

LESSON OF THE BLIGHTED FIG TREE

"Have faith in God." – Mark 11:22.

AS JESUS and His Apostles passed along the road from Bethany to Jerusalem preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, they had seen, en route, a fig tree. Our Lord, being hungry, went to the tree, seeking fruit thereon; for the time of figs was not yet past. But He found that the tree was barren. Then He pronounced a curse, a blight, upon the tree. The next day as they passed by, Jesus' disciples noticed that the fig tree had withered from the roots. Then Peter said, "Master, behold, the fig tree which Thou cursedst is withered away!" Jesus answered, "Have faith in God." (Mark 11:13,14,20-22.) Then He called their attention to the fact that it was not merely Himself who had blighted the tree, but that the Heavenly Father was to be recognized as behind Him in this. He ascribed always the honor to the Father. He was merely the Finger of God. "The works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me." "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." – John 5:36; 14:10.

REAL OBJECT OF JESUS' MIRACULOUS WORKS

Some of the people of that time, as now, had malignant power; and Jesus' act might have been attributed to that source. So He would direct the minds of His disciples to the things that He did as being always of God – thus differentiating His power from that of Satan. Some might wonder that God would take notice of a tree because it was not bearing fruit. But Jesus was not an ordinary person. His course was not an example for us to go along the street and, seeing an unfruitful tree, say, "Cursed be this tree; it shall not bear any more fruit forever!" Should we adopt this course, we might be finding fault with trees and with everything else. But our Lord was especially sent

of God. He was accustomed to do good as He went about. He healed the people and taught them, giving them forceful object lessons.

It was necessary that the disciples of Jesus be thoroughly convinced that He was sent of God before they could have developed in them the needful faith. They must continue this faith, consecrating their hearts and lives to God, before they would be ready for the Pentecostal blessing. Hence many of our Lord's works were of an outward, visible kind, intended for the enlightenment of His followers, for the establishment of His Messiahship, and for the manifestation of His future work for the world. Of His conversion of the water into wine, it is written, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His [coming] glory; and His disciples believed on Him." – John 2:11.

St. Paul points out that the natural man cannot see the deep things of God because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14.) Hence there was a necessity for teaching of this outward, material kind to Jesus' disciples; for they were but natural men. Although they recognized Him as the Messiah, they did not realize this clearly at first. Jesus asked them on one occasion, "Whom say ye that I am?" And Simon Peter answered. "Thou art The Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona! for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven." (Matthew 16:15-17.) It was a grand course of education, then, that Jesus gave His Apostles.

And so as regarded the fig tree, the miracles of healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons, feeding the thousands, etc., it was not so important that certain persons be physically healed at that time, nor so important that the multitudes should not go hungry over night, nor that Divine displeasure should be visited upon an unintelligent tree. But it was important that the disciples should get the needed lessons and see that the Lord's power could and would be exercised on their behalf; that, with the realization that the Lord was

on their side and would guide and protect them, they would be able to exercise great confidence. It was important also that we should have this assurance of our Father's love and care over us as His children. It was important that our Lord's coming glory during His Kingdom Reign should be illustrated and shown forth. [R5920 : page 205]

THE FIG TREE A SYMBOL

There is a further thought as regards the fig tree. We believe that the fig tree is a representation of the Jewish nation. This nation had been God's fig tree. In due time God sent His Son seeking fruit from that nation, but He found none. The tree was barren. He found a few faithful individuals, but nationally nothing – *no fruit* as a nation; and the blight, or curse, of the Lord came upon the Jewish nation because with all their privileges and advantages they had not brought forth the proper fruits. Our Lord Jesus, five days before His crucifixion, pronounced their House desolate. "Behold, your House is left unto you desolate!" – Matt. 23:38,39; Luke 13:34,35.

Ever since that time, the Jews have been desolate and blighted as a nation. But there is a promise that this blighted fig tree shall again become a living tree – a living nation. They are to be restored to Divine favor, after their "double" of disfavor has been fulfilled. [See STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, Vol. 2, pp. 217-230.] This "double" we understand has been accomplished, and this is the meaning of the great awakening now among the Jews, and of the great Zionist movement.

Speaking of the time of His Second Advent and of the nearness then of the Kingdom, Jesus said, "Learn a parable of the fig tree: When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near; so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors." (Mark 13:28,29.) The Jewish nation has been having a long winter time. But the spring time of this nation is now at hand. We already see this fig

tree putting forth leaves. So we see that the lesson of the blighted fig tree was not merely a lesson for an hour, but a lesson to all the Lord's people from that time even until now.

