

## Study Notes on the Parable of the Barren Fig tree: -

- Jesus introduces the Parable of the Barren Fig tree with the teaching that if we don't repent of our sins, we shall all perish.

Luke 13:1 – 5: - "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

- This leads us to understand that repentance must bring forth FRUITS worthy of repentance itself.

Matthew 3:7 & 8: - "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

Acts 26:19 & 20: - "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7:10 & 11: - "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

- Jesus then tells the Parable of the Barren Fig tree, in which a certain man had planted a fig tree in his vineyard, and for three years, he came seeking fruit upon its branches. And for three years the owner found no fruit at all. The owner asks the vine-dresser to cut down this barren tree, for why should it occupy the ground. The vine-dresser tells the owner not to do that yet, but to wait for a year, in which he would dig around the tree, and manure it, to see if it produces fruit. And if after one year the fig tree does not produce fruit, then it shall be cut down. Please observe the fact, that the Parable does not inform us what is the eventual fate of this fig tree.

Luke 13:6 – 9: - "He spake also this parable; A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung *it*: And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down."

**NOTE:** - This Parable of the Barren Fig Tree is associated with other similar Parables that deal with vineyards and vines etc. – see Matthew 21:33 – 41; John 15:1 – 8.

- Figs/fig trees and Vines are linked together throughout the Scriptures. Here are a few examples.

1<sup>st</sup> Kings 4:25: - "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon."

Joel 1:12: - "The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, *even* all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men."

Joel 2:22: - “Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.”

Micah 4:4: - “But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make *them* afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken *it*.”

**NOTE:** - The Vineyard is a general description of a place where vines, and other fruits trees grow, such as, Figs, Grapes and Pomegranates.

- A certain man planted a fig tree in his vineyard – Luke 13:6. The nation of Israel is represented in the Scriptures as being God’s Vineyard that He had transplanted from Egypt, and planted in the land of Israel. He had nourished and blessed it, and was seeking godly fruit from it. Unfortunately, He did not obtain the fruits of righteousness at all. Rather, the very opposite – the fruit of unrighteousness. Who is that certain man?

Psalms 80:7 – 19: - “Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst *room* before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself. *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

**NOTE:** - The vineyard, is the Work, and Possession of that certain man – the Lord of Hosts.

Isaiah 5:1 – 7: - “Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; *and* break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts *is* the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.”

**NOTE:** - Both the owner and the worker of the vineyard is the Lord of Hosts. The Divinity of both is shown by the use of the title – “The Lord God of Hosts”, and “The Lord of Hosts.”

- The owner of the Vineyard, [the Lord of Hosts], came seeking fruit upon this fig tree and found none - Luke 13:6. An incident in Jesus’ life runs parallel with this parable. Jesus was hungry and He came across a fig tree that was sprouting plenty of leaves, and when He examined it, He found only leaves upon it. There was no fruit upon it at all. He then cursed the tree so that it would never produce fruit again! Jesus’ words produced immediate results – the fig tree dried up immediately!

Matthew 21:18 – 20: - “Now in the morning as he returned – into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit

grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw *it*, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!”

- What kind of fruits does God want to see which are worthy of repentance? The following passages inform us concerning the spiritual fruit God wants to see manifested in our lives.

John 15:4 – 8: - “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”

Philippians 1:9 – 11: - “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”

Colossians 1:5 & 6 & 10: - “For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the grace of God in truth: ... That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

James 3:12 & 13, 17 & 18: - “Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. ... But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

- Who is the Vine-dresser? Jesus’ Parable concerning the Vine, Branches and Fruit Bearing reveals that God the Father is the Husbandman or the Vine-dresser.

John 15:1: - “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman<sup>1</sup>.”

- The three years that the owner of the Vineyard sought fruit from the barren fig tree, has a parallel with the length of Jesus’ ministry to the Jewish nation. Jesus was ministering to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and not to the Gentiles in His ministry. The length of Jesus’ ministry as the Messiah equates closely with the time period referred to in this Parable.

Matthew 15:24: - “But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Jesus attended three annual Passover Feasts during His public ministry, and at the last one, He was crucified. Thus His ministry to the Hebrew people covered a period of over three years in its length.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The word “Husbandman” is defined as: -

“HUSBANDMAN, n. A farmer; a cultivator or tiller of the ground; one who labors in tillage. In America, where men generally own the land on which they labor, the proprietor of a farm is also a laborer or husbandman; but the word includes the lessee and the owner. 1. The master of a family. [Not in use in America.]” – Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary.

John 2:13: - “And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”

John 6:4: - “And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.”

John 11:55 – 57: - “And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show *it*, that they might take him.”

- The vineyard is jointly owned by both the Father and the Son of God. The Vine-dresser's asking for more time to tend to the fig tree and give it a last chance to produce fruit, represents the truth, that the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ would send prophets and apostles to the people of Israel, to call them to repentance. Jesus Himself was sent by the Father to call sinners to repentance.

Matthew 4:17: - “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Matthew 9:13: - “But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

- Jesus commanded the apostles to start their preaching of the gospel of Christ, at Jerusalem, and Judea and Samaria, before going to the rest of the world. This was to give them a final call to repentance and accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

Matthew 23:34 – 36: - “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify; and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.”

Luke 24:45 – 47: - “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Acts 1:6 – 8: - “When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

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<sup>2</sup> The Passover was celebrated in the Northern Hemisphere's Spring – that is in March – April every year. Jesus' public ministry commenced when He was baptized by John the Baptist, being publicly acknowledged by His Father's Voice from Heaven, as the Son of God; and He was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah – Matthew 3:15 – 17. He then was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, to experience 40 days of being tempted by the Devil – Matthew 4:1 – 11; Luke 4:1 – 13. He then returned from the wilderness in the power of the Holy Spirit into Galilee, teaching in the Jewish synagogues in the region of Galilee – Luke 4:14 & 15. He then went to Nazareth and proclaimed Himself to be the Messiah – the Lord's Anointed One – Luke 4:16 – 30. All these events at the start of His public ministry would have occurred over a period of some months, **before** Jesus celebrated His first Passover in Jerusalem as the Messiah as recorded in John 2:13. Thus Jesus' public ministry took place approximately over a period of 3½ years.

- Jesus made no comment about the ultimate fate of the fig tree in the Parable. This is because He had some time left in His ministry to the Jewish nation – that gave some hope that they might repent of their hypocrisy and hardness of heart, and accept Him as the Messiah. But, we know that they ultimately rejected Christ. And God has rejected the nation of Israel as being His special covenant people, because of their rejection of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 21:43 – 45: - “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.”

Matthew 23:37 – 39: - “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 2:14 – 16: - “For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.”

**NOTE:** - The Parable of the Barren fig tree, represents the Love of both the Father and the Son – the Lord of Hosts, having mercy and compassion upon His vineyard [Israel]. It also is a plea for all to come to repentance and bear the FRUITS of genuine repentance in our lives.

## WHAT ABOUT THE GENTILES THEN?

- How does the fact concerning the Lord’s rejection of the Children of Israel, as His special covenant people, relate to the Gentiles? The following New Testament passages answer this question. The Gentiles are to also produce the fruits worthy of the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 21:43: - “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

The Gentiles have been grafted into the natural Hebrew Olive tree by faith, so they need to be humble and fear before God. The reason for this is because if they don’t continue in God’s goodness, they can also be broken off from the Hebrew Olive Tree.

Romans 11:17 – 22: - “And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

**QUESTION: - How do we manifest Fruits of Repentance?**

**ANSWER: - By the Holy Spirit working in our lives.**

- What we need above all else, is to allow the Holy Spirit to have control of our lives, so that we can have the fruits of the Spirit manifested within our lives. In other words, to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, and worthy of walking after the Spirit. We shall have the righteousness of the Law of God fulfilled within our lives.

Romans 8:1 – 4: - “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Galatians 5:22 – 24: - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

Ephesians 5:9: - “(For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)”

**NOTE: - The Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are all working together for the salvation of humanity. God’s compassion, mercy, and longsuffering are all demonstrated within this parable, so as to give hope to the repentant believer, and heavenly promises to the diligent reformer!**

- A good place to end this study on is, that we need to have all the Christian virtues listed in Peter’s Ladder being manifested within our lives, so that we will be fruitful; and at last have an entrance into the Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:3 – 11: - “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

**AMEN.**