

## Matthew 21:18-22 - The King's Faith!

Scriptures:

18 Now in the morning, as He returned to the  
city, He was hungry.

G3983 -

Notes:

Why is this account in here? Jesus is days away from the cross. Why should we care about a fig tree that had no fruit?

This account is a lesson in the power of faith. In a short time, Jesus would be gone. He would no longer be there with them. All they would have left is faith.

Faith is not restrained by what we see or know. Faith is only restrained by what we believe and what is true.

'city' = Jerusalem.

'He was hungry.' This reminds us of Christ's humanity – he needed to eat. But we also know that He could go without food – forty days in the wilderness temptation.

Scriptures:

Jeremiah 8:13 –

“I will surely consume them,” says the LORD.

“No grapes shall be on the vine,

Nor figs on the fig tree,  
And the leaf shall fade;  
And the things I have given them shall pass away from them.”

Hebrews 4:13 - And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Galatians 5:22-23a - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control.

19 And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came

to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and

said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you

ever again.” Immediately the fig tree

G1519 + G3588 +  
G165 – into  
eternity.

withered away.

G3583 – to  
become dried up.

Notes:

When a fig tree has leaves it also has fruit. It is possible to pick fruit 9 to 10 months of the year. Take picture of Philip’s fig tree.

Based on the appearance of the tree, it should have also had fruit on it. Jesus was well-acquainted with how the fig tree bore fruit – they were common in Israel. Mark’s gospel tells us that the time for harvesting figs had not come, so figs should have been present. Jesus condemned the fig tree, not for being barren, but for being false.

Jesus’ response to finding the fig tree barren is not a human act of frustration, anger, or vindictiveness. Jesus is using this fig tree as an illustration of the Jewish religious system, including the temple. This was a sign of God’s judgment on Israel for rebellion and disobedience ([Jeremiah 8:13](#)).

This account follows the account of the chief priests and scribes challenging Jesus in the temple as the people are responding to His arrival as the Messiah. The religious establishment of the nation of Israel had the appearance of health and fruitfulness, but the closer you got to it the more you could see it was not bearing spiritual fruit. This might also be a parable about what would come upon Israel in 70 AD.

“Like this green tree, Israel was fruitful in appearance alone. Spiritually they were barren. From a distance the temple looked inspiring, but upon close examination it was fruitless. Inside the activities that surrounded the Passover sacrifice were only hollow rituals offered to God neither in spirit nor in truth.” (O’Donnell, 2013) page 602

The Jews had everything they needed to produce a harvest of righteousness. The barren fig tree is an example of their barrenness. And just as Jesus approached that fig tree looking for fruit, He came to the Jewish religious leaders looking for the fruit of righteousness. And finding none, their fate was to wither away.

This is not a lesson just for the Jews. Every church must examine itself for the fruits of righteousness. Is there an emphasis on religion or upon Jesus? Is there holiness, repentance, truth, and growing faith? Is there love and forgiveness? Is grace and mercy given and received? It is not enough to look like a healthy church, there must be fruits of righteousness.

“...the green leaves of your religious practices cannot cover a fruitless life.” (O’Donnell, 2013) page 604

And what is true for the church is true for every believer. Going to church and partaking in Communion or being baptized or serving in or giving to the church is not the fruit of righteousness. All of that is religion. We might appear fruitful to those around us but God sees the real us ([Hebrews 4:13](#)).

The fruit of righteousness is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is dwelling within you. If He is there will be fruit, spiritual fruit ([Galatians 5:22-23a](#)).

<sup>20</sup> And when the disciples saw *it*,

they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree

G2296 – to be  
very amazed.

wither away so soon?”

Scriptures:

Matthew 17:20 - So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

James 1:6-7 - But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

21 So Jesus answered and said to them,

"Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith

G4102 – "trust (faith) n. — strong confidence in, and reliance upon, someone or something; often with the object of trust understood."

and do not doubt, you will not only do what

G1252 – be uncertain.

was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to

this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into

the sea,' it will be done.

G1096 -

Notes:

'...mountain...be moved' – There is a problem with interpreting this literally. At no time since Jesus said this has anyone moved a physical mountain, or even a hill, by their faith. So, what does Jesus mean by this?

It is followed immediately with instructions on prayer.

Scriptures:

22 And whatever things you ask in prayer,

G4335 -

Notes:

The Bible teaches that God does not answer prayers that violate His own nature or will or are not in harmony with His perfect plan for you and the world around you.

believing, you will receive.”

G4100 -

G2983 -

[Top of section](#) [Top of chapter](#)