

# DOCTRINE OF THE FIG TREE

August 23, 1992

- I. Preliminary Considerations.
  - A. The Jews lost the second commonwealth in 70AD, as they did the first commonwealth, due to their negative volition to doctrine.
  - B. This event, occurring within the Church Age, was a fulfillment of prophecy (Lk.19:43,44; 21:20-24; Mt.23:38; 24:2; cp. Dan.9:26 "...and the people [Romans] of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary...").
  - C. From that date until 1948AD the Jewish people were at no time in possession of a national homeland.
  - D. The land promised to Abraham and his racial descendants forever languished in an undeveloped state, under various Gentile powers, in fulfillment of Deut.29:22-28 (cp. Deut.28:63-68; Lev.26:32-39).
  - E. God promised to restore the Jews to their land if they would, in their captivity, repent of their evil (Deut.30:1-10).
  - F. The return witnessed in the last half of the twentieth century is in unbelief, which fact seems to contradict the previous observation (see point IV.A.).
  - G. Israel must be a nation before the Tribulation, which fact alone means that the Rapture of the Church had to wait until Israel was re-established as a nation (the two witnesses of Rev.11 minister at a time when Jerusalem is in Jewish hands and when the Temple is in place).
  - H. The restoration process is the result of a political process known as Zionism (whose father was Theodor Herzl).
    - I. Jewish leaders have, in the present century, aggressively and doggedly sought out their fellow Jews among the nations in fulfillment of Jer.16:14-16 (cp. Zech.2:6,7).
    - J. Virtual whole communities of Jews have been removed from the place of their dispersion (like Operation Magic Carpet, which brought all the Jews [48,000] out of Yemen in 1950; and Operation Solomon, bringing some 50,000 from Ethiopia in 1991; hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews immigrated in the shadow of the collapse of Soviet communism).
    - K. The bulk of world Jewry resides in the U.S.A., and it will take the Rapture and a spiritual conversion to get them out (Jer.50:6-10,17-20; 51:6,9,10,45,46; Rev.18:4).
- II. The fig tree is a symbol for national Israel (Jer.8:13; 14:1-10; 29:17; Hos.9:10; Joel.1:7 "*My vine fig tree*"; Micah.7:17).
- III. Christ cursed a fig tree on His way to cleanse the temple on Tuesday of Passion Week (Mt.21:18,19a; Mk.11:12-14).
  - A. Out of hunger He approached the fig tree, desiring mature figs (cp. Micah.7:1,2).
  - B. The planted tree represents national Israel, and the absence of ripe figs represents the absence of mature believers to deliver and preserve the nation.
  - C. Finding leaves only, He cursed the tree, and it withered immediately.
  - D. Leaves represent the people and their national society (affluence, institutions, social life, etc.) that are necessary but do not carry a nation.
  - E. The cursing of the tree represents the fifth cycle (cp. Dan.9:26; Lk.19:41-44; 21:20-24).
  - F. On Wednesday morning they observed the tree that had withered from its roots (Mt.21:19b-22; Mk.11:19-21).
  - G. In 70AD the nation was destroyed at its very roots, eliminating the chance of a new state emerging from the cataclysm. (Historical attempts to establish a Jewish state failed until the 20th century. One example is the Crusades; another is mentioned on pages 183,184 of *Jerusalem* by Gulston; much earlier was the Bar Kochba revolt in 133AD.)
- IV. In a parable on faith (mustard seed) Jesus used a fig tree (wild fig tree: *ficus sycamorus*) to teach Israel's post First Advent dispersion (Lk.17:5,6).

- A. The disciples desired greater faith.
  - B. Jesus used the mustard seed analogy to illustrate the growth of faith.
  - C. The faith represented by a mature mustard tree would call for the uprooting of the fig tree, Israel.
  - D. The subsequent planting in the Gentile "*sea*" represents Israel's dispersion.
  - E. Israel is also represented by a mountain, which doctrine in the soul (maximum [Faith-Rest](#) via prayer) moves into the sea (cp. Mk.11:21-23; Mt.21:20,21).
  - F. Mountains are a prophetic symbol for world powers (cp. Dan.2 and 7).
- V. In the parable of the fig tree, Israel's re-emergence as a national entity is given as the major sign of Christ's return (Mt.24:32-35; Mk.13:28-31; Lk.21:29-33).
- A. The disciples wanted to know the sign (singular: a sign always points to something greater, i.e., the Second Advent) of His return (see Mt.24:3).
  - B. So Jesus gave them "*the sign*": namely, the replanted, budding fig tree (national Israel).
  - C. He also gave them a list of phenomenon that would coincide with the fig tree and would proliferate during those days just before the end.
  - D. They are: the rise of many false prophets and christs, wars (hot and cold), earthquakes, famines, and plagues (like AIDS).
  - E. In the parable Jesus assumes the historical replanting of the tree, which was replanted in 1948.
  - F. Disciples living then were to focus their attention on the budding of the tree, which is Israel's phenomenal post World War II development based primarily on immigration from all nations.
  - G. The vital conclusion we are to draw from this is that "*summer*", or the "*kingdom of God*", (i.e., the Millennium) is near, which is ushered in by Christ's return (Mt.24:32,33; Mk.13:28,29; Lk.21:30,31).
  - H. How near is set forth as a generation which will not pass away until "*all these things*" are fulfilled (Mt.24:43; Mk.13:30; Lk.21:32).
  - I. So the generation witnessing the budding of the tree will survive to the Second Advent.
- VI. Objections to the identification and interpretation.
- A. **Objection:** The present return is while Israel is still in unbelief; therefore, it does not count.
  - B. **Refutation:** Jesus came to the nation when it was in a state of unbelief (Jn.1:11), and Ezekiel prophesied that God would return them in unbelief, demonstrating that physical restoration will precede spiritual restoration (Ezek.36:22-25).
  - C. **Objection:** There is no prophecy relating to Israel and the nations being fulfilled in the Church Age.
  - D. **Refutation:** The fifth cycle and dispersion was fulfilled in 70AD (37 years into the age, cp. Dan.9:26), plus many commands to alertness "*lest the day overtake us as a thief*" (1Thess.5:1-19). Then there is the argument from historical precedence which would (if the above objection is true) make the Rapture generation in the dark approaching a major prophetic fulfillment (Noah knew the time, etc.).
  - E. **Objection:** Jews have always resided in the land since 70AD.
  - F. **Refutation:** The fact of a small community of Jews in the land is not the issue of this prophecy, but rather the establishment of a nation.
  - G. **Objection:** God did not establish the current nation.
  - H. **Refutation:** God establishes all nations (Jer.18:9).
  - I. **Objection:** When God restores Israel, it will be supernatural and the people will have Millennial prosperity.
  - J. **Refutation:** This displays ignorance of the whole restoration process, making the last phase apply to the whole. For a gradual restoration of the land see Ezek.36; and for a gradual restoration of the people from dispersion see Ezek.37; Jer.50:6-8; 51:6,45; Isa.43:5,6; Jer.16:14-18; Zech.2:6,7.
  - K. **Objection:** The fig tree does not refer to Israel, and the word "generation" means "race".
  - L. **Refutation:** See point I. for documentation as to the identity of the tree. The word γενεά *genea*,

means "generation" (according to usage; see Mt.1:17 [3X]; 11:16; 12:39,41,42,45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; 24:34; Mk.8:12,38; 9:19; 13:30; Lk.1:48;50 [2X]; 7:31; 9:41; 11:29-32,50 [2X]; 16:8; 17:25; 21:32; Act.2:40; 8:33; 13:36; 14:16; 15:21; Eph.3:5,21; Phil.2:15; Col.1:26; Heb.3:10). Γένος, *genos*, means "race" (see Mt.13:47; Mk.7:26; 9:29; Act.4:6,36; 7:13,19; 13:26; 17:28,29; 18:2,24; 1Cor.12:10,28; 14:10; 2Cor.11:26; Gal.1:14; Phil.3:10; 1Pet.2:9, "*chosen race*").

VII. The prophetic word predicts that other entities would coexist with Israel.

- A. Russia as a military power with confederates (Ezek.38 and 39).
- B. The "kings of the east" (Rev.16:12).
- C. The U.S. (Jer.50,51; Rev.18).
- D. The Revived Roman (European) Empire, consisting of 10 nations, under the Antichrist (Rev.13; 17:11-14).
- E. European Catholicism (Rev.17).

VIII. Applications to believers living in the Rapture generation and beyond (Mt.24:42, 25:30; Mk.13:33-37; Lk.21:34-36).

- A. Each generation is enjoined to watchfulness lest their generation be it.
- B. Teachers of doctrine are to act like "porters" signaling the Master's return.
- C. Believers who are spiritually alert receive a reward.
- D. Those asleep are still raptured (1Thess.5:6).
- E. We still watch for the third temple to be built.

Reviewed: April 27, 1995  
Reviewed: April 10, 2000