

Theme: Like the fig tree, the Temple was utterly barren of fruit and Jesus pronounced it to be dead, never to bear the fruit of true worship of God again.

I. Intro - Jesus' Vindictive Fury?

- A. Bertrand Russell accused Jesus of vindictive fury against the fig tree - and others have as well.
- B. At first glance, one can see why! What is happening?
- C. Another "sandwich" by Mark - the fig tree and Temple
- D. To understand either, we must look at both!
- E. What is happening here? What is Jesus doing?

II. The Fig Tree and the Temple

- A. Mark weaves the fig tree and the Temple together
 - 1. v11 - Jesus inspects
 - 2. vv12-14 - Jesus inspects and curses the fig tree
 - 3. vv15-18 - Jesus clears the Temple
 - 4. vv19-25 - The withered fig tree

B. The unfruitful fig tree

The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. ¹³ Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it. Mark 11:12-14

- 1. On the walk back to Jerusalem Jesus is hungry
- 2. Jesus sees a fig tree with lots of leaves - the appearance of health and fruitfulness
- 3. Jesus inspects the tree - there is nothing but leaves!

- 4. It is not the season for figs - what did He expect?
- 5. Jesus curses the fig tree (v14, 21) - always barren
- 6. Understanding Jesus' actions
 - a. The fig tree looked healthy and fruitful (leaves)
 - b. It was not the season for ripe figs - but fig trees produce edible nodules before the leaves, and then fully ripe fruit comes later

The **fig tree forms its early fruit**; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Song 2:13 (also Hosea 9:10)
 - c. This tree has nothing but leaves - no leftover fruit, no early fruit, only leaves!
 - d. The tree is deceptive - it looks healthy and should be giving signs of fruitfulness, but it is barren!
- 7. The LORD curses the fig tree
I will take away their harvest, declares the Lord. There will be no grapes on the vine. **There will be no figs on the tree, and their leaves will wither.** What I have given them will be taken from them. Jeremiah 8:13 (also Isaiah 34:4; Jeremiah 29:17; Hosea 2:12; Hosea 9:10; Joel 1:7; Micah 7:1)
 - a. Israel had rejected Yahweh and His covenant
 - b. God used the fig tree as an example of what was coming - judgment and exile for rejecting Him.
 - c. Jesus had already warned the people the same way
Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. ⁷ So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' ⁸ "Sir," the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'" Luke 13:6-9

1. The King had come but the fig tree had no fruit when He inspected it
2. He was merciful and delayed judgment - but only for a time.
3. The time had now ended - and the fig tree was still not producing fruit and would be cut down.

8. Jesus does not prune the fig tree, he does not cultivate around it - He curses it and it dies. Its days are at an end.

In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree **withered from the roots**.²¹ Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you **cursed** has withered!" Mark 11:20-21

C. The unholy Temple

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves,¹⁶ and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.¹⁷ And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" Mark 11:15-17

1. Jesus goes to the Temple and drives out merchants
2. Selling sheep and doves, changing money to pay the Temple tax - a huge business venture
 - a. This had normally been done near the Mount of Olives
 - b. It appears from records that doing this in the Temple was a recent innovation - and quite profitable for the chief priests and the Sanhedrin.
3. This was a massive, noisy affair - Josephus says that 255,600 lambs were sacrificed for Passover in AD 66 - imagine all the noise and activity!

4. This was happening in the Court of the Gentiles - the only place Gentiles could worship.
5. Jesus quotes 2 Scriptures to explain His actions
6. The Temple was meant to be a place of prayer for everyone - Jews and Gentiles

This is what the Lord says: "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed."² Blessed is the man who does this, the man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."³ Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely exclude me from his people." And let not any eunuch complain, "I am only a dry tree."⁴ For this is what the Lord says: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant —⁵ to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off."⁶ And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve him, to love the name of the Lord, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant —⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." Isaiah 56:1-7

- a. In the True Temple, there is a place for Gentiles and eunuchs, who were excluded from the Temple in the Old Covenant.
- b. The True Temple was a place of prayer where Gentiles of all nations could come and pray.
- c. But the current Temple excluded the very people God said to include!
- d. Instead of a place for prayer, it was a noisy market!

7. The Temple was to be a place of worship, not a place of protection for robbers!

But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless. ⁹ “Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, ¹⁰ and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe” — safe to do all these detestable things? ¹¹ Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord. Jeremiah 7:8-11

- a. At the time of the exile, Israel thought the Temple would protect them - but they were wrong!
 - b. They lived immoral lives and thought following religious rituals would protect them - but they were wrong!
 - c. The Temple was a den of robbers - the place where robbers retreated after their crimes to find shelter and protection.
 - d. Jesus says the same thing is happening in His day - and the Temple will not protect them now either!
 - e. The old Temple was destroyed and the people were sent into exile - and this Temple was likewise to be destroyed for they were rejecting the Messiah.
8. The Lord of the covenant has come to His Temple and found it utterly wanting - and pronounced that its days are done.

See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty. ² But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. Malachi 3:1-2

- a. Mark began the Gospel with the first sentence of Malachi 3:1 - and now the rest is fulfilled.
 - b. The LORD has come to the Temple - and does not like what He finds.
 - c. Like the fig tree, the Temple gives false advertising of life and fruitfulness - but there is nothing there.
 - d. The Temple claims to be a place of worship, but it is not.
He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁷ They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’ Mark 7:6-7
9. Like the fig tree, the Temple is utterly barren of fruit and Jesus pronounces it to be dead, never to bear the fruit of true worship of God again.
10. This is why the leaders decide to kill Jesus (v18)

III. Applying the Word

- A. Do I see the Old Covenant has passed away?
1. Jesus will teach this many times in Holy Week
 2. The whole Old Testament economy - Temple, priests, animal sacrifice, holy land, the nation of Israel as God’s people - was always meant to give way to the New Covenant.
 3. The leaders of Israel refused to do this - and the result was the destruction of the Temple.
 4. But the new covenant came with Jesus and the Old Covenant way of worship will NEVER be part of God’s people again.
 5. Thanks be to God - worship is not about a particular place but about worship in Spirit and truth!

6. Thanks be to God - worship is not through priests and sacrifices to mediate but through Jesus the only mediator between God and man!
7. Thanks be to God - membership in the people of God is not determined by being part of Israel but by being part of Jesus Christ!

B. Do I see the nature of true worship and fruitfulness?

1. The fig tree and Temple looked impressive - but were barren of actual life!
2. The priests, scribes, and Pharisees loved their religious rituals and traditions - but their hearts were far from God!
3. Reducing worship to proper religious rituals is always a danger for the people of God!
4. But God is after my whole life, and my Monday words and work must line up with my Sunday words and worship!
5. There are many churches today where people love the ritual, the music, and the tradition, but they refuse to believe and submit to the Word of God. This is what Jeremiah prophesied and Jesus reiterated - it is rejected by God as worship!
6. Some churches reject "outsiders" - different ethnicities, social groups, political, and economic groups - this is also refusing to believe and submit to the Word of God. This is what Isaiah prophesied and Jesus reiterated - it is rejected by God as worship!
7. Is the Spirit revealing any area of my life that needs to be brought into line with the Word of God?

8. Let us not be like the chief priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees - who loved their traditions, their ways, their thoughts, and their desires more than they loved the Word and will of God!

C. The Table of the New Covenant

1. Hebrews 13:9-16
2. This is the Table of the New Covenant, which is far superior to the Temple and worship of the Old Covenant!
3. Come and be strengthened!

The Lord Comes To His Temple

Mark 11:11-25

July 7, 2024

Communion

1 Peter 2:9-10

Teaching keywords: Christology; Tabernacle and Temple; Israel; Prophecy (Old Testament)

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve. ¹² The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. ¹³ Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.

¹⁵ On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, ¹⁶ and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. ¹⁷ And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" ¹⁸ The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

¹⁹ When evening came, they went out of the city. ²⁰ In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. ²¹ Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

²² "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. ²³ "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵ And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."
Mark 11:11-25