

The Last Week of Jesus

PERSONAL THOUGHTS:

It's Monday

The day after the "Triumphal Entry" or "Palm Sunday" Jesus again enters Jerusalem in the morning, but this time he is walking. There is no ceremony, no joyful cheers, just a fig tree that will serve as a living parable. It is early and Jesus is hungry (Matt. 21:18-22). Upon investigating the tree, Jesus sees that the tree had not produced figs and he curses it. Since it was common knowledge that fig trees would not produce edible figs for about six more weeks, this action of Jesus seems bizarre. Everyone knew that the fig tree would not produce edible figs at this time of the year. The edible figs would not ripen until late in May. These figs were called "early" figs and were known to precede the main crop of "late" figs that would grow in mid-August and into October. So why is Jesus cursing this fig tree how does it relate to the Passion Week?

The key is found in a closer inspection of the fig tree. If only leaves appeared on the tree and no early figs, then the tree would not produce any figs that year - early or late. Jesus' point is that people are like trees that seem from a distance to have good fruit (c.f. Jer. 24), but upon closer inspection show no sign of producing fruit at all. These types of trees and people can only lead to disappointment for the hungry and judgment from God. This is precisely the picture Jesus is painting by cursing the tree.

Jerusalem was a type of fig tree. From a distance it seemed like the people were moving toward bearing ripe fruit (Matt. 21:8-9), but upon further investigation they only had leaves of religiosity (Matt. 21:12-17). The people of Jerusalem were rich with religious activity in preparation for the upcoming Passover meal, but bankrupt of true spiritual devotion to the Messiah of

God now standing among them. It was on this day that the disciples would purchase a lamb for Passover, which was to begin at twilight on Friday evening as prescribed in Exodus 12:1-6. It was the 10th of Nissan (the first month of the Jewish calendar) and there would be thousands of people purchasing a lamb from the local vendors. They would then care for and observe it for defects for four days. Any defect would eliminate it from being able to serve as a Passover lamb. If it proved to be worthy, the one-year-old lamb would be sacrificed on the 14th of Nissan as a remembrance of God choosing to "pass-over" those who had the blood of the lamb applied to the entrance of their homes (see Exodus 12:1-14). How ironic that the Lamb of God, chosen before the foundations of the world (see I Peter 1:20), would be involved in choosing a lamb for His twelve disciples. I wonder what Jesus thought as the disciples discussed the merits of the potential lambs. Imagine the scene: Simon says, "It's too small." The sheep chosen would have to feed the entire twelve during the Passover meal. John says, "Are those spots on the left side?" According to the Law, the lamb could not have spots or defects. During the entire evaluation process, the lamb they really needed had been with them all along.

Jesus would also interact with some Greeks who had, seemingly, converted to Judaism and wanted to speak with Him (see John 12:20-36). How tragic that the people who were to receive Christ as Messiah had rejected Him, while those who were outside of the Covenant people clamored to meet with Him. Then, leaving Jerusalem, the disciples noticed that the fig tree from the morning had withered - a stark reminder of the penalty for missing Christ.

