

Study Guide
The Kingdom Has Come
Matthew 21:18-32

Big Idea: Fruit-bearing Christians Pray, Follow and Admit Failure.

A. The Cursing of the Fig Tree

Read Matthew 21:18-19 and Jeremiah 8:13. Jesus cursed the fig tree as a prophetic and symbolic act of judgment against the religious leadership of Israel. God shifted his earthly representation away from Israel to the Church. According to chapter 23 it was because of their hypocrisy or play-acting. It's barren. It's cursed! How are we as the Church, susceptible to play-acting? Describe some scenarios. What are the dangers associated with that?

B. Fruit-bearing Christians

1. Read Matthew 21:20-22. Fruit-bearing Christians pray in faith.

History doesn't record the disciples and Christians going around throwing mountains into the sea by prayer. This was a figure of speech to illustrate the power of prayer.

What do our prayers reveal about our view of God? What are things we can be praying for right now?

2. Read Matthew 21:23-27. Fruit-bearing Christians follow God.

Feel the tension as the question of authority is addressed. Ultimately all authority is delegated and comes from God. Notice how Jesus followed the authority of God, whereas the Pharisees were led by the fear of men (v. 26). If we want to bear fruit for God, it's important to learn to follow His voice in our lives. What does that look like for you? Why does it require faith?

3. Read Matthew 21:28-32. Fruit-bearing Christians admit failure.

The Pharisees were too proud to be baptized by John! Even after seeing so much evidence, they were not willing to admit they had failed. What an insult to them, to hear that tax-collectors and prostitutes would get to heaven before them.

Why is it hard for us to admit failure? What can it look like to be more authentic as a Christian? Why does it require faith? How can it help bear fruit? Discuss.

Message Slides

Clash of Kingdoms

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I. The Cursing of the Fig Tree (v. 18-19)

¹⁸In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry.¹⁹And 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.

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Jeremiah 8:13

“When I would gather them, declares the LORD, there are no figs on the fig tree...and what I have given them will pass away.”

Colossians 1:9-10a

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete!”

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II. Fruit-bearing Christians (v. 20-32)

A. Pray (v. 20-22)

²⁰When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither at once?” ²¹And 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. ²²And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”

B. Follow God’s Authority (v.23-27)

²³And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?”²⁴Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things.

B. Follow God’s Authority (v.23-27)

²⁵The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’²⁶But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” ²⁷So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

C. Admit Failure (v.28-32)

²⁸“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go.

C. Admit Failure (v.28-32)

³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

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