mark).

### IV. The lesson about Israel.

- A. Why did Jesus kill the fig tree?
  - 1. Was it to vent His anger because the fig tree failed to furnish His breakfast?
  - 2. No, no, no. A thousand times “no.”

B. It was to teach a lesson about Israel.

1. Israel was like a green fig tree; it appeared to bear fruit for God. (God made a covenant, was recipient of the law, the Old Testament scriptures, the priesthood, the temple. Even now on the Passover Jews from all parts had gathered to worship.)
2. But she was barren of spiritual fruit. (Her worship was more pretense – hypocrisy.)
3. She had already failed to provide for her king; She would soon crucify Him.
4. Like the fig tree she would soon wither. (In 70 A.D. The city would fall, the temple destroyed, the sacrifices stopped, the people killed or scattered.)

Conclusion: We had better make sure that our worship of God is real and not mere pretense. Our repentance of sin had better be real. Our faith in Jesus as Savior had better be real.

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