

Doctrine of the Fig Tree and the Olivet Discourse

1. In the Bible, the fig tree is mentioned forty times.
2. It can be reasonably argued that the fig tree is intimately associated with the Land of Israel, according to the Old Testament, and was used by the prophets, and the Lord, to communicate spiritual principles and gospel truths.
3. What is a matter of particular interest for many, is the usage of the fig tree in a parable that Jesus told while giving the Olivet Discourse near the end of His earthly ministry.
 - *Luke 21:29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; 30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. 31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*

Special Note.

“*When they now shoot forth (v. 30)*”, a reference to sprouts, in the plural, is made, and not to a sprout, in the singular. This would be grammatically consistent, for the parable is about “*the fig tree, and all the trees.*”

- *Mark 13:28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:*
- *Matthew 24:32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:*

Special Note.

It is important to look for the whole counsel of God on any verse under consideration. Luke provides an important detail left out by Matthew and Mark’s accounts of the words of Jesus concerning the parable. Luke informs the church that Jesus gave a parable about “*the fig tree and all the trees.*” Because of the modern misplaced emphasis on this parable, the extra notation by Luke becomes vitally important.

4. In historical context, AD 30 – AD 70, the point of the Parable of the Fig Tree and all the Trees was this. As many trees blossom, the blossoming was the sign of the time Christ gave to His disciples and would serve to indicate to the Christian community that the impending judgment upon Jerusalem was near.
5. Jesus was teaching His disciples that the Jewish age was coming to an end. And when the Lord came in judicial judgment upon Israel, not one stone would be left standing on top of another of the Temple.

- *Matthew 24:1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 3 And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*
6. Unfortunately, in trying to teach, and emphasize one point, a spiritual truth is often lost. An example of this can be found in Matthew 21. It is often taught that Matthew 21:19-22 teaches that the fig tree refers to Israel. But that is to miss the point of what Jesus was teaching. The narrative is not about national Israel, but the importance of offering believing prayers.
 - *Matthew 21:19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. 20 And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! 21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. 22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*
 7. Despite repeated warnings not to try to look for modern day signs of the time to indicate the world is coming to an end, the urge is irresistible, illustrated by Israel becoming a nation again in 1948. Many people believe this to be a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy, but it would be impossible to open the Bible and prove “this is that” in a historical context.
 8. In a frantic effort to insist that modern Israel reflects the fig tree of Matthew 21:19, prophetic pundits fail to explain what Jesus meant when He said of the fig tree, “*Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.*”

If this fig tree narrative was to teach anything, with the modern day prophetic presuppositional premise in mind, it would teach that Israel, the fig tree, was cursed by Jesus to die forever and wither away.

The larger point is that the modern day prophetic pundits are wrong in the application because they are wrong in their interpretation. The fig tree as Israel is not the point that Jesus was making in Matthew 21:19. The parable is about spiritual faith, and spiritual fruit in the lives of Christian disciples, and not national Israel.

9. There is one other passage that is interesting to notice, because modern day prophets like to use it to teach that the fig tree represents Israel. If it does, Israel is in trouble, and all hope is gone for the nation.

- *Luke 13:6 He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. 7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? 8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

10. Notice that in this parable the fig tree was planted in a vineyard. That is significant, because it is the vineyard, not the fig tree, which is the best Biblical simile for Israel, and for Christians. It is the vineyard that is important, not the fig tree.

- *Isaiah 5:7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.*
- *John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

11. Notice that in this Parable of the Fig Tree Planted in a Vineyard, it is the servant, not the owner of the land, which had pity on the fig tree. If this parable is designed to teach the relationship of God to Israel by way of the fig tree, Israel is doomed.

12. However, if this Parable of the Fig Tree Planted in a Vineyard is not about national Israel, what is it about? The context explains the purpose for the parable, and the single main point Jesus was making.

13. Specifically, Jesus was teaching that unless a person, Jew or Gentile, does not repent of sin, and turn to God, that individual will be suddenly judged, without warning, and they shall perish, not just for time, but for eternity.

- *Luke 13:1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*