

Bible Studies

The Fig Tree

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Read Luke 13v6-9

Jesus told a story about a fig tree, a gardener and the owner of the vineyard in which the fig tree stood.

Many people find a very easy interpretation of this parable by applying it to the Jews. *They are the fig tree that failed to bear fruit, the three years are the three years of Jesus ministry*. Unfortunately nowhere in the whole Old Testament are the Jews likened to a fig tree: a vine, yes, a vineyard, frequently, or even an olive, yes but never a fig tree. So we cannot get away with just blaming the Jews.

Moreover to do so, is demonstrate the same attitude that Jesus identified and criticised in the crowd. *Do you think they were any worse sinners than you are? I tell you unless you repent you too will perish.* (The average Jew of Jesus day, demonstrated a greater responsiveness to God, than the average Christian has throughout most of the church age).

Some people believe the fig tree represented the city of Jerusalem, this makes sense as the fig tree was planted in a vineyard, and the vineyard is a metaphor used of Israel. If so then Jesus spoke this parable against the religious and political leaders in Jerusalem (the capital city). If so this highlights the mercy of the Lord even though the Saducees and some Pharisees failed to recognise who He was He still gave them more time. The end came in AD70 when the city was razed to the ground. If this is the case then this parable in Luke carries the same message as the cursing of the fig tree found in Matthew (21v19 & Mark 11v14). It is important to differentiate between the religious leaders to whom Jesus was a threat and the crowds who followed Him.

Let look at the context.

Read Luke 13v1-5

Is Jesus talking to the nation or to individuals?

Why did the people believe the Galileans had been killed?

What was Jesus reply?

When Jesus warned that they too would perish, what did he mean by perish?

Even today too often we blame someone's afflictions on their sins. Like Job's comforters we say "*you must have sinned very badly for this to have happened*". Jesus is not denying that there can be a connection between sin and strife. He is pointing out that if such is the case, we are all on dodgy ground, "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" Rom 3:23

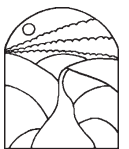
Who is the fig tree?

Who is the owner?

Who is the man who takes care of the fig tree?

This passage is not suggesting that there is disagreement between God the Father and God the Son, or that Jesus displays more mercy than the father. The discussion is method Jesus used to explain His point.

What do you think that Jesus is trying to say in this parable?



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What is the Fertiliser that is dug in around the tree?

I think you could say it is a whole lot of things; the blessing we receive from God, the way He nurtures us and cares for us. It also includes all the teaching that we receive from the Word.

What is the Fruit the Father is looking for?

Again it covers a whole host of things. Responsiveness to God, Righteousness, Works of service, Fruit of the Spirit etc.

Was the fertiliser insufficient?**Was the Care the tree received not enough?****Whose fault was it the tree bore no fruit?****Then why was it that the tree bore no fruit?**

Someone coined the phrase “high maintenance, low productivity Christians” Always needing God to feed them but never bearing any fruit.

How does Hebrews 5v12 compare with this?**What does this parable tell us about Jesus attitude toward such Christians?**

Firstly He is patient, His goal is that we do bear fruit, even if it is only by next year.

Psalm 103:14

Hebrews 5:2

In the end He will deal to the tree.

The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Matthew 3:10

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. John 15:1-2

How quickly do you give up on others when they fail to meet your standards?**How will God deal with the fruitless trees?**

Will Christ cut out the dead wood irretrievably? Never. He will take them through experiences, even trials to bring them back to repentance.

“All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.” Romans 10:21, If this parable speaks of the hardness of Jerusalem with its religious leaders, then its counterpart is found in Romans 11v16-23. Here Paul explains that God can and will regraft branches that were broken off through unbelief

For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Romans 11:21

The empty seats in Churches are full of people who believe that God has given up on them. Jesus is not inclined to give up on people, the problem is generally that people give up on themselves and then use the idea that Jesus has given up on them as an excuse.

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. Mat 12:20

What does this verse mean?**How does it apply to us?**

Where our hearts are repentant, where we respond to Jesus, He will always restore us. There is no sin that is bigger than His mercy. There is no hardness of heart that cannot be broken by the call of His voice.

What should our response be to the message of this Parable?