

Authority

Isaiah 5:1-8; Matthew 21:18-27 / Isaiah 40:1-31

I. The Religious Structure in Jesus' Day Did Not Work

A. Jesus was hungry and the figs weren't there for Him. Now in the morning as he returned into the city, **he hungered.** (MATTHEW 21:18)

B. Since the early figs come with or before the spring leaves something was dreadfully wrong with a tree and Jesus predicted the tree's future. 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. (MATTHEW 21:19)

C. From Eden onward, gardens have symbolized the place in which God works with His people; Isaiah spoke of the final reform to come in the day of the Messiah. *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:*** (ISAIAH 5:4-5)

D. Scripture begins and ends in the GARDEN OF GOD. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that **overcometh** will ***I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*** (REVELATION 2:7)

E. The disciples were amazed at the power of Jesus' words. And when **the disciples saw it, they marveled,** saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! (MATTHEW 21:20)

F. Believers should not be surprised at the power of the Word. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? ***All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*** (ISAIAH 40:6-8)

II. Faith Would Have Produced Fruit

A. People practicing faith [in the efficacy of prayer] do what is impossible for others. Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, ***If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.*** (MATTHEW 21:21)

B. Israel was flourishing but fruitless when all God's people had to do was ask. And all things, ***whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*** (MATTHEW 21:22)

C. Confidence in the Sovereign God is a distinguishing mark of genuine believers which leads to great things. ***Ask, and it shall be given you;*** seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: (MATTHEW 7:7) ***If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*** (MATTHEW 7:11)

III. In Whom Do You Place Your Trust?

A. The religious leaders asked a different kind of question revealing their confidence in certification rather than grace. And when he was come into the temple, **the chief priests and the elders** of the people **came unto him** as he was teaching, and said, **By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?** (MATTHEW 21:23)

B. Jesus turned the question back on the officials; what gives God's people power? And Jesus answered and said unto them, **I also will ask you** one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. **The baptism of John, whence was it?** from heaven, or of men? And **they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?** (MATTHEW 21:24-25)

C. John, whom the authorities feared to dismiss, had recognized Jesus as the Messiah. The next day **John seeth Jesus** coming unto him, and saith, **Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.** This is he of whom I said, **After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.** (JOHN 1:29-30)

D. The officials faced the problem all intentional unbelievers do; when truth is excluded, people cannot find the right answer. But **if we shall say, Of men; we fear** the people; for **all hold John as a prophet.** (MATTHEW 21:26)

E. Leaders who cannot remember their reason for being cannot be much use to any one. **His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark;** sleeping, lying down, **loving to slumber.** Yea, **they are greedy dogs which can never have enough,** and they are **shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain,** from his quarter. (ISAIAH 56:10-11)

F. Unbelievers condemn themselves; willful ignorance is its own punishment. And they answered Jesus, and said, **We cannot tell.** And he said unto them, **Neither tell I you** by what authority I do these things. (MATTHEW 21:27)