

# Gospel Power



*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation..." (Romans 1:16)*

*The Gospel Power is published in interest of New Testament Christianity and to enhance the work of the Anderson church.*

**Anderson  
church of Christ**  
5900 Highway 207  
Anderson, Alabama

**Visit Us On The Web**  
Anderson-church.org

## Men Privileged To Serve:

Sunday, November 18th:

### *Bible Classes*

Song Leader  
..... Mark McIntyre  
Bible Reading ..... (Num. 22:7-14)  
..... Jimmy Glass  
Prayer  
..... Aric Butler

### *Morning Worship*

Song Leader  
..... Mark McIntyre  
Prayer  
..... Rocky Rose  
Lord's Supper  
Presiding ..... Kevin Chancellor  
Assisting ..... Brian Blakely  
Serving ..... Mark McCrary  
..... Hunter Cox  
..... Michael Word  
..... Jim Phillips  
Closing Prayer  
..... Steve Parker

### *Evening Worship*

Song Leader  
..... Eddie J. Hammond  
Bible Reading .... (Num. 22:15-21)  
..... Daniel Clemmons  
Prayer  
..... Jonathan Keenon  
Lord's Supper  
..... Kevin Chancellor  
..... Brian Blakely  
Closing Prayer  
..... Jerry Dickey

Volume XIV

November 18, 2007

No. 46

## *The Barren Fig Tree*

**Matthew H. Allen**

The account of Jesus cursing the fig tree is found only in Matthew and Mark's gospel. Taken together, they give us an interesting narrative on an event that took place during the last week of the life of Jesus. Jesus passed and observed a fig tree on the side of the road that had all its leaves but no fruit. After taking note of its barren condition, Jesus says *May no one ever eat from you again*, Mark 11:14. As He says these words in front of the disciples, the fig tree immediately withered, Matthew 21:19. Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?

Fig trees are common in this part of the Middle East. Depending on terrain and soil type, they can be the size of a tall tree or as small as a shrub. They are mentioned throughout the Old Testament and were considered very valuable. Fig trees were viewed as a sign of prosperity and peace. At first glance, we may wonder why Jesus cursed the tree for having no fruit when it was *not the season for figs*, Mark 11:13. Fig trees produced fruit twice a year. In December the trees lose their leaves and when they reappear in early spring, tiny figs appear with the leaves having sprouted from what was referred to as the "old wood." These figs would have been ready for harvest by early June. As Jesus is entering into Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, it is early to mid-April. He would have expected it to have figs maturing on it. After shedding their fruit in June, fig trees produced again from the "new wood" with the harvest taking place in August.

Some have suggested that this barren fig tree was a symbol for Israel. Even from the days of the prophets, Israel was compared to a plant that would not produce fruit. In Isaiah 5:4, God says that His people were *expected to produce good grapes*, but they only

brought forth *worthless* ones. Some believe this story is a fulfillment of what we read in Luke 13. There Jesus teaches on the need for repentance. He says, *I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish*, 13:5. He then recites a parable about a fig tree that did not produce fruit. The owner was going to cut it down, but decides to cultivate the ground around it, apply fertilizer, and wait another year to see if any fruit would be borne. *If it bears fruit, fine; but if not, cut it down*, 13:9. Now we come back to our text in Mark 11. Jesus has now reached the end of His ministry. He sees a fig tree that represented the spiritual condition of Israel. The fig tree *appeared* healthy but it was not. Everything with Israel *appeared* great, but the nation was spiritually dead. The week of the Passover was no ordinary week in Jerusalem. People came from around the world to participate in this most holy feast of the Jews. To the casual observer it would appear that the Jews had a great relationship with God. But spiritually speaking, Israel was as barren as the fig tree that Jesus cursed. The message of the Messiah had been proclaimed. Additional time had been given for repentance. And yet, even as these events occur the scribes and Pharisees are conspiring to kill Him. The Jewish nation was going to be cut off. *No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you*, Matthew 21:19.

As we begin to understand the significance of this event, there are important applications for a twenty-first century audience. For example, outward profession of religion is not enough. Things can look great on the outside. Those who work hard to project an image of piety and godliness but fail to change their heart will come up short in eternity. Just as the fig tree *appeared* vibrant and healthy, it was barren and unfruitful. God looks at the heart, the inward part of man. Do we have a real, meaningful relationship with God? We must work to be transformed, Romans 12:1-2. As we change our lives on the inside, we will be fruitful in God's kingdom, bringing glory to Him. See Galatians 5:22-24.

God *constantly* holds out for our repentance, hoping that we will turn to Him. But, His patience and longsuffering will only last so long.

This lesson seems especially relevant here when taking Luke 13:1-9 into account. The Jews had been given chance after chance to repent. Now with the Messiah in their midst, only to be met with rejection, there was nothing more that could be done for them. Within forty years of Jesus' death the Jewish nation would be completely destroyed. As long as the world continues, we have opportunity to humble ourselves and submit to God. One day the time of His patience will cease and the judgment will come, 2 Peter 3:1-14; Hebrews 9:27. Let us use each day as an opportunity to become more like the Savior, spreading His message of love, forgiveness, and grace.

~via *New Livings*; Brownsburg, Indiana.



## ***Read, Read, Read***

**David Holder**

Recently in our High School Bible class, the students wanted to learn more about studying the Bible on their own. To make a point I referred them to the three most important considerations in buying and selling real estate — location, location, location. I applied this idea to Bible study. The three most important practices for effective Bible study are — read, read, read. Nothing substitutes for carefully and thoughtfully reading the word of God.

Through the Holy Spirit, God oversaw the production of the Scriptures so that they form a God-inspired, God-empowered word (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:9-12). They should be received not as the words of mere men, but for what they are — the word of God that performs its work in those who believe (1 Thessalonians 2:13). But for the Word to do its work, we must read, read, read.

Think about it. God commanded Moses to:  
At the end of every seven years . . . read this

law in front of all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the Lord your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 31:10-12)

When Judah's King Josiah led reforms throughout the nation, he had heard Shaphan the scribe read from the book of the law that had been found in the house of the Lord. In what must have been an incredible scene, Josiah gathered all the people of Judah to Jerusalem "and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 34:29, 30).

Once Ezra and Nehemiah had led the remnant of God's people in rebuilding projects, they gathered in front of the Water Gate in Jerusalem. Ezra brought the book of the law of Moses before the crowd, stood behind a wooden podium and read to the people from early morning until midday (Nehemiah 8:1-8).

We won't learn all we need to know in Bible classes. We'll never hear all the wonderful details of Scripture in sermons. Commentaries, computer programs, and publications can support and supplement our study, but nothing can substitute for taking the Bible in hand to read with our own eyes and hearts. Get out your copy of the Scriptures today and read, read, read.

—via *The Cornerstone*; Richmond, Virginia



## *Ears To Hear*

**Grant B. Caldwell**

Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 11:15). There are three times in the book of Matthew that Jesus used this expression. The phrase is a call to be alert to what is being taught. It is equivalent to our expression "pay attention" or "Listen Up!"

**True Greatness** — In this text, Jesus em-

phasizes the fact that true greatness is in the kingdom of God (verse 11). A person who does not make a lot of money, have a high IQ, or moves in the best social circles, can be considered great by God. So many wander through life trying to figure out who they are or where their place is. The creator of us all has answered those questions. Listen Up! One need only obey the Lord and be a citizen in his kingdom and he is greater than John the Baptist.

**A Condition of Heart** — In Matthew 13:3-23, Jesus tells the parable of the sower. It identifies four types of heart men have. One is hard. It is difficult for the Lord to get anything into this heart. A second is stony. This heart wants to accept the Lord, but there is no desire for depth of understanding and growth. A third heart is thorny. It is burdened with the cares of this world. Even though it wants the Lord, he is choked out by too much business (busy-ness). But Listen Up! You can have a good soft heart that truly cares for the Lord and is willing to be devoted to Him. Those of us who sow the seed (the word of God) are looking for those hearts.

**Must Live With Evil** — In Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43, Jesus tells another parable, the parable of the tares. The point of this parable is that there is evil in the world. Sadly, we have to live with that evil all around us. That evil tempts us to sin. It makes consequences in our lives which are difficult to bear. Even when we are confident and doing all we can for the Lord, still there is pain because others are only interested in sin. The Lord cannot just do away with all of the sinners. First, there would be no one left. We all sin. Second, and more so, there would be no more conversions. The Lord wants all men saved and is longsuffering for this reason (1 Timothy 2:4, 6; 2 Peter 3:9). Listen Up! One day, the righteous will shine like the sun and the wicked will be cast into the furnace of fire. We have to live with the evil now, but one day evil will all be over for those who obey God.

**What The Spirit Says** — In Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22, Jesus said, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." It is time for all of us to pay attention

to the teaching of the Spirit found in the word of God. Listen Up! It is only in accepting the Bible that you can be saved (Romans 1:16).

-via *News & Notes*; Madison Alabama.

## News & Notes

**THE SICK:** *Amber Hammond* had surgery on Friday at ECM in Florence and the reports from the surgery was good ... *Glenda Phillips' aunt, Vernon Green*, is in the ECM hospital and has been diagnosed with Leukemia ... *Brooke Blakely* has continued to be sick and not able to be at services... *Cindy Mosley* has been sick and unable to be at services Wednesday night ... *Caroline Parker* was sick and unable to be at services Wednesday night ... *Jamie, Taylor and Ava Mosley* have all been sick this past week ... *Myrtie Williams* continues in Glenwood Convalescent Center in Florence ... *Jim White, Eric White's father*, is undergoing cancer treatments ... *Signa Skipworth and Catherine Parker's sister, Anna Jean Luffman* continues her recovery from her recent heart surgery ... *Signa Skipworth, Catherine Parker & C.L. Weathers' cousin, Hilda Fincher*, is now at her home ... *Jack & Onzell Tucker* are confined at home ... *Judy Williams' mother, Flossie Kazzaire*, continues in a nursing facility in Fayette.

**BIBLE DRILL:** This evening at 5:30 p.m. will be the time for our children's Bible drill. I hope that all of our children will be able to be present. I hope that many of our adults will be able to come and encourage our children.

**SINGING:** The Carriger church in Limestone county will have a singing this afternoon at 3:00.

**ELDERS MEETING:** The elders will be meeting this afternoon at 4:00 p.m.

**THE RECORD:** Attendance-Week of Nov. 11th

**Sunday:** Bible Classes ..... 89  
Morning Worship ..... 103  
Evening Worship ..... 73

**Wednesday:** Bible Classes ..... 70

### Schedule of Services

#### Sunday

Bible Classes ..... 9:45 a.m.  
Morning Worship ..... 10:45 a.m.  
Evening Worship ..... 6:00 p.m.

#### Wednesday

Bible Classes ..... 7:00 p.m.

#### Elders

Michael Clemmons ..... (256) 247-0836  
Scottie Goode ..... (931) 565-3391

#### Deacons

Jimmy Glass ..... (256) 247-0571  
Eddie J. Hammond ..... (256) 247-3038  
Mark McIntyre ..... (256) 729-8316  
Steve Parker ..... (256) 247-7843  
Phil Pressnell ..... (256) 232-8509  
Rocky Rose ..... (256) 247-0011  
Brian Word ..... (931) 565-3799

#### Evangelist & Editor

David A. Cox ..... (256) 247-1049  
Office-(256) 247-5539

E-mail address: dacox@hiwaay.net

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P.O. Box 66  
Anderson, Alabama 35610

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