

A Tree with Spiritual Meaning

Three important events happened in the life of YAHSHUA before His death: the triumphal entry, the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple.

After His triumphal entry to Jerusalem, He and His disciples, on the following day, when they had come out of Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing in the distance a fig tree with leaves, He went to see if He could find any [fruit] on it [for in the fig tree the fruit appears at the same time as the leaves]. But when He came up to it, He found nothing but leaves, for the fig season had not yet come. He said to it, No one ever again shall eat fruit from you. When evening came on, He and His disciples, as accustomed, went out of the city. In the morning, when they were passing along, they noticed that the fig tree was withered away to its roots (Mark 11:12-14,19-20).

The fig tree is mentioned first in Genesis, when Adam and Eve used its leaves to cover their nakedness after they transgressed against God's command. "They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves apron like girdles" (Gen. 3:7). The fig tree in this instance served as a temporary **covering** for our parents in the garden, until God provided them with long coats of skins and clothed them (Gen. 3:21). Fig trees were prominent in Palestine, where Israel was heading in their journey of forty years. Moses told them that the Lord God was bringing them into a good land...a land of wheat, barley, and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive tree and honey (Deut. 8:7-8). Fig trees were a symbol of **blessing**. In the days of King Hezekiah when he rebelled against the King of Assyria, he responded to Hezekiah by trying to sway his army by offering vine and fig tree. The fig tree constitutes a symbol of **peace**. In Proverbs 27:18 Solomon compares the tending of a fig tree to looking after one's master. In the Song of Solomon chapter 2:13 the fig tree is a **sign of the times**. The prophet Micah mentions the fig tree in the latter days as a symbol of **peace** and **security**. "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken" (Micah 4:4). In Jeremiah's vision of baskets of figs- one good and the other very bad figs, the message here was of **redemption and of judgment**. Like these good figs so will I regard the captives of Judah whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good, (says the Lord) For I will set My eyes upon them for good, and I will bring

them again to this land; and I will build them up and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up, and I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart. And as for the bad figs... I will even give them up to be a dismay and a horror and to be tossed to and from among all the kingdoms of the earth for evil, to be a reproach, a byword or proverb, a taunt, and a curse in all places where I will drive them. And I will send the sword, famine and pestilence among them until they are consumed from off the land that I gave to them and to their fathers (Jer. 24:1-10). In the book of Joel, the fig tree is a **sign** of Israel's restoration. The prophet encourages all to rejoice. He said, Be not afraid, you wild beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness have sprung up and are green; the tree bears its fruit, and the fig tree and the vine yield their strength (Joel 2:21-15).

In Luke 21:7-9 YAHSHUSA uses the fig tree as a symbol of the nation of Israel in her bareness. He said, A certain man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it, but did not find [any]. So he said to the vinedresser, See, here! For these three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and I find none. Cut it down! Why should it continue also to use up the ground? The **nation of Israel** is portrayed here in relationship with the ministry of YAHSHUA among them. Three years had been since the ministry of YAHSHUA had taken place among them, without them producing fruit. Judgement is pronounced against the bareness of the nation of Israel typified by the fig tree. They are under judgment for their unbelief. Mark 11: 12-20 registers another event related to the fig tree. This happened a week before YAHSHUA'S death, after His triumphal entry in Jerusalem. Here we have three important events before His death: **(1)** His Triumphal entry to Jerusalem when a young colt was brought to Him and people threw their outer garments upon the colt and YAHSHUA set on it; people spread their garments on the road and others [scattered a layer of] leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. Those who went before and those who followed cried out, Hosanna! Praised and blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! Praised and blessed in the name of the Lord is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest! They proclaimed Him King at that time, but few days later they cried out demanding His crucifixion. **(2)** The curse of a fig tree when He was hungry; and seeking fruit on it, He found none. Therefore, He pronounced judgment over it. He said to it, No one ever again shall eat fruit from you... In the morning, when they were passing along, they noticed that the fig tree

which He doomed has withered away! Prophetic of the nation of Israel, which was doomed by the Romans about thirty-seven years later, for their rejection of their Messiah. This fig tree represented the spiritual deadness of Israel. **(3)** The cleansing of the temple. When they came to Jerusalem, YAHSHUA went into the temple and began to drive out those who sold and bought in the temple area, and He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who dealt in doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry any household equipment through the temple enclosure. He taught and said to them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have turned it into a den of robbers (Mark 11: 15-17). That caused the Jewish authorities, who like a cursed fig tree, were dead in their rejection of their Messiah. They did not want to accept the fact that as a Messiah, He had authority and right to cleanse the House of His Father. When YAHSHUA exercised His authority to curse the fig tree and to cleanse the temple, He was showing the identity of His Sonship of the Living God; His authority as King over Israel and the nations. He was Israel's Messiah, accepted or not. It did not change Who He was. YAHSHUA'S declaration on the fig tree was a teaching that echoed Jeremiah's prophetic words: When I wanted to gather them says, the Lord, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered and what I gave them has passed away from them (Jer. 8:13). Fruitless and religious Israel was being judged here, not the fig tree. It served only as a symbol for YAHSHUA to make His point. When YAHSHUA looked for figs at the time when it was not the season for it, He was implying a deeper and spiritual meaning related to Israel. The emphasis of judgement was on the nation, on the temple and on the Jewish leaders.

There is a lesson for the believer, here too. YAHSHUA emphatically commanded that we go and bear fruit. We are His branches being pruned, cut to produce more fruit. We can only bear fruit by dwelling in Him, for He is the source of life. Outside of union with Him we can do nothing; we are dead and we will be cut off, by means of judgement. If a person does not dwell in YAHSHUA he is thrown out like a branch, and withers; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, and they are burned (John 15: 1-7). Are you bearing fruit that glorifies your heavenly Father?