

~ **OPERATION FIG TREE – FIRE AND FURY** ~

GOD'S RED LINE IN THE SAND

Matthew 21:18-22 = Continued from last Sunday

INTRODUCTION: Jesus is just a few days away from His crucifixion and culmination of His earthly ministry. In rapid succession events are unfolding. Jesus has ridden into Jerusalem demonstrating His Kingship in fulfillment of OT prophecies. He next went into the Temple and exposed the corruption of its leadership by casting out the money-changers and merchants. Now He stands in front of a fig tree and curses it because it was devoid of any fruit and the fig tree withers. We saw last time that Jesus cleansed the Temple during Passover season at the beginning of His public ministry, and now, **three years later** during Passover season, He is forced to cleanse it again. The parable Jesus told in Luke 13:6-9 gives us a clear indication that the fig tree is representative of Israel and its corrupt religious leadership.

*"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, **for three years** I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down'"*

Jesus had come repeatedly looking for fruit on His fig tree (Israel) but found none. The persistently barren fig tree is about to be cut down – Let it be a warning to each who does not fulfill the purpose to which the LORD has created us and then re-created us in Christ Jesus.

A. THE ILLUSTRATION ENACTED

1. THE EXPECTATION OF OUR LORD

The presence of leaves suggests the presence of fruit

2. THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF OUR LORD

Christ was not impressed with the leaves on the tree, the mere promise of fruit,
He hungered for the reality of fruit.

3. THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF OUR LORD

Jesus will use His disappointment as an opportunity – a teaching moment – and so
He curses the fig tree as an enacted parable to warn and to encourage.

B. THE INTERPRETATION ENVISIONED

1. BY THE SCRIPTURES TO THE NATION

The O.T. prophets frequently used the fig tree and its fruit as images of Israel's relationship to God and her experiences of His judgment.

2. BY THE _____ TO THE DISCIPLES

A. THE DISCIPLES' _____ AND AMAZEMENT

B. THE LORD'S _____ AND ENCOURAGEMENT

C. THE _____ IMPLIED