

## **THE TRAGEDY OF FRUITLESSNESS**

By Jerry L. Henderson

Lk 13:6-9 is a parable about a barren fig tree. The primary application of this parable has to do with the Jewish nation and the efforts of Jesus to lead them to repentance. However, the basic principles of the story did not pass away with the Jewish nation, but would apply to all members of the body of Christ who are God's people today. So, consider the parable as it applies to Christians today.

Remember this was a "planted" tree in the man's vineyard it didn't just happen to be there, it wasn't a wild tree. We as Christians have been "planted" in the vineyard of the Lord Rom 6:3-5. We have been "raised" together with Christ and are now a part of His vineyard, family, church, or body. Paul said in 1Cor 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. (NKJV)

Verse six of this text says the man who planted the fig tree in his vineyard looked for fruit on the tree and did not find any. As a result of it having no fruit it was absolutely worthless to the owner of the vineyard. This is an apt description of many members of the Lord's church today Matt 5:13; Matt 25:41-46. All members of the Lord's church are expected to bear fruit Jhn 15:8; 2Pet 1:5-9. Most church members are not wicked; not lawbreakers; not violent; revengeful nor hateful; they simply are of no use to the Lord. Our Master, Jesus, does not expect the impossible but he does expect some fruit from every "tree"

Because this tree was not producing fruit instructions were given to "cut it down" (vs. 7). It was in the way - it was not only doing no good, but it was hindering good from being done. The question is asked: "why does it use up the ground?" (NKJV). Many church members are hindrances to the cause of Christ 1Cor 5:6; Matt 18:6. Not only do they fail to do good themselves, but they sometimes keep others from serving the Lord Faithfully. They often discourage some who are trying to bear fruit and cause them to be unfruitful. Sometimes they even hinder others from obeying the gospel because of the evil influence which they have on them Matt 5:13-16.

However, even though this tree had been unfruitful for three years (vs. 8) the dresser of the vineyard asked for more time so he could give the tree special attention, to cultivate around it and fertilize it. He wanted to give it every chance to bear fruit. This illustrates the longsuffering of God toward us 2Pet 3:9. Many in the church today are in need of repentance. They are in need of special attention and care to possibly affect a change in their lives that will allow them to be fruitful in the Lord's vineyard.

But then after time was given for this tree to bear fruit and it remained fruitless it was "cut down" or destroyed (vs. 9). It was useless, in the way and had to be destroyed. Understand, however, it was the "dresser of the vineyard" who cut the tree down, other trees in the vineyard had no authority to say, "cut it down", only the owner of the vineyard had that authority. It is the law of nature that whatever does not reproduce itself must die. This is a universal law whether applied to the vegetable, animal, human or spiritual kingdom. God warns through the Scriptures that unfruitful church members will be eternally punished Jhn 15:5, 6; Matt 7:19. Our Lord expects us to be fruitful. There is no place in the kingdom of Christ for non-producers. The lazy, indolent and indifferent need not entertain hope of reward in this life or that which is to come. We, as a part of the vineyard of the Lord must continue to reproduce ourselves, this is being fruitful, otherwise we will be "cut down"; we will be destroyed. The question that each of us as members of the Lord's church must continually ask ourselves is: "am I bearing fruit"? However, one must remember that you cannot bear fruit for the Lord unless you are in Christ, that is, in His vineyard Jhn 15:4. If a person is not bearing fruit then they are useless and a hindrance to the cause of Christ. Yes, God is longsuffering - giving you a chance to live for Him and bear fruit, but He will not wait forever. This life is all the time we have, so when it is over there is no more opportunity for one to bear fruit. Even though we live in homes where there is a Bible in almost every room, many of those who claim to be Christians (trees in God's vineyard) bear no real fruit in the Lord's service. It is not an angry God that condemns us to eternal punishment; we condemn ourselves by

our fruitlessness. You see, destruction is the fault of the tree itself. Fruitlessness invites disaster now and in the judgment to come. We must be like the tree in Psa 1:3 "...a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper." (NKJV)