

Episode #847 Matthew 21 Part 3-Fruit Out of Season

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord had come into Jerusalem for the Passover feast, and the people had welcomed Him in the glorious triumphal entry. Now, the Lord enters into the temple to cleanse it.

III. Zeal in the Temple. Matthew 21:12-17.

B. Verse 15. “Chief priests” are arch priests, not “first priests,” as it sometimes is.

1. “Wonderful things” occurs only here, an hapax legomenon. This is the last major mention of miracles He did in Matthew, and the final witness to these religious leaders. The Lord did not just usurp their authority: He claimed authority and backed it up by working these miracles that the Messiah was supposed to work according to the Old Testament. The reason the Sanhedrin was formed was supposed to be to recognize the Messiah when He came. The Lord has now given them proof positive that He is Messiah. Any honest assessment would have concluded that He did not just claim to be the Messiah, but that He was the Messiah. They could not provide a single miracle to prove their authority over Him! They were the usurpers and rebels against God. Like usurpers, they tried to remove the One with true authority.
2. The “Hosanna” of the triumphal entry is now proclaimed in the temple.
3. “Son of David” clearly displayed their belief that He was the Messiah, more than just a prophet. These children could see the truth of the signs that their leaders rejected. As Christ said, the vineyard ought to be taken from them and given to others who would yield to their Lord its fruit in season!
4. “Indignant” is the same word as how the ten felt toward the two brothers who tried to elbow them out in chapter 20. They were in charge of the marketplace in the temple, and made a pretty penny from it. Thus their disgust.

C. Verse 16. The fifth of six times that the Lord questions the religious leaders if they have never read the Scriptures in Matthew. These supposed experts failed again and again to apply the things they read to the real world. Their “expertise” in the things of God was an illusion, for they showed no true understand of what God meant at all. He quoted from Psalm 8:2. What the Lord didn’t say but strongly implied is that David says this in light of the LORD’s enemies, telling them that they are the enemies! This emphasizes the youth of some of these children, though probably there were some older ones among them. “Perfected” or prepared, to make complete by preparation.

D. Verse 17. He was not leaving Jerusalem, but merely going out to His lodging in Bethany, where He stayed this whole week until His arrest. Bethany was near Jerusalem at the Mount of Olives, a suburb, means “House of Misery.” The home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, with whom He probably spent some of this time. It was also the home of Simon the leper; see chapter 26. It was about 9,000 feet or less than 2 miles from Jerusalem. Luke 21:37 says he lodged in the mount of Olives, where we know the Garden of Gethsemane was. He and His disciples slept outdoors there, perhaps on the grounds owned by Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. This may well explain why He went to the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His arrest. It could be this was their final stop and where they were planning to spend the night.

IV. The Withered Fig Tree. Matthew 21:18-22.

- A. Verse 18. This means early in the morning, at daybreak. He was famished.
- B. Verse 19. This passage has inspired many sermons on Christians who make a great outward show but have no fruit to show for it. But this is not the lesson taught here. Mark 11:12-14 tell us that the time of figs was not yet. The tree can hardly be blamed, then! The lesson has to do with fruit out of season. Fruit in season is normal and to be expected, whereas fruit out of season is abnormal, and while it may appear, it is not right to expect it out of a tree. Psalm 1:3 speaks of the blessed man who brings forth fruit in season, yet here we have the Lord expecting fruit ahead of time and pronouncing a curse on a fig tree when He found none, even though Mark tells us the time of figs was not yet. Read Sellers' "Fruit Ahead of Season."

<https://seedandbread.org/download/WOT/W1801-Vol.%20V,%20No.%201.pdf>

- C. It is only required of stewards that they be found faithful, not that they be popular.

V. Conclusion: The religious leaders asked Him to rebuke those who named Him as Messiah, yet He pointed out that children say the truth to silence God's enemies. Do we speak the truth about Jesus Christ? Or do we stubbornly reject it, like the failed religious leaders of the Lord's day? The Lord cursed a fig tree for not bearing fruit out of season. Are we willing to acknowledge the Lord and His truth when it is not popular among most to do so? Will we bear fruit out of season?