

## The Unfruitful Fig Tree

Mark 11:13,14  
Charlie Brackett

As the Savior made His way on the road from Bethany to Jerusalem, a very unusual thing happened. He did something quite unlike any other thing recorded by any of the four gospel writers. Jesus was hungry, and seeing a fig tree from a distance, He went to see if He could find any figs on it. There were none, only leaves. Mark explains "for it was not the season for figs." Jesus' response was, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." Matthew 21:19 says the fig tree immediately withered and died.

Some have objected that this is not like the Savior. They say He acted vindictively. Since it was not the season for fruit, why did He expect fruit? The charge is made that Jesus was unreasonable and unjust. Let's consider this matter carefully.

Fig trees were plentiful around Bethany and on the road to Jerusalem. This one must have stood out. Mark says the Lord saw it from afar. It must have been more obvious than the others to have caught His attention from a distance. Its leaves were full. The fruit usually preceded leaves. Such a fig tree, full of leaves, was often known to produce a few figs before the normal season for fruit. Jesus saw this tree from afar. It looked as though it had early fruit which would satisfy His hunger, so He approached it.

It may be that He cursed the tree for being unproductive, that is, not fulfilling its intended purpose though the season for productivity had not yet fully arrived. But it seems more likely that He cursed the tree for appearing to have fruit and failing to deliver - a hypocritical tree, as it were.

At this point, let's learn this important lesson about our Lord - He is the Lord and Creator of all. That fact gives Him complete rights of ownership and the supreme right to be the Judge in all matters. Here He simply exercised His right to judge.

And this observation must be made: The reason Jesus cursed the tree is found more in the opportunity He saw for teaching His disciples a spiritual lesson than in His displeasure over finding no fruit. We get to that lesson a little later in chapter 11 when Jesus returned again in the evening to Bethany. Now, however, can we see that the spiritual is always more important than the physical? Teaching a lesson of eternal relevance is of far greater significance than one fig tree, a thing of no conscience, an inanimate object with no soul.

The Creator used one of the objects He created for the physical benefit of man - to advance man spiritually. He has the right to do that because He is God. A mere man doing what Jesus did on this occasion deserves our criticism, but not the Lord.