

How To Study The Bible Idioms and Metaphors

Mountains – Fig Tree with Leaves – Time of Figs

Jesus leaves Jerusalem to go to Bethany with his twelve apostles. He was hungry AND SEEING A FIG TREE AFAR OFF HAVING LEAVES, HE CAME IF HAPLY HE MIGHT FIND ANYTHING THEREON: AND WHEN HE CAME TO IT, HE FOUND NOTHING BUT LEAVES; FOR THE TIME OF FIGS WAS NOT YET. (Mark 11:13)

In order to understand scripture we must comprehend the meaning through study of the culture of the 1st century. Just as in our 21st century, they had sayings (metaphors and idioms) that were directly related to the environment and lifestyles in which they lived. In and around Jerusalem in the first century, life was simple. It was a time of farmers, shepherds, tent makers and the like bringing their wares to market when they were not in the fields or keeping their sheep. They had terminologies regarding all that one must know about growing crops, marketing, keeping sheep, etc. In verse 13 there is a terminology that we would not understand concerning figs unless we lived in the first century. Figs were a daily staple of the Hebrew diet. The term "Time of Figs" does not mean that the time for figs to be on the tree was not yet. Why would Jesus come seeking figs if the time for figs to be on the tree was not yet. "Time of figs" was a term that meant the "fig harvest." The figs had not been harvested. That is one of the reasons Jesus came seeking figs. The second reason he came looking for figs is that he could see the leaves on the tree from afar. When studying fig trees we find that fig trees had pre-season figs that come on the tree before the leaves. The tree should have had figs, unless it was barren. That is exactly what was wrong.

How do we know that the tree was barren? The law concerning fig trees is found in Lev 19:23-25.

AND WHEN YE SHALL COME INTO THE LAND, AND SHALL HAVE PLANTED ALL MANNER OF TREES FOR FOOD, (fruit, fig, olive, etc) THEN YE SHALL COUNT THE FRUIT THEREFORE AS UNCIRCUMCISED:

THREE YEARS SHALL IT BE AS UNCIRCUMCISED UNTO YOU: IT SHALL NOT BE EATEN OF (fig trees could not be eaten of for its first three years. Jesus would not have ventured to eat of a fig tree that he did not know its age, lest he break the law that he gave to Moses.)

BUT IN THE FORTH YEAR ALL THE FRUIT THEREOF SHALL BE HOLY TO PRAISE THE LORD WITHAL (the forth year the crop was sanctified by giving the crop as first fruits for the servants of the Tabernacle.) AND IN THE FIFTH YEAR SHALL YE EAT OF THE FRUIT THEREOF, THAT IT MAY YIELD UNTO YOU THE INCREASE THEREOF: I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. (Jesus would not have eaten of a fig tree that was under five years old.)

The Bible tells us that if the tree does not bear fruit by the fifth year then the tree must be cut down.

Matthew 3:10-9

AND NOW ALSO THE AXE IS LAID UNTO THE ROOT OF THE TREES: THEREFORE EVERY TREE WHICH BRINGETH NOT FORTH GOOD FRUIT IS HEWN DOWN, AND CAST INTO THE FIRE.

Luke 13:6

HE SPAKE ALSO THIS PARABLE; A CERTAIN MAN HAD A FIG TREE PLANTED IN HIS VINEYARD; AND HE CAME AND SOUGHT FRUIT THERON AND FOUND NONE.

THEN SAID HE UNTO THE DRESSERS OF HIS VINEYARD, BEHOLD, THESE THREE YEARS (not to be eaten) I COME SEEKING FRUIT ON THIS FIG TREE, AND FIND NONE; CUT IT DOWN; WHY CUMBERETH (render idle) IT THE GROUND? (Remember, the fig tree according to Jewish law is to be considered uncircumcised the first three years).

AND HE ANSWERING SAID UNTO HIM, LORD, LET IT ALONE THIS YEAR (the forth year, that belongs to God) ALSO, TILL I DIG ABOUT IT, AND DUNG IT:

AND IF IT BEAR FRUIT (by the fifth year), WELL: AND IF NOT, THEN AFTER THAT THOU SHALT CUT IT DOWN.

Let us go back to Mark 11:14 after Jesus finds the tree with leaves (fruit comes before leaves) and the tree has not been harvested (time of figs).

What does he do?

Mark 11:14

AND JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO IT, NO MAN EAT FRUIT OF THEE HEREAFTER FOREVER. AND HIS DISCIPLES HEARD IT.

Why would Jesus kill the fig tree? Because he was God and he knew how old it was. He could not and would not break the law.

Jesus and his apostles come by the tree the next morning-

Mark 11:20,21

AND IN THE MORNING, AS THEY PASSED BY, THEY SAW THE FIG TREE DRIED UP FROM THE ROOTS.

AND PETER CALLING TO REMEMBRANCE SAITH UNTO HIM, (I recall verse 14, where the scripture says, "his disciples heard it" speaking of Jesus cursing the tree). MASTER, BEHOLD (an exclamation of surprise), THE FIG TREE WHICH THOU CURSEDST IS WITHERED AWAY.

The apostles are showing a shock that Jesus would kill a fruit tree because it was against the law of Moses to kill a fruit tree (unless it was five years old not bearing fruit). Here is the verse the apostles had in mind when they showed their attitude of shock for Jesus having killed the fruit tree.

Deut 20:19,20

WHEN THOU SHALT BESEIGE A CITY A LONG TIME, IN MAKING WAR AGAINST IT TO TAKE IT, THOU SHALT NOT DESTROY THE TREES THEREOF BY FORCING AN AX AGAINST THEM: FOR THOU MAYEST EAT OF THEM, AND THOU SHALT NOT CUT THEM DOWN (for the tree of the field is man's life) TO EMPLOY THEM IN THE SIEGE.

ONLY THE TREES WHICH THOU

KNOWEST THAT THEY BE NOT TREES FOR MEAT, THOU SHALT DESTROY AND CUT THEM DOWN; AND THOU SHALT BUILD BULKWORKS AGAINST THE CITY THAT MAKETH WAR WITH THEE, UNTIL IT BE SUBDUED.

The apostles are recalling these verses when they exclaim in surprise that Jesus killed a fruit tree. It is against Jewish law to kill fruit trees unless it is five years old or older and not bearing fruit. The apostles cannot believe that he would kill a fruit tree since it is against God's law. The only way he could kill it is if it is at least five years old and not bearing fruit. They evidently thought he could not possibly know how old the tree was, since they were in Bethphage, which means house of figs. There were many fig trees in this area.

Jesus would not have broken the law by killing this fruit tree unless it was five years old and not bearing fruit.

The apostles are obviously correcting Jesus to some degree, because Jesus says to Peter and the apostles, "Have faith in God." He is saying have faith in me. I'm God and I know what I am doing.

Then Jesus speaks words of correction and instruction to the apostles.

WHOSOEVER SHALL SAY UNTO THIS MOUNTAIN, BE THOU REMOVED, AND BE THOU CAST INTO THE SEA; AND SHALL NOT DOUBT IN HIS HEART, BUT SHALL BELIEVE THAT THOSE THINGS WHICH HE SAITH SHALL COME TO PASS; HE SHALL HAVE WHATSOEVER HE SAITH.

Here is what Jesus is saying in verse 23 of Mark 11. A mountain is a capital (ruling) city of a nation or empire. Babylon is called a mountain of pride (Jer 50:29-32). God says, "I WILL MAKE BABYLON A BURNT MOUNTAIN" (Jer 51:25; Rev 18:9). Babylon is the Mother (an instructor) of Harlots (Rev 17:5 *harlot* is the word *porneia* meaning idolatry) Babylon, the mountain (ruling city) that rules the world, was founded on the doctrine, "Let us make us a name:" (Gen 11:4). *Name* (in Hebrew) is the word *Shem* and it means "authority." God's *authority* (name) is his word, his commandments.

When Peter and the Apostles began to be corrective of Jesus, they had made themselves a name (authority). They were correcting Jesus for killing a fruit tree

with this Babylonian *authority* (name) of self ("Let us make us a *name*").

They remembered the verses from Deut 20:19,20) how it was against the law to kill fruit trees, but had conveniently forgotten the verses in Lev 19:23-25 (about the tree bearing fruit by the fifth year). Jesus said that the axe must be laid to the root of every tree that brings not forth fruit (by the fifth year) Luke 13:6-9, Matt 3:10) Jesus tells the apostles that the Babylonian mountain (the mother of harlots-idolatry) of self (pride or let us make us a name) must be cast into the sea. These are metaphors and idioms in this text. The sea is not some general term that man can interpret any way he wants. The sea is found in the 7th chapter of 1st Kings.

I Kings 7:23,26

AND HE MADE A MOLTEN SEA; TEN CUBITS FROM THE ONE BRIM TO THE OTHER: IT WAS ROUND ALL ABOUT, AND HIS HEIGHT WAS FIVE CUBITS: AND A LINE OF THIRTY DID COMPASS IT ROUND ABOUT - IT CONTAINED TWO THOUSAND BATHS.

The brazen sea was called a "sea" because of its size. When Israel came out of bondage in Egypt, God gave to Moses the Levitical law. In the law God gave to Moses specific instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle and all the facilities that were attached to it for the rituals that were performed by the Levites (priests). The Tabernacle was made a permanent structure in the form of Solomon's temple. (A Tabernacle is a mobile temple).

When the children of Israel left Egypt, God gave Moses instructions to build a brazen laver (a washing bowl - Ex 30:18). The Tabernacle was always pitched to face east. In front of the East door of the Tabernacle was the brazen laver. Every morning the priests washed in the laver before they went to their duties to offer the various sacrifices throughout the day. As the population of Israel increased, so did the number and size of the lavers. By the time of Solomon the priesthood became so large that God gave Solomon instructions, when he built the temple, to build 10 lavers and the "Brazen Sea" for the exclusive use of the priesthood. (II Chron 4:6, I Kings 7:23) It was a requirement that all priests washed at the sea before they went to their daily duties. Throughout the day, before new sacrifice, the priests only washed their hands and feet.

This is what Jesus is referring to when he speaks of saying to the mountain of self to be cast into "the sea." Jesus had just made the statement to the apostles, "Have faith in God". Mark 11:22. He is telling his followers believe in me; I'm God. I know how old the tree is - quit correcting (*denying*-contradicting) me! Jesus is saying, "If you are going to be a priest of mine, you need to washed of all your opinions" (Babylon-name-*authority*) in the sea. He goes on to say in Mark 11:23, WHEN YOU SAY TO THIS MOUNTAIN AND YOU WILL NOT DOUBT IN YOUR HEART YOU WILL HAVE WHATSOEVER YOU "SAITH."

The word *doubt* is the Greek word *diakrino* which means "to discriminate or to become the channel of judging!" It comes from two Greek words *dia* meaning "through or a channel" and *krino* which is the common Greek word for "judge." *Krino* means to decide something is lawful or unlawful or to decide if a person is guilty or innocent. We are not to judge by deciding with our opinions what is right or wrong (Matt 7:1). However, we are to judge righteous judgement (John 7:24) by declaring what God says concerning right or wrong (guilty or innocent). When we insert our opinion then we do the judging and become the channel of judging (*diakrino*). We start doubting Gods decisions or his work in our lives by correcting him like the apostles did Jesus, when he killed the fig tree. We are not unlike the apostles when we accept the work of God in our lives then the next day we want to correct what he is doing. We like to say, "Lord, I'm right today and you were right yesterday", When the fiery trials come in our lives we like to pray, "Lord its time for the trials in my life to stop." Peter says the trial is a daily requirement that God brings, and it is not a strange thing (I Peter 4:12). James says, "Count it all joy and let patience have its perfect work," when the fire comes. Don't pray for it to leave because it is from God. This fiery trial is more precious than gold that perisheth (says Peter). I Peter 1:7.

This is how we judge and discriminate (contradicting God). We try to tell God (Jesus) when he is doing right or wrong as in the case of killing the fig tree. How do we get what we "saith." *Saith* is the word *lego*. Getting rid of Babylon, (the mountain) is getting rid of self. When we *deny* (*arneomai*-contradict) self we

cease speaking our opinion and we *confess* (*homologeo*-agree with) Christ. We must agree with Jesus when he curses the fig tree even when we don't understand. We crucify self and cast the mountain of "Let us make us a name" into the sea.

Saith is the word *lego* meaning to lay forth or relate in words usually of a "systematic or set discourse", to speak, tell, say or ask. Definition: *Systematic* - forming of constituting a system an orderly arranged plan, and orderly arrangement of facts or rules (The Bible or word of God).

Discourse - Communication of ideas,

information by talking or conversation; a long formal treatment of a subject in speech or writing, lecture, treatise or dissertation to talk or carry on conversation. To speak, or write on a subject formally or at length. (The living, spoken, and written word of God).

If we are going to have what we "saith," we must cast the mountain (Babylon) of self into the sea and not discriminate (doubt) we must believe and confess Christ (agree with) saying the words he says in his systematic (orderly arrangement of his word) discourse (the spoken and written word of God) if we are to

have what we "saith," we cannot make up our own ideas and words. The whole context of this section of Mark 11:12-23 is that the mountain of this world (Babylon), which is self, must be drowned in the sea and we must *agree* (*confess*) Jesus' words that he has written in his word if we are to have what we say or desire.

I have much more to say on this subject. We will continue at a later date.

Jim

Mary's Mailbox



I would like to thank all of you for the letters, phone calls and e-mails. It thrills me when Jim and I go to the post office and I get a letter personally addressed to me. Its like getting a new toy or a present. I would like to remind all of you that I make the special order tapes. Please ask for no more than 3 at a time. We have several hundred people on our mailing list. It is very easy to get behind on the tapes.

Jim is doing a series on the World Trade Center terrorism. You will find it very interesting, since most of the preachers and politicians do not understand Biblical Prophecy. Jim explains from the Old Testament that this is about the land of Israel. We want everyone on the mailing list to get a copy of the 1st video in the series. If you haven't received your copy, please write, e-mail or call me. Please be a part of the ministry by calling or writing every 6-8 weeks. This way we will know that you are still interested in getting the tapes. We want all of you who want the tapes to have them. They are free of charge. We never ask for money. Please stay in touch.

Mary

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