

Exegetical Analysis — Luke 13:6-9

6-9 – And He began telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. [7] And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?' [8] And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; [9] and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.'" (6. "Ἐλεγεν δὲ ταύτην τὴν παραβολήν· συκῆν εἶχεν τις πεφυτευμένην ἐν τῷ ἀμπελῶνι αὐτοῦ καὶ ἦλθεν ζητῶν καρπὸν ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ οὐκ εὔρεν. 7. εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς τὸν ἀμπελουργόν· ἰδοὺ τρία ἔτη ἀφ' οὗ ἔρχομαι ζητῶν καρπὸν ἐν τῇ συκῇ ταύτῃ καὶ οὐκ εὗρίσκω. ἔκκοψον αὐτήν, ἵνατί καὶ τὴν γῆν καταργεῖ; 8. ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς λέγει αὐτῷ· κύριε, ἄφες αὐτήν καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ἔτος, ἕως ὅτου σκάψω περὶ αὐτήν καὶ βάλω κόπρια. 9. κὰν μὲν ποιήσῃ καρπὸν εἰς τὸ μέλλον· εἰ δὲ μὴ γε, ἐκκόψεις αὐτήν)

As we evaluate the parable of the fig tree, the parable must be analyzed in the historical context and we must understand its relation to all of scripture. The parable of the fig tree has been used as a symbol many times throughout scripture. Here in [vs.6-9] there appears to be a conversation or dialogue going on between a vineyard owner, and a vineyard keeper. This all stems from the context of [vs.1-5] where Jesus repeatedly makes a call to repentance. But why? We will see why in the parable.

Analogies of the Parable

- Vineyard Owner: God the Father
- Vineyard Keeper: God the Son
- Fig Tree: Ethnic/National Israel + Unrepentant Sinners
- Three years: The First Three Years of Jesus' Ministry
- Fruitlessness: Israel's Rejection of Jesus
- Additional Year: Jesus' Final Year of Preaching
- Cut it Down: God's Judgment against Ethnic/Nation Israel

"In this, the fig tree is the Jewish nation, God the owner, Christ the vinedresser. The fig tree is condemned for fruitlessness, but the vinedresser asks for more time ... in order that it might yet bear fruit. If not, that is, if the Jewish or any other nation or individual fails to bear fruit ... it is to be destroyed."

— John William Russell, Compact Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1964), 173.

6 – And He began telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any.

The vineyard owner [God the Father], had a fig tree [National Israel] which he had planted in the vineyard. God the Father looked at Israel and saw no fruit.

7 – And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?'

The vineyard owner [God the Father] spoke to the vineyard keeper [God the Son], and said that for three years [The time of Jesus' Ministry] he had not found any fruit. God the Father said that the fig tree should be cut down.

8 – And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer;

Jesus the vineyard keeper says to his Father to leave it alone for "this year too", until Jesus digs around it and puts in

fertilizer. This is a demonstration of his mercy and compassion for Israel, and how he holds out his hand to an unrepentant people.

9 – and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.

The problem is that we know that National Israel did not repent, rather, they became furious with Jesus and his teaching, and later initiated the call to have him crucified.

Matthew 23:37-39 NASB

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. [38] Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! [39] For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

Because Israel was unrepentant and produced no fruit they would be cut off from the covenant blessings and promises given to them [Romans 9:1-5]. Because of their unrepentant hearts God has chosen to harden them, and to cut them off. Thus, the Gentiles have been Grafted into the commonwealth of Israel as partakers of the blessings once attributed to them.

Romans 11:7-10,17,21,23-25 NASB

What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; [8] just as it is written, "God GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY." [9] And David says, "Let THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. [10] "Let THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER." [17] But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, [21] for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. [23] And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. [24] For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? [25] For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery-so that you will not be wise in your own estimation-that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

Praise God, that although Israel has been rebellious God will restore them to their land, and save them.