

MATTHEW:
THE GOSPEL
OF THE KINGDOM

The Fig Tree Cursed

Matthew 21:18-22

Introduction

- chs.21-25 Cast dramatically as the King who will be judged preemptively making judgement.

The Fig Tree Cursed (18-19)

In the morning, as he was returning to the city,
he became *hungry*.

And seeing a fig tree by the wayside,
he went to it
and found *nothing* on it but *only leaves*.

And he said to it,
“May no fruit *ever* come from you again!”

And the fig tree *withered* at once.

The Lesson Taught (20-22)

When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying,
“How did the fig tree wither at once?”

And Jesus answered them,
“Truly, I say to you,
if you have faith and do not doubt,
you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree,
but even if you say to this mountain,
Be taken up and thrown into the sea, it will happen.

And whatever you ask in prayer,
you will receive,
if you have faith.”

Application

- The place of prayer and faith in accomplishing the things of the Kingdom.
- Is there something else going on here?
 - “This apparently pointless act of power is generally understood from its context (and from the way Mark interweaves it with the story of the temple incident) to have a symbolic purpose.” (Carson)
- If this is so, “what does this mean?” What does it symbolize?
 - Here I must admit a degree of conjecture rooted in context, nevertheless a strong case to be made that sometime more is going on than what lies on the surface.

The Cursing as a Prophetic Visual Parable

- Visual parable (contrasted to verbal)
- Prophetic (what is to come, particularly in judgment)
- Why this perspective? (deep themes from OT Scriptures)
 1. The immediate **context**
 2. The following **content**
 3. The **fig tree** as a symbol
 4. The **fruit/fruitlessness** as a symbol
 5. **Leaves without fruit** as a symbol
 6. **Withering** as a symbol
 7. The **mountain** as a symbol
- If these are significant in this way, then it is Jesus' way of foreshadowing what he will make explicit in the coming chapters.

Application

- The unfounded and devastatingly cruel error of anti-Semitism
- The actual warning against *all* fruitless forms of external spirituality
- Are you merely a leaf-tree or a leafy fruit-tree?
