

Sunday, January 15, 2012—Mark Dispensationally Considered—Mark 11:12-21: The Barren Fig Tree and the Purification of the Temple

Mark 11:12-14

- **12) And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:**
- **13) And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.**
- **14) And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard [it].**
- The account of the barren fig tree is found only in Matthew and Mark. It is important to note that they are in a slightly different order.
 - Mark—the barren fig tree is cursed before Jesus purifies the temple
 - Matthew 21:12-20—Jesus purifies the temple before the barren fig tree is cursed
 - Luke 19:45-47—Jesus purifies the temple but nothing is said about the barren fig tree
- Mark 11:12—we saw at the end of last week’s study that after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem Jesus returned back to Bethany with the 12 Apostles. “On the morrow,” i.e., the next day Jesus was making his way back to Jerusalem with the 12 and was hungry.
- Mark 11:13—from far away Jesus saw a fig tree with leaves upon which he found no figs because “the time of figs was not yet.”
 - Matthew 21:19—Jesus curses the fig tree for not bearing any fruit and the tree immediately begins to wither away.
- Mark 11:14—the question which troubles people is why Jesus cursed the tree for not having figs, when it was not the season for figs. On commentator Edersheim claims: “It is a well-known fact, that in Palestine the fruit appears before the leaves, and that this fig tree, whether from its exposure or soil, was precocious (ripe before the proper or natural time), is evident from the fact that it was a leaf, which is quite unusual at that season on the mount of Olives.” (Baker, 220)
- In due course we will study the parable of the fig tree found in Mark 13:28-33. For now it is important to realize that Israel is depicted in Scripture under the figure of the Olive Tree, the Fig Tree, and the Vine.
 - Romans 11:17, 24—Olive Tree
 - Isaiah 5:7—Vine
 - Jeremiah 24:1-10—Figs
- Judges 9:8-15—all three are mentioned in Jotham’s fable.

- The Olive Tree is a symbol of Israel's Religious privileges.
 - The Vine is a symbol of Israel's Spiritual privileges.
 - The Fig Tree is a symbol of Israel's Religious privileges.
- “The Fig-Tree is a fit emblem of Israel. Its peculiarity is that the blossoms of fruit appear before the leaves. Naturally, therefore, we should look for fruit on a tree in full leaf. This accounts for why Jesus cursed the Fig-tree that had on it nothing but leaves. Matt. 21:18-20. The presence of the leaves led Him to expect fruit, and when He found none He cursed the tree for its fruitlessness. . . The Application of this incident to Israel is quit simple. Naturally Jesus from ‘leafy profession’ would expect to find fruit on the tree of their National life, and when He found none He cursed them for their Hypocrisy.” (Larkin, 157)
 - Nationally Israel had all the leaves of religious profession, but for three years Jesus came looking for fruit and found none. Therefore, symbolically Jesus curses the fig tree because of its lack of fruit. Consequently, the tree withers away just as the nation will. Just as fig leaves could not provide a suitable covering for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:7) they cannot satisfy Christ's hunger.

Mark 11: 15-21

- **15) And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;**
 - **16) And would not suffer that any man should carry [any] vessel through the temple.**
 - **17) And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.**
 - **18) And the scribes and chief priests heard [it], and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.**
 - **19) And when even was come, he went out of the city.**
 - **20) And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.**
 - **21) And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.**
- Mark 11:15-16—upon arriving at Jerusalem Jesus entered the temple and cast out those who bought and sold in the temple. This was not the first time that Jesus had purified the temple from those seeking to turn the house of God into a house of merchandise.
 - John 2:13-16
 - Mark 11:17—after throwing out the money changes Jesus taught daily in the temple (Luke 19:47) and performed many miracles (Matthew 21:14). Teaching daily in the temple Jesus contrasts what God's intentions were for the temple with what the temple had become.
 - Isaiah 56:7—house of prayer
 - Jeremiah 7:11—den of thieves

- Mark 11:18—when the scribes and chief priest heard his doctrine and saw the healings they took council amongst themselves about how they might destroy him.
 - Matthew 21:15-16—the chief priests and scribes were “sore displeased” with what was transpiring in the temple. So they ask Jesus, “Hearest thou what these say?” To which Jesus once again corrects their incorrect thinking by quoting Psalm 8:2.
 - Luke 19:47-48
- Mark 11:19—when evening was come Jesus once again left the city and returned to Bethany (Matthew 21:17)
- Mark 11:20-21—the next morning they passed by the same fig tree that Jesus had cursed the day before as saw that it had “dried up from the roots.” Peter seemingly unaware of the Spiritual significance of the dried up Fig Tree entreats everyone to remember the previous day’s events.