

## ***God Expects Fruit – February 28, 2021***

### **1. Introduction:**

- a. Israel, the Jewish people and Christian believers are often portrayed in Scripture as being capable of and expected to bear fruit.
- b. In our text today we will discuss a couple of trees that didn't bear fruit.
- c. We will also discuss how this imagery is applicable to Christians today.

2. **Read:** Luke 13:6-9, And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' <sup>8</sup> And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. <sup>9</sup> Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

- a. I found this on the web, "Fig trees generally begin to ripen fruit sometime between 3 and 5 years after planting. Some cultivars start earlier, but that is average. With good care and time, your tree will begin to ripen fruit, not a lot at first but once it starts there will be more every year."
- b. Question: Who is the owner of the vineyard?
- c. Question: What or who does the fig tree represent?
- d. Question: What does the vineyard symbolize?
- e. Question: Why did the owner of the vineyard want to cut down the fig tree?
- f. Question: Who is represented by the vinedresser?
- g. Question: What does the cultivating and fertilizing of the fig tree represent?
- h. Question: What is seen in the owner's willingness to wait for another year?
- i. Question: What is to happen if no fruit is found on the tree after the owner has the cultivated and fertilized the fig tree and waited the extra year?
- j. Question: A productive fig tree will bear fruit, if it is cared for, after a few years. What is the fruit implied in this parable?

k. The ESV Study Bible Note for this passage reads, “This parable symbolizes Israel's last opportunity to repent before experiencing God's judgment. Three years signifies that Israel has had enough time to repent. The owner's willingness to wait represents a period of grace but even grace has its limits. The Greek construction suggests that this last attempt will also result in failure. God's graciousness and patience should not be presumed upon.”

3. In a passage with a similar theme Jesus cursed a real fig tree. Mark 11:12-14, “On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. <sup>13</sup> And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. <sup>14</sup> And he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.”

a. The ESV Study Bible Note for this passage tells us, “Since the fruit of the fig tree begins to appear about the same time as the leaves, the appearance of a fully leafed tree should have indicated that fruit (in the form of green figs) was already growing. Jesus' actions here have symbolic importance, signifying the hypocrisy of all who have the appearance that they are bearing fruit but in fact are not. [But the] specific reference here is to Israel, since in the OT the fig tree often serves as a metaphor for Israel. Here the cursing of the fig tree signifies the judgment of God on the “fruitless” Jewish people who had turned away from God into empty ritual and legalism.”

b. Question: What are some examples of Israel appearing to bear fruit but in truth being barren?

c. Question: What are some examples of Christians appearing to bear fruit but in truth being barren?

d. Question: This seems unlike Jesus. He must have done this to teach some sort of lesson. What do you think His action represents?

e. Mark 11:20-25 provides us with the fate of the cursed fig tree. “As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. <sup>21</sup> And Peter remembered and said to him, ‘Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.’”

f. The order in which Mark organizes these accounts is interesting. First, the account of fruitless fig tree, then the account of Jesus cleaning the Temple, followed by the account of the withered fig tree. This seems to me to make a connection between the fruitlessness of Israel and the cleansing of the Temple.

g. Question: What happened to the Temple and the Temple system in 70 AD?

g. Question: What caution do these accounts provide to us?