



# The Barren Fig Tree

**"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 15:2)**

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On a wonderful Sabbath day in a Synagogue, Jesus chose to re-enforce the answers he gave to questions about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices; and the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell; with a parable (Luke 13:1-6). "But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples" (Mark 4:34).

"He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. **7** Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? **8** And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: **9** And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. **10** And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath" (Luke 13:6-10).

This background and context provide valuable insights to the message Jesus conveyed in the parable:

1) In response to these disaster stories, Jesus told the enquirers "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5). By this response, Jesus was shifting their focus from the departed to the living, who still had the chance of doing something about their eternity. It is often the case that people think that they are better than those on whom some accidents or disasters had befallen. The barbarians thought that Paul was the worst of sinners whom vengeance would not allow to live when a serpent stuck to his hand after surviving a shipwreck (Acts 28:4). Jesus' answer was basically telling

**"And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it" (Luke 13:8).**



these people, "do not think that you better than those people, if you continue in your present state, and do not do something about the salvation of your soul". To re-enforce that message, Jesus used this parable to emphasise points 2 to 7 below:

- 2) God (likened to a certain man who owned the vineyard) expects fruits from every fig tree that he planted.
- 3) God is not pleased with a fig tree that is merely 'cumbering' the ground through much growth, leaves, etc. but without fruits.
- 4) After three years of investments to maintain the trees, the owner issued a command to cut down the unfruitful ones. God may be patient for us to change, but ultimately a time comes when He must judge the fruitless.
- 5) In response to the plea from the dresser (a type of Christ praying for all believers), God allowed one year's grace to see if the fig tree will bear fruit.
- 6) Has it ever occurred to you that 2014 could be the year of grace that God is giving you and I to bear fruit, and if not to cut down the barren fig tree?
- 7) God is a wise and prudent investor who will not tolerate the frustration of His grace (Galatians 2:21). We must not therefore receive His grace in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1). Yes, He is the God of mercy and love; but those who spurn His mercy and love, will have to face His justice!