

#### 44. Jesus Spoke of the Need to Bear Fruit

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain clearly to others the most important choice that they will ever make in this life. If they choose to repent of their sin of unbelief, they will receive eternal life. If they choose to reject, they will face eternal punishment. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus continued to speak about the topic of coming judgment.

Jesus had been teaching the people. One day, some of the people told Jesus what had happened to some Galileans that Pilate had killed. Luke 13:1-3 says, “There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.’” This is the first time that Luke said anything about the character of Pilate. (Luke had mentioned Pilate as one of the rulers when Jesus was born in Luke 3:1.) We see that some of the people told Jesus what Pilate had done to some Galileans.

Most of the Jews were very opposed to the rule of their land by the Romans. This was especially true in the area of Galilee. A leader from Galilee by the name of Judas Gaulonitis organized a rebellion against the Romans to oppose the paying of taxes to Caesar. A group of his followers came to Jerusalem during one of the feasts to offer their sacrifices. That was apparently the time when Pilate sent a group of his soldiers into the temple court. These soldiers killed these Jews and mingled the blood of these men with the blood of the sacrifices that they were offering. For the Roman soldiers to kill a group of people in the temple courtyard was considered blasphemy by the Jews. This just further stirred up the hatred of the Jews toward the Romans.

The Jews thought that when something unusual happened to a Jew, it was the judgment of God. John 9:2 says, “And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’” In this case, the disciples of Jesus thought that this man was born blind either as a judgment for his sins or for the sins of the parents. Many Jews thought these Galileans had committed some very evil sin and that sin was the reason why they had been killed and their blood mingled with the blood of their sacrifices.

Jesus made it clear that the manner of their death was not the reason why this had happened to these Galileans. Instead, Jesus used the opportunity to speak to the people who were there and tell them that unless they repented they would also experience an eternal judgment. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:24-26, “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and *that* they may come to their senses *and* escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” People have to know the truth and God must work in their hearts to draw them to Himself in order to escape the snare of the devil. The fact that these Galileans had been killed by the Romans did not make them any worse sinners than those who died a natural death. In addition, Jesus also knew that all of the Jews living in Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Romans about 40 years later.

Jesus went on to give a second illustration of people who had died an unusual death. Luke 13:4-5 says, “Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all *other* men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” The Pool of Siloam was located in the south part of the city of Jerusalem. That is where Jesus told the man that was born blind to go and wash his eyes. John 9:6-7 says, “When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.” Apparently, the people had all heard about a tower located near this pool that had collapsed and killed eighteen people.

Again, we see that some of the people thought that the people who were killed when the tower fell on them were worse sinners than others. Jesus again made it clear that this was not an earthly judgment of people who committed more sins than the rest of the people. Jesus again made it clear that people who die from a catastrophe are not worse sinners than those who die a natural death. Jesus gave the same warning to the people after pointing to the death of the people killed when the tower of Siloam fell and killed them. Jesus said that those who fail to repent of their sin of unbelief will also perish. The word translated “perish” in both verses means *to destroy or to kill*. It is the same word that is used in John 3:16 where we read, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” This verse makes it clear that the word “perish” is talking about eternal judgment.

Then, Jesus gave a parable of a fig tree that did not bear fruit. Luke 13:6-9 says, “He also spoke this parable: ‘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.’” Here, we see that the keeper of the vineyard gives us a picture of the mercy of God.

In Hosea 9:10, we see that the nation of Israel is compared to a fig tree. That verse says, “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. *But* they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves *to that* shame; they became an abomination like the thing they loved.” This verse shows that God saw Israel as the first ripened fruit from a fig tree. As a result, this parable may apply to the nation of Israel as a whole. However, it certainly applies to individuals. God is the One who brought the nation of Israel into existence. His desire was to see Israel become a fruitful nation. In the passage from Hosea, we see that God said that Israel was an unfruitful nation because of the idol worship of the nation.

In this parable, we also see that God is looking for fruitfulness. Jesus later said to His disciples in John 15:4-5, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, *you* are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” For any

individual to bear fruit that individual must abide in Jesus. The Father is also looking for each Christian to bear fruit.

In this parable, we see that the man who planted the vineyard spoke to the keeper of the vineyard when it did not bear fruit. He said that he had come looking for the vine to bear fruit for three years and there was still no fruit. The owner said to cut down the vine because it was just using up ground and was bearing no fruit. The keeper of the vineyard pleaded with the owner to give the vine one more opportunity to bear fruit. He said that he would dig up the ground around the vine and fertilize it so that it would have every possible opportunity to bear fruit.

The request of the keeper to give the vine one more opportunity to bear fruit helps us to understand one of the very important ministries of Jesus. Romans 8:34 says, “Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” This shows the kindness of Jesus to all who follow Him. It is the desire of the Lord that we bear much fruit. Jesus told the disciples in John 15:8, “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” In our lives, we learn to bring glory to God as we become more like Christ so that our lives bear more fruit.

However, the primary purpose of this parable is to provide a warning to those whose lives bear no fruit. For the individual, that would be each individual who does not repent and place his or her faith in Jesus. Jesus illustrated this warning for His disciples in Mark 11:13-14 where we read, “And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response, Jesus said to it, ‘Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.’ And His disciples heard *it*.” In this case, the fig tree was cursed because of the lack of fruit. Mark 11:20-21 says, “Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, ‘Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.’” This is a reminder that all those who reject Jesus will one day be judged.

This passage also shows the mercy of the Father. We see that He has great patience even with those who reject and does give many opportunities even to the most sinful before He finally brings judgment. That is why 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, “For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to share with others the need to receive the mercy of God while they have the opportunity before judgment does come. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to share this message with others.