

# UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF THE FIG TREE EPISODE



**(Mark 11: 13-15; Matt. 21:18-22)**

A week before His death, YAHSHUA rode on a young colt as the ultimate expression of His kingship or messiahship. The people, in return, cried out with voices of happiness, they spread their garments on the road, and others [scattered a layer of] leafy branches, and those who went before and those who followed cried out, Hosanna! Praised and blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord; Praised and blessed in the name of the Lord is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest (Mark 11: 7-9)! What was going on here? Had the people accepted Him as their Messiah? Of course, not. The people wanted Him to overthrow the Romans and become their physical king. They were not interested in the spiritual aspect of His Messiahship. That week was very

important for YAHSHUA. In a few days, His ministry as all knew it, would come to an end. He entered Jerusalem riding on a colt fulfilling Zachariah's prophecy of long ago: Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zach. 9: 9-10). Slowly, He rode to Jerusalem, the city that kills their prophets, and soon, He too, was going to face His death at their demand. He was their rejected and condemned King, riding on to face His death in His city- Jerusalem, the city of the great King. A lot was happening at that time while He was fulfilling the last things before His death without the people around Him knowing or perceiving them.

When He arrived in Jerusalem, He entered the temple and when He had looked around, surveying and observing everything, as it was already late, He went out to Bethany together with the Twelve [apostles]. That happened, according to the Restored Vision book by A.E. Ware, on Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup> of April A.D 33, four days before His death. We read in the book of Mark that on the day following, when they had come away from Bethany, He was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree with leaves, He went to see if He could find any [fruit] on it. But when He came up to it, He found nothing but leaves, for the fig season had not yet come. He said to it, No one ever again shall eat fruit from you (Mark 11:11-14). What was happening here that the apostles could not perceive was that YAHSHUA was pronouncing judgment against the nation of Israel. The fig tree, symbolizing the nation of Israel, failed greatly for not bearing fruit to satisfy the hunger of its Creator. A thing to consider here is that when a fig tree's leaves appear, there appear also its fruits. It speaks of Israel, who had their Messiah for thirty-three years among them, three of them were ministering by teaching, healing many who came to Him for healing and delivering those who were possessed with demons. They were spiritually fed but there was no fruit to show that they had accepted YAHSHUA as their Messiah. The fig tree represents Israel in the fact that the nation was indifferent to Him as their Messiah and continued rejecting Him to the point of taking part in His death.

Coming to Jerusalem the next day, He went back to the temple [area, the porches, and courts] and began to drive out those who sold and bought in the temple area, and He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who dealt in doves. And He would not permit anyone to carry any household equipment through the temple enclosure. And He taught and said to

them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have turned it into a den of robbers. When evening came on, He and His disciples, as accustomed, went out of the city (Mark 11:15-17,19). In the cursing of the fig tree, and in the denouncing of Israel's lack of respect for the temple and its spiritual purpose, YAHSHUA was denouncing Israel's spiritual condition. The temple was built to be the house of prayer, where the presence of YAHWEH would abide in the Holy of Holies. (II Chronicle 6: 1-5). However, Israel profaned the house of prayer by using it also for business. YAHSHUA, with zeal for the purpose for which that house stood, echoed the words of Solomon at the completion of the temple many years past.

In the parable of a fig tree concerning the nation of Israel, the Lord YAHSHUA illustrates His point. He starts by saying, A certain man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but did not find [any]. So he said to the vinedresser, See here! For these three years, I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and I find none. Cut it down! Why should it continue also to use up the ground, [ to deplete the soil, intercept the sun, and take up room]? But he replied to him, Leave it alone, sir, this one more year, till I dig around it and put manure [on the soil]. Then perhaps it will bear fruit after this; but if not, you can cut it down and out (Luke 13: 7-9). In this parable, the vineyard which symbolizes Jerusalem, where the fig tree was planted, the owner (God) was willing to cut it down. But the servant- the symbol of the Holy Spirit interceding for Israel, pleaded with Him to give it one more year for him to work the fig tree out to produce fruit. Then He said, "but if not, you can cut it down and out." This parable illustrates the frame of the time of YAHSHUA'S ministry among the Jewish nation. For three years He ministered to them through teaching, healings, and miracles, but no fruit was seen as a result of His effort to save the nation. Another year was given and it comes to pass that nothing had changed when He uttered cursing over the nation of Israel through the cursing of the barren fig tree and the renouncing of Israel's way of worship. Israel was then cut out and became spiritually dead, as the fig tree shriveled up at the condemning words of YAHSHUA.

It was in the period of that year that YAHSHUA would lay down His life as an atoning Sacrifice for the sins of that nation and the worlds. That year of clemency given to the nation of Israel was a year of opportunity for Israel to repent and avoid destruction which came seventy years later under the cruelty of the

Romans. On His way to His crucifixion, as a great multitude accompanied Him, including women who bewailed and lamented Him, He uttered these words against the nation: Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming during which they will say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the breasts that have never nursed. Then they begin to say to the mountain, Fall on us! And to the hills, Cover us! For if they do these things when the timber is green (on time of peace) what will happen when it is dry? (Luke 23:27-31).

We all have the knowledge of what happened to the nation of Israel or Jerusalem, when the Romans encircled it, allowing many to die of hunger before they burned the city on the year 70 A.D. So severe was the punishment, but deserving for having they rejected YAHSHUA'S message and warnings, and His messiahship by condemning Him to the worst form of death –with a cursed death of crucifixion, knowingly well the meaning of this way of death, that the nation was destroyed and the people were taken captives all over the world, losing their identity after many years away from their land. The temple which they had profaned, was also destroyed, leaving only remains of it, as YAHSHUA prophesized in Matthews 24:2: Do you see all these? Truly I tell you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. He was referring to the temple, as the disciples called His attention to its beauty. Luke registers YAHSHUA'S most solemn call of repentance to the Jewish nation: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who continue to kill the prophets and to stone those who are sent to you! How often I have desired and yearned to gather your children together [around me], as a hen her young under her wings, but you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken, And I tell you, you will not see Me again until the time comes when you shall say Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! (Luke 13:34-35). Israel was cut out of God's plan for a time, but not permanently. A bright future of restoration awaits the nation when the stump- the holy seed [the elect remnant of Israel] will sprout into life. These are the elect remnant and the substance of Israel. Then the "the fig tree" will blossom and produce fruit under the care of the True Vinedresser. Cleansed and pruned, Israel will dwell in YAHSHUA and will bear fruit, showing to be His true followers!