

June 1st 2008 : Mark 11:12-25: Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?

In Revelation 1: 12-18 John writes:.....

It is a picture of Jesus that we don't often focus on
God the Son in His role **as Judge** of all the earth

We enjoy seeing Him as Saviour Friend Redeemer Healer Servant King
Yet the Scriptures emphasize just as much
His place as Victorious Ruler coming in judgment

- **It is Jesus as God the Judge.....that we see in Mark 11:12-25**
And it's a judgment that begins with the cursing of the fig tree

*"The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. 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. Then He said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again."
And His disciples heard Him say it."*

For many years I have found this story a little strange

That Jesus talked to a tree is a little odd
That he destroyed it for not bearing figs when it wasn't.....seems unfair

- **The clue to what Jesus was really doing however**
- **Is in fact shown by Him talking to a tree**

Jesus the Messiah was also the Prophet of God

And like Prophets of the OT...He used Symbolic actions to proclaim God's Judgments

*I always think of Ezekiel
In chapter 5.....sharp sword and shave
Then he had to weigh....divide into 3*

- **They looked at his actions in the context of the words.....**
other actions performed

We must do the same with Jesus and the cursing of the fig tree

When we do that we find that the particular type of.....**had fruit** when

- However this one had produced a lot of early leaves.....
.but not the fruit....that the leaves promised

It was a blatant case of false advertising

The tree gave the impression that it might have something for the hungry
But in fact it had nothing

Jesus judged it for offering much.....and giving nothing

Then He goes to the Temple in Jerusalem

The temple in all its glory

Giving the impression that this was the place where you could meet with God
Where through the sacrifices and the prayers
People could be fed ..spiritual ...life enhancinglife enabling food

Where those hungry for God could be satisfied But it's season for doing so was now over

Sin and corruption had taken over.....Especially the sin of rejecting the Messiah
The One come to draw all peoples.....to God

- **You may have noticed that I used the word season**

Back near the fig tree Mark tells us.....that it was not the season for figs
He uses a strong Greek word kairos meaning a set time.....religious word

Jesus uses it in Mark 1: 14-15

"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' He said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'"

The time or season for the Temple was now past

It still offered itself as the way to God.....**but it had become** just a show of leaves

- **Jesus enters the Temple**
- **Not as a Reformer.....the cleansing He did lasted how long ?????**

- **BUT as the coming JUDGE**

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And Symbolically He closes the temple down

He disperses the sacrifices.....THE one thing required

He scatters the Temple tax.....The major payment that keeps the temple

And then He quotes the Prophets to explain His actions

Isaiah 56:7 is part of a Messianic Prophecy

It looks forward to a time when all will be welcomed in the Presence of God
The outcasts.....The Gentiles

**The quote: *"Is it not written:
'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?'"***

Then for the words of Judgment He quotes from Jeremiah 7:11

***"Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you?
But I have been watching! Declares the Lord"***

1. To understand this Judgment statement by Jesus

We need to understand the context of Jeremiah chapter 7.

• **Basically the Temple at the time of Jeremiah has deteriorated**

Into a hiding place where people thought that they could find forgiveness
Fellowship with God.....No matter how they acted on the outside

• **Den of robbers is better translated.....Hideout of robbers**

It is not the place where they do their wickedness
But the place they come to hide out in.....after committing their crimes outside

So the chief Priests and leaders.....Could plot and plan the death of the Messiah
And then retreat into the Temple and believe that they were righteously meeting God

Note a couple of other verses from that chapter of Jeremiah 7:14-15; 28-29

**Then after this.....the very next day.... Jesus takes His disciples
where? Back to the fig tree**

**And its Peter who remembers and says:
*"Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!" v21***

• **And note how Jesus answered**

***"Have faith in God", Jesus answered. "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.
Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have
received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold
anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may
forgive your sins."***

We look at that verse.....and immed think that it refers to a believer having faith
But that doesn't fit the context of Jesus words

- **Neither does He talk of any mountain.....But this mountain**
The area known as the Temple Mount

The Jewish leaders were trusting in their Mountain being elevated
Jesus had by Faith in the judgments of God.....declared it out of business

- **Some 30 years later the Romans pulled the Temple apart....brick by**
For the Jew this was disastrous.....They saw the Temple as their only way to God

A later Rabbi wrote:

"From the day on which the Temple was destroyed, the gates of prayer have closed, as it says, "Yea, when I cry for help, He shutteth out my prayer"(Lam 3:8)....Since the day that the Temple was destroyed, a wall of iron divides between Israel and their Father in Heaven."

- **But God the Son replaced that Temple with the Temple of His own body**

And there on the cross He died.....And the veil in the Temple was ripped
And when He rose.....He became for us the Temple
Through Him we now approach directly to God

- **The position from now on says Jesus.....in Mark 11:24-25**
That prayer is open to all ...anyplace...anytime

All that is needed is faith.....Faith that God will now hear you because of me
And a willingness to claim forgiveness.....and then act out that forgiveness to others

- **Now we began.....with the picture of Jesus as judge in Rev 1**
He is no longer judging the Temple.....But His church

And the first church mentioned.....is a church that has many leaves.....works
But no love

We can learn from that church at Ephesus.....and from the fig tree this morning
That what God delights to see in us.....**As indiv.....church**

Not lots of works.....But lots of love.

