

Matthew 21:20-22 A Lesson Concerning Faith in Prayer

Introduction: Jesus used a fig tree to teach the soon coming downfall of the nation of Israel. In this text He uses it to teach a lesson about prayer.

I. The surprise of the disciples, verse 20.

- A. Mark tells us that it was the Apostle Peter who voiced his surprise.
- B. But Matthew makes it clear that all of the disciples were surprised.
- C. They knew that Jesus had said that it would be barren, but they did not expect it to die – at least not that soon.
- D. But it did die and they marveled at the Lord's power over the laws of nature.

II. An expansion of the disciples' miracle working power, verse 21.

- A. Remember that Jesus had already given the disciples power to perform miracles, Matthew 10:7-8. (Power to heal the sick, cleanse lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons.)
- B. Jesus now expands that power.
 - 1. They too would be able to duplicate His killing of the fig tree.
 - 2. But not only that, they would be able to do many other miracles involving the laws of nature.
 - 3. For example they would be able to cast a mountain into the sea.
(It might have to explode into a million pieces, but it would go into the sea.)

III. Virtually a limitless power thru prayer, verse 22.

- A. Jesus virtually gave those disciples a blank check.
- B. Sounds good?
 - 1. It was.
 - 2. But keep in mind there was a limitation: they had to pray in faith without doubt, verses 21 and 22.
- C. They had a mighty power at their disposal, but they could not use it for selfish purposes.
 - 1. For instance they could not use this to take over the wealth of others.
 - 2. Nor to take over the political positions of others.
 - 3. Nor to take unfair advantage of others in any way.
 - 4. They could not pray in faith asking such things.
- D. The only way this power would work for them was when they knew what they were asking for was in God's will and in keeping with the teaching of Scripture.
(Then God would hear and answer no matter how big their request.)

IV. The text as it applies to us today.

- A. One extreme that some make is by trying to exercise the gift of miracles as did the apostles.
 - 1. God certainly has the power to perform miracles today.
 - 2. He could bestow the gift of miracles today.
 - 3. But He also has the right not to bestow this gift at all today if He so chooses.
- B. How can we know whether He does or does not bestow such gifts today?
(We can know that He will do what He says in the Bible that He will do.)
- C. And in the Bible He teaches that the gift of miracles would cease with the completion of the Bible, I Corinthians 13:8-13.
 - 1. In discussing spiritual gifts He said specifically that the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy would cease.
 - 2. Then He said that only three gifts would remain after the Bible is completed and miracles

was not included, I Corinthians 13:13.

D. Somebody may say, "But I claim God's power."

1. Just because one claim's the power of God that does not mean that He will get the power of God.
2. God has not promised to give such powers today. To the contrary, He informs us that such gifts would cease.

E. To seek to lay hold on such powers today can be dangerous business.

1. You may lay hold on a power that also lays hold on you.
(I am talking about demon power.)
2. Anytime somebody starts claiming a power that God does not give is dangerous business.
3. Look at what happened to Jim Jones and his followers.

F. Do not try to possess a power that God never intended for you. (The apostles never sought such powers. If God wanted you to have them neither would you have to seek them.)

G. But we do not need to feel cheated or left out.

1. God still extends to us the privilege of prayer.
2. No matter how big the problem yet we can go to God in prayer about that problem.
(Although big as a mountain.)
3. If it is the Lord's will, He will remove the problem altogether.
(Although it is as big as a mountain.)
4. If it is not God's will to remove it God will give us the strength to carry it.
(Big as a mountain.)

Conclusion: What we need to learn to do is to pray – and to pray in keeping with that we know to be the will of God – and to pray in keeping with the teachings of the word of God – and to pray in faith believing and God will answer. He will move the problem or give us strength to carry it.

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