



CAPITOL COMMISSION

The Lesson of Priority: The Power of Prayer

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Matthew 21:18-22 But as He was returning early into the city, He was hungry. And seeing one fig tree on the way, He went up to it, and He found nothing in it except leaves only, and He said to it, "May there never be fruit on you forever." And immediately the fig tree was dried up. And seeing, the disciples marveled saying, "How was the fig tree dried up immediately?" And Jesus answering said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do that of the fig tree, but also if you may say to this mountain, 'Be removed and cast into the sea,' It shall happen. And all things, whatever ye may ask in prayer believing, ye yourselves shall receive."

"MEN OF FAITH, OPERATING THROUGH FAITH, ARE ABLE TO TAKE HOLD OF THE POWER OF GOD FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE PURPOSE OF GOD, THAT PURPOSE BEING THE SETTING UP OF HIS KINGDOM."

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN

How is this tied to the temple cleansing? Why was Jesus hungry as he returned to Jerusalem early in the morning? What is the symbolism of this lone fig tree? Has Jesus ever done a destructive miracle like this previously in His ministry? Why was lack of fruit answered by Christ with permanent fruitlessness? Is lack of spiritual fruit the same as being cursed? Why are the disciples only amazed at the swiftness of the withering of the fig tree? How does faith tie in to the symbolism of the fruitless withered tree? What is the one thing Jesus wants His disciples to learn from this unusual miracle?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- > MARCH 4: DR. JEFF GINN LAST YEAR'S PASTORS' DAY SPEAKER LEADING OUR STUDY
- > MARCH 11: MATTHEW 21:23-32 JEWISH LEADERS QUESTION THE AUTHORITY OF THE KING
- > APRIL 21-23 VETO SESSION: MATTHEW 21:33-46 THE LEADER'S CHOICE: BROKEN OR CRUSHED?

Jesus is unfolding the final week of His incarnation. All has been planned from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8), and Jesus will accomplish every detail with

precision. Monday, He checked out the tree, and drove out those buying and selling from the temple court saying, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a House of Prayer', but you are making it a den of robbers." When the temple was first built and dedicated by Solomon, he had prayed, "May You hear the supplications of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place, Hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and when You hear, forgive" (2 Chron. 6:21). Five times that prayer is repeated and the answer is given by God to Solomon that night, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14). Isaiah had prophesied long before that the temple would be "called a house of prayer for all nations" (56:7). On this final trip to His house of prayer, Jesus reminds His future leaders of the absolute necessity of the priority of prayer and they never forget it (Acts 6:4).

"THEREFORE I EXHORT FIRST OF ALL THAT SUPPLICATIONS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSIONS, AND GIVING OF THANKS BE MADE FOR ALL MEN, FOR KINGS AND ALL WHO ARE IN AUTHORITY, THAT WE MAY LEAD A QUIET AND PEACEABLE LIFE IN ALL GODLINESS AND REVERENCE, FOR THIS IS GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD OUR SAVIOR, WHO DESIRES ALL MEN TO BE SAVED AND TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH." I TIMOTHY 2:1-4

I. THE WITHERING TREE MT. 21:18-19

Jesus and His disciples may have slept under the stars Sunday evening because "as He was returning early into the city, He was hungry." It must have cheered His heart in "seeing one fig tree on the way." So, "He went up to it, and He found nothing in it except leaves only." This deceitful tree is like the hypocritical leaders in having an outward show of dedication to God without any fruit. As King, His justice was moved against such. Jesus

BIBLE STUDIES

THURSDAY @ 6:30AM—INTERCESSORY PRAYER – GAB 3RD FLOOR WEST CONFERENCE ROOM
THURSDAY @ 7:00AM—BIBLE STUDY – GAB 3RD FLOOR WEST CONFERENCE ROOM
THURSDAY @ 12:00NOON—BIBLE STUDY – WYTESTONE PLAZA AT 8TH & MAIN 2ND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

Virginia

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then said, “*May there never be fruit on you forever.*” The lack of fruit was made permanent by the Creator.

“JUST AS FRUITFULNESS IS ALWAYS EVIDENCE OF SALVATION AND GODLINESS, BARRENNESS IS ALWAYS EVIDENCE OF LOSTNESS AND UNGODLINESS.”

JOHN MACARTHUR

II. THE WONDERING DISCIPLES MT. 21:20

Mark tells us that it was the next day, (Tuesday), that Peter said, “*Rabbi, Behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered*” (11:21). And “*the disciples marveled, saying, ‘How was the fig tree dried up immediately?’*” When it’s purpose for existence was removed, it ceased to exist. Only two passages in Scripture give us the fruit God desires: One speaks of soul winning (Prov. 11:30), and the other lists “*the fruit of the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:22-23) as “*love, joy peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law.*”

“BELIEVING PRAYER IS THE SHADOW OF THE COMING BLESSING”

C. H. SPURGEON

III. THE WHELMING PRAYER MT. 21:21-22

The wonder of the disciples is met with the eighteenth “*Amen I say to you,*” found in Matthew and Jesus is emphasizing the necessity of unshakable faith. Such faith must rest on the bedrock of the power of God and the promise of Scripture. “*If you have faith and do not doubt,*” Jesus said is the necessary means of obtaining answers to aggressive prayer. The word for “*if*” assumes the possibility of the condition and “*faith*” is the general word for “*believe.*” This promise is addressing unbelief, or “*doubt*” in either the ability or willingness of God to answer the request. The word “*doubt*” is used nineteen times in the New Testament and seven times it clearly means “*doubt,*” but the other

times it is translated “*discern, dispute, distinguish, decide or discriminate.*” The words of Christ are even clearer in Mark 11:22-23 “*Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him.*” James 1:5-6 uses the same word, “*But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*” Jesus continued regarding the prayer of faith, “*you will not only do that of the fig tree, but also if you may say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and cast into the sea,’ it shall happen.*” The word for “*it shall happen,*” is the same word used in the translation of Christ’s day for the creation account in Genesis when God said “*Let there be light, and there was light.*” God decided it as the ultimate cause and therefore it had to occur! Finally, Jesus gives a unilateral promise, “*And all things, whatever you may ask in prayer believing, ye yourselves shall receive.*” The door is open to all types of requests, “*all things, whatever*” from the small fig tree to the greatest mountain, God promises to give what is asked “*in prayer believing.*” There is also promise in prayer with others, “*ye yourselves*” is plural. We must ask according to His will (I John 5:14-15) and in His name.

“MOST ASSUREDLY, I SAY TO YOU, HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME, THE WORKS THAT I DO HE WILL DO ALSO; AND GREATER WORKS THAN THESE SHALL HE DO, BECAUSE I GO TO MY FATHER. AND WHATEVER YOU ASK IN MY NAME, THAT I WILL DO, THAT THE FATHER MAY BE GLORIFIED IN THE SON. IF YOU ASK ANYTHING IN MY NAME, I WILL DO IT”

JOHN 14:12-14

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Are you seeking God in prayer for yourself and our nation?
- 2) Is your life barren or unfruitful due to lack of prayer for forgiveness or turning from sin?
- 3) Do you pray according to God’s will, and in Christ’s all powerful name, trusting God for the impossible?