

Mark 11:13 (GO) 68319

Bible Treasury: Volume 14, Barren Fig Tree, The (11:13)

" For the time of figs was not yet."-Mark 11:13.

IT seems to me that the above statement refers to the time of gathering figs, and not, as Dean Alford and others say, to the time of their being grown. If the latter "was not yet," there would have been nothing strange in there being none on the tree. It would have been no proof of its barrenness, especially as there was a show of life in the presence of leaves upon it. For the Lord to have cursed the tree under such circumstances would have been quite unlike His equitable and patient dealings with Israel down to that moment, and still more unlike the grace that brought Him down into their midst. But if on the other hand the time for figs to have grown had arrived (figs appear before the leaves) and the time for gathering the crop had not come, the figs ought certainly to have been there.

As a type of Israel, this fig tree without fruit when there ought to have been is most striking and appropriate. Using this symbol, the Lord Jesus Christ says in Luke 13:7, "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none." Besides this, at the close of three successive dispensational cycles, He had previously assayed to bless Israel, to gather them together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and they would not." Those occasions, which I believe to be specially referred to in His lamentation over Jerusalem (Luke 13:34) in the words "how often," were—1st, at the Exodus; 2nd, at the dedication of the temple by Solomon; and 3rd, at the return from Babylon under Nehemiah. But now His personal ministry of digging about it and dunging it had given them another opportunity, and had run its course; but still there was no response to His forbearing goodness—no fruit to requite His labor of love. The words of Isaiah were fulfilled, "I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught and in vain (Isa. 49:4). The Lord therefore condemned the tree to its own barrenness forever. He did not make it barren, it was that already; but His sentence brought death" and presently the fig-tree withered away," Matt. 21:19, 20. It was Israel after the flesh.

The Lord had been rejected at Jerusalem the day before, and had sought a lodging in Bethany. On the following morning He set out to pay another visit to the doomed city, and though the journey was short, He hungered by the way, a touching intimation He had taken no food, no morning meal. A fig would have refreshed Him, but alas! there was none. Think of this, and who and what He was!

The hour was come when the Son of man should be glorified: but "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Instead of giving Him the crown and the scepter of the kingdom, they pierced His brow with a crown of thorns, and put a rush into His right hand for a scepter, spat in the face of the Holy one of God, and crucified Him. Thus they rejected Him, whom to have received would have been the fruit He sought at their hands for their blessing

The sentence the Lord pronounced on the fig-tree is the abiding sentence of God on Israel, on man in flesh, who can produce nothing acceptable to God. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He cannot be improved out of his own sinfulness. He cannot be developed into what He is not. He must be born quite anew. Happy is he who bows to this truth, and, ceasing to go about to establish human righteousness, submits himself to the righteousness of God. Such a soul will find in the world-rejected but risen and ascended Christ all that as a sinner his conscience needs, and all that as a believer his heart can desire. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." G. O.