

God describes those He will come to protect and save, as “good trees.” God uses trees in many places in His parables, and we will discuss several here. We read in **Matthew 7:15-20**, that the good trees (those with good fruit), will be saved, and the bad trees (those with bad fruit, or no fruit), will be thrown into the fire. Make a note that the *fig* is mentioned in verse 16.

So, what is good fruit? How can I recognize if I’m on the right track (a path toward the kingdom of God), or on the wrong track (a path toward the burn pile)? If we look in **1 Corinthians 12:8-31**, we see signs, or fruits, of being on a path toward God (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, etc.). If we look in **Galatians 5:22-23**, we see more signs, or fruits, of being on a path toward God (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control). If we look in **Colossians 1:9-11**, we see even more signs, or fruits, of being on a path toward God (knowledge, wisdom, steadfast, patience, thankfulness). Now, it must be said, that if anyone possessed all of these fruits, or attributes of life, that they would be close to perfect. We understand that we acquire these fruits as God chooses to provide them to us as we go through this life. None of us will be perfect--very few will have many of these fruits--and different people will have different fruits evident in their lives. But, one thing is for sure--if you are not seeing the fruit that you do have ripen, and mature, then you may want to examine your life, and determine if you might be one of those who God plans on cutting down, and burning in the judgment to come.

Just because you may *not* think of your life as very fruitful (or maybe you have let some of your fruit set around too long, and think it may be rotting), that doesn’t mean it is too late. It just means that we need to be about the business of growing, and harvesting a new crop. In other words, in our lives, we sometimes take a wrong turn, or drop out for a while, but that may not be the same thing as turning our back on God totally, of going through life totally barren. God knows we all fall short in various ways. None of us is good, or perfect (**Rom. 3:10-12, 3:23**). In **Matthew 13:28-30**, God tells us He is waiting for the final harvest to determine who will spend eternity in His kingdom. But, we don’t want to tempt God. The time is always *now* to assess where we are, and where we need to be...and then, we need to do what is right! God is forgiving, and will forgive. But, of course, we have to want forgiveness. God uses the word repent, meaning change. We are to change from the world’s ways, to those ways of God—grow good fruit.

From the very beginning of creation—EDEN—God has used the image of trees to symbolize beings (see the book *Eden to Evil*—[Target Truth Ministries.com](http://TargetTruthMinistries.com)).

- Genesis** 2:9 Every *Tree* – some for food / some pleasant to see / one for life / one for knowledge
 2:16 Every *Tree* is O K to eat (partake of) Tree of Life also
 2:17 NOT the *Tree* of Knowledge
 3:8 Adam and Eve hid amongst the *Trees* (Ezek. 31:3-18 Trees in Eden)
 3:24 Guard and keep the Way of the *Tree* of Life
- Judges** 9:8-15 The trees select a king / but various trees decline / a bramble is selected
- 1 Chron.** 16:33 Some trees will sing...and also, some will cry when God comes to judge
- Psalms** 1 Righteous man like the tree living by water – never withers
 37:35-36 Wicked spreads himself like a great bay tree – which died
 52:8 Be like the olive tree – trust in God forever
 92:12-14 Righteous will flourish like trees in the house of God.
 96:12 Trees will rejoice before the Lord
 148:9 Fruitful trees and cedars will praise God
- Song** 2:3 The tree is like my son – his fruit is sweet (Gen 2:9, 2:16)
- Isaiah** 6:13 The elect of Israel are like the stump of the tree
 10:18-19 The trees will be destroyed – both body and SOUL – only a remnant left
 14:8 The trees rejoice at the enemies being destroyed
 44:23 They praise God – mountains (nations), forests (tribes), trees (individuals)

- 55:12-13 The mountains (nations) sing and the trees (individuals) clap their hands – the good tree in place of a bad thorn.
- 56:3 If you are in the Lord, you cannot be a dry tree – even if you are ridiculed here on earth
- 61:3 The plantings of God are to be called the Trees of Righteousness
- Jer.** 11:16 God once called you a fair tree with good fruit (Gen. 2:9, 2:16), but now He will set fire to you
- 11:19 They plotted to destroy Jeremiah, the tree with good fruit
- 17:7-8 Blessed is the man who trusts the Lord – he is a tree planted by living water
- Ezek.** 17:24 All trees (people), will know how great God is
- 20:45-49 Speak against the trees and the forest of the South (opposite heaven in the North)
- 31:3-18 Trees in Eden (Gen. 2 & 3)
- 47:7-12 Trees in the Millennium – fed by living water – purpose to give life – V 22, all nations will inherit Israel’s covenant with God
- Daniel** 4 This tree is Nebuchadnezzar
- Joel** 1:12 Just as men, various trees are withered
- Mark** 8:24 I see men as trees
- Rev.** 2:7 The Tree of Life
- 7:1 The 4 winds are held back from the earth, the sea, and the trees.
- 7:3 Don’t hurt the trees
- 8:7 1/3 of the trees are destroyed
- 9:4 Don’t hurt the trees, but only those men which are evil
- 11:4 2 olive trees – 2 to testify and be resurrected (Zech. 4:3-14)
- 22:2 The Tree of Life
- 22:14 The Tree of Life

Jesus gave us a parable about a tree while He was here. A *fig* tree in a vineyard, and we find it in **Luke 13:6-9**. God has already given this tree three years to produce, and will now give this “fig tree” a fixed amount of time to produce fruit -- one more year, then He will cut the unfruitful parts out, and cast them into the fire (just as we read earlier about the trees in Matt. 7). So, if we can figure out who, or what, this “fig tree” is, and if we follow its history, then we may know about when Jesus is planning on returning (**Matt. 26:55-64**). Who is the “fig tree?” Throughout Scripture, God uses the fig tree as a symbol of the nation of Israel, and God uses the grapevine as the symbol of His people.

Hosea 9:10 describes God’s people as grapes, and the leaders of the nation Israel as figs, and the nation itself is the fig tree. **Joel 1:7** describes the grapevine as the Israelite people laid waste, and the fig as the nation Israel. **Joel 2:21-22** says that God will restore the fig tree, and the vine - Israel. **Isaiah 5:7** describes the vineyard as the people of Israel. And, in **Zechariah 3:10**, God tells us that in the kingdom to come, that everyone will be invited to rest with His people (the vine), and His chosen nation (the fig tree). In the very beginning, in **Genesis 3**, God used a _____ leaf to cover Adam and Eve, to hide their sin, to deal with their disobedience. In other words, God is going to use this fig tree (Israel - His chosen), to deal with the sins of the world. First God gave Israel the Ten Commandments, and a sacrificial system (the Ten Commandments were given to Israel to show all of us that we really can’t do them). Therefore, we should recognize our need for some greater sacrifice in the future. Israel was to be a nation of priests, and carry the Word of God to the whole world (**Isa. 49:6**). Then, Israel (the fig tree), was used to provide for us the Savior of the world. Jesus, God, the Son, left His kingdom, and revealed Himself to us as a human being (born in Israel), for the purpose of dying for us (**Phil. 2:5-8; John 1:1-18**). Finally, in the end times, God will use the nation of Israel to signify His return. The fig tree, Israel, is destined by God to fulfill His plan (see **2068 Series** at Target Truth Ministries.com).

So, nation Israel has a fixed time to produce fruit, to put their trust in God, in Christ, the Savior. Nation Israel was first officially established as a physical nation with borders and a king (Saul), around 1,020 B.C., and almost 3,000 years later, around 1948 (after not having borders to call its own for over 2,500 years), it became official once again (see Message on **Great Prophecies** - Ezek. 4, at Target Truth Ministries.com). And, in 1967, Israel came into control of Jerusalem. Because the traditional understanding of the Hebrew faith, is that “one” year represents “one thousand” years in prophecy, the parable of Jesus in **Luke 13:6-9**, has been fulfilled-

-that the fig tree would be tended to for 3 years (3,000 years -- which has happened - 1020 B.C. to today), and these 3,000 years are ending during our generation (*right now*), and then Israel would be allowed one more year (1,000 years more). This 1,000 extra years is seen by some scholars as the millennium, the 1,000 year period *after* Jesus returns, when Jesus will give the nation Israel, and the world, one last opportunity to come into a loving relationship with Him--before the absolute final judgment at the end of the millennium (**Rev. 20**).

What makes this so intriguing is that Jesus also gave us yet another parable about the fig tree (Israel). In **Mark 13:28-33**, we learn that the generation which sees the fig tree come into leaf (come to life again, come out of its' dormant period), that "this generation" will see the end times, and Jesus return. And, after Jesus returns, then the millennium will begin. We ("this generation"), have, in fact, seen Israel come back to life again. Israel came out of its dormancy. The nation Israel, after 2,500 years without land, became a country once again in 1948. So, it seems that all three parables about the trees fit together. Luke 13 could point to our time (right now - around 3,000 years after Israel was established as a physical nation), and Mark 13 could point to our generation (right now - our time), while Matthew 7 points to the judgment to come of the trees, the nations, the peoples.

But, there are many that say the **Mark 13** reference to "this generation" is referring to 70 A.D. (to an event which had already occurred, when the temple was destroyed by Rome). In other words, to the generation of the time of Jesus, and not to this generation today (this same parable, by the way, is found in **Matthew 24:32-35**, and in **Luke 21:29-32**). The argument can be examined and explained, by going to the beginning of **Matthew 24**, where the disciples ask Jesus **three questions**:

Q # 1 – When will these things (the stones be cast down) happen?

Q # 2 – What will be the signs of Christ coming?

Q # 3 – What will be the signs of the end of the age?

Since we know that the temple stones were all cast down in 70 A.D. (when the Roman army destroyed the temple, and killed over one million Jewish people), this means that the answer to question # 1 is 70 A.D. This is covered in **Matthew 24:4-13**.

Then, in **Matthew 24:15-31**, Jesus answers question # 2 by describing the events to take place before He returns. Note that in verse 29, Jesus states that *after* the tribulation of those end days, He will return to gather His followers. Read **verses 29-31 in Matthew 24**.

Then, in **Matthew 24:32-35**, Jesus answers question # 3, and gives a parable to sum up what this last generation should look for.

The argument, that all these questions were fulfilled in 70 A.D., was accepted by most scholars up until 1914. The view of most scholars, up until 1914, was that God planned the millennium to begin after the great tribulation, and that this event of 70 A.D. (the temple being destroyed), was that end-time event, and, that the world would slowly be getting better and better during the *supposed* millennium period after 70 A.D. Many argued that the world was getting more peaceful through history (even though there were many wars, plagues etc.), until 1914. In 1914, WWI began, and brought with it even more destruction than happened in 70 A.D., which meant that things were not getting better. Of course, there had been many, many wars after 70 A.D., which should have led people to understand that things were not peaceful, and not getting better. God describes the millennium, in Isaiah (as well as other places in the Bible--**Rev. 20**), as a 1,000 year period of peace, until the very end, when Jesus brings in a final judgment. When WWI happened, everyone agreed that this didn't fit with the description of the millennium as a period of time where things were peaceful, and getting better. So, many scholars then concluded that the millennium was yet future.

Still, some scholars say that "this generation" (**Matt. 24:32-35**), cannot refer to the end times, because all other references in the New Testament to "this generation" are to the generation of Jesus. However, out of fourteen "this generation" references, three are the same references to the generation of the fig tree (future), while seven others are a reference to Jesus telling "His generation" that he would give them *no signs* of His return (which the fig tree references obviously are, as they are given in the context of end-times signs and events - **Matt.**

12:39). So, Jesus, Himself, is telling us, in His typical form of the parable, that the generation of the fig tree is a future end-times reference.

This view of “all” the events described in Matthew 24, as having been fulfilled by the destruction of 70 A.D., (called the “preterits” view), had been accepted for hundreds of years, and was still being taught in schools and colleges, even after 1914 (and, in fact, is still taught in some places, even today). There are still some scholars who insist we are in the millennium now, that things will get better, and that when we die, we are immediately given our resurrection body, and immediately sent, either to hell, or to join with other believers, in God’s kingdom (because Jesus has supposedly somehow already come back around A.D. 70). In fact, this view of us, at death, being immediately in a *conscious* state in heaven with God, is the result of the “preterits” view (of us supposedly being resurrected to our supernatural body as soon as we die, because we are supposedly in the millennium already). God’s Word says (see **Eccl. 9:5-6; Job 14:12; Psalm 17:15; Isa. 57:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18**), that we all sleep *until* the resurrection. And, God’s word says that while we sleep we are not aware of anything--we are asleep, and at peace with God, *awaiting* the resurrection (see **Final States** message at Target Truth Ministries.com).

Today, most people think we are conscious, and awake, when our spirit goes to be with God. This view is a direct result of hundreds of years of believing we were in the millennium already, and that those who died were immediately resurrected, meaning that there is no longer a period of sleep, and no general great resurrection to come for believers sometime in the future. However, a careful reading of Jesus’ words reveal we are *not* in the millennium. The resurrection is yet future, when Jesus returns (**Rev. 20:5-6**). Today, when we die, we are asleep, and at peace, and at rest with God in His kingdom, awaiting the resurrection to our new eternal bodies. We enjoy being in the presence of God, asleep in complete peace and rest.

Each of us needs to reflect on what kind of a tree we might be...are we producing any fruit? Are we ready to be cut down and be thrown into the burn pile? In the end...all will know (**Ezek. 17:24**).

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