

Parables (Part 32) - The Unfruitful Fig Tree (B) August 2, 2025

The following text is a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph. The original presentation can be viewed at <https://www.cornerfringe.com/media/5ym7jsj/parables-part-32-the-unfruitful-fig-tree-b>

*Portions of this document have been edited from the video message to better present a comprehensive, written document. Special attention was given to preserve the original context, but this document is not verbatim. Scripture verses are in the red text with other quotes in blue. Therefore, it is recommended that this document is printed in color. The Hebrew words are generally accompanied by the transliteration into the English alphabet. In most cases, the Hebrew is to be read from right to left.

The Unfruitful Fig Tree: Prophecy and Repentance

This is a transcript of a sermon from Corner Fringe Ministries by Daniel Joseph, focusing on the Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree within a larger biblical narrative. The sermon explores historical context surrounding Pilate and the Jewish people, highlighting Jesus's emphasis on repentance and immediate readiness for judgment rather than assuming divine retribution for specific sins. Daniel connects the cursing of the literal fig tree in Mark Chapter 11 with prophetic judgment against Israel's unfruitfulness and Jesus's cleansing of the Temple, likening the latter to Jeremiah's prophecies against a "den of thieves." The text also examines false teachings that promote lawlessness under the guise of grace and draws parallels to ancient texts like Sirach to underscore the urgency of repentance and the consequences of delaying it.

Well, Shabbat Shalom, everyone. We're currently looking at the Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree. Last week, we didn't even get to the parable. Last week was about just laying some groundwork to get some perspective on the imagery that we see in the Bible of how the Bible presents the fig tree idiomatically, metaphorically, and most notably, prophetically.

Today, we're actually going to break into the parable; however, we can't just jump into the parable; we need context. And the way we get the context is to recognize that the parable is part of a bigger narrative. In other words, to understand what Yeshua is after in the context of what He wants to convey, you have to go back to Verse 1, so this is where we're going to begin today. We read in Luke 13:1—
There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Now, this has been something that a lot of people have asked about in the past—what's actually being communicated here? And so, I want to dig into this a little bit and give you some perspective because we're going to need it.

Number one, there are a couple of questions we can't answer, and that is, why did this happen? Ultimately, the context of this passage is that you had Jewish Galileans going up to the Temple to offer up sacrifices, and Pilate gives the order to kill them, but what we're not told is why. So, we can just hypothesize that until the cows come home, they might have been perceived as a threat. They might have been part of specific groups in the first century, like the Sicarii. There were groups like the Zealots. These were groups that were willing to fight against Rome. Rome's presence in Judea and Samaria was

abhorrent to the Jews. They wanted this pagan nation out, and they were willing to do it at all costs. And so maybe they were a part of these groups; maybe Pilate saw them at some level as a threat.

The other thing we're not told here, and we can't answer, is how many? Was it three? Was it four? We know it's in the plural. Was it ten? Was it twenty? We can only speculate. But what we do not speculate on is the following: Pilate was a radical tyrant. And the fact that there were men who brought this event to Yeshua makes it not surprising that He would do this.

In fact, let me put this into context for you and take you back to the first century, back to the days of Philo of Alexandria. And Philo was a Jewish theologian and philosopher. He is well known to this day for his allegorical interpretations of the Torah, which are quite insightful. But Philo comments on Pilate's character, and listen to this. He said, —*ON THE EMBASSY TO GAIUS*, Philo of Alexandria—[\[Pilate was\] a man of a very inflexible disposition, and very merciless as well as very obstinate, and his continual, listen to this, his continual murders of people untried and uncondemned, and his never ending, and gratuitous, and most grievous inhumanity.](#)

Philo does not paint Pilate in a good light. Pilate is radically evil. He's literally putting men to death, and this is something that isn't the norm in Rome, where you're putting men to death who are untried and uncondemned. So, Pilate was something of a cowboy, and to further prove this, look at what Josephus says; he's a first-century Jewish Roman historian, and he records the following: —*ANTIQUITIES OF THE JEWS* 18.55 by Flavius Josephus— [But now Pilate, the procurator, or as we would say, prefect, of Judea, removed the army from Caesarea to Jerusalem, to take their winter quarters there.](#) Why? Now get this: [in order to abolish the Jewish laws](#) (emphasis added).

Pilate, it is well documented and well known, was completely offended by the Jewish faith. He was intolerant of the Jewish faith, and he wanted to eradicate it. Now, understand, that's not even the position of Tiberius, the emperor of Rome, who took a much more indifferent position. But Pilate was much more of a cowboy, if you will. He wanted to gut it out. He kind of moved, if you will, in the spirit of Antiochus Epiphanes, who wanted to do the exact same thing: root out the Jewish Torah and get rid of that.

Continuing, we read this: [So he introduced Caesar's effigies, which were upon the ensigns, and brought them into the city; whereas our law forbids us the very making of images.](#) He did this intentionally. Pilate knew exactly what he was doing. These effigies, these images of Caesar, are no mystery, and this is well documented even in Roman secular history—that the emperors were deified. They were worshiped, and so in all the land they would send out effigies, they would send out images of Caesar, and they would expect you to worship and to pay homage to these images. And the very thing that Pilate did caused such an uproar that it almost started the Jewish revolt early.

There are two different stories. One, they're going to the emperor of Rome, specifically and basically telling Tiberius, "This is what this guy is doing." Then later, what we discover, and I didn't put this up here, is that the Samaritans go to Vitellius, who was over Pilate, the prefect of Judea, and they tell on him, "Look at what he's doing to the Samaritans." In fact, what Pilate did to the Samaritans was to kill them on Mount Gerizim—commanding his soldiers to do that. That would be the end of his rule. He would end up having to go back to Rome, and that's the end of it; we don't hear anything more. And so, the simple point I'm making here is this guy is not a good guy. And you look at who this man is, and it makes perfect sense that he would be the one chosen to crucify Yeshua—to give the order.

And so, as we go back to Luke 13:1— **There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.** We see this information being brought to Him that the Galileans, Pilate, mixed, mingle their blood with the sacrifices. You have some context; this is no surprise. However, as we continue, something interesting is going to take place in Luke 13:2— **And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things?"**

Yeshua's response is peculiar. Pilate is all but absent from focus; that tells you something. It tells you there's an intent here. When you have these men bringing this information to Yeshua, "Oh, Yeshua, did you hear about what Pilate did to these men? They went up to sacrifice to the Lord, and now they're dead." It gives you some insight as to why they might have brought this information to Yeshua.

If you were there in those days and you saw that happen, some of you might be coming to the conclusion, Wow, they got their comeuppance. See, Proverbs 15:8 says, **The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD.** How many men were whispering in the background, saying, "All they did was go up and worship the Lord, and then they got cut down in that context?" Certainly, some men would have been thinking, "The Lord wasn't going to have it; the Lord didn't accept them."

And you can see this insight. I think of John 9:2; there's a man blind from birth, and Yeshua's disciples come to Him and say, **"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"** They're looking for who's responsible for this situation. Yeshua said (John 9:3), **"Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."**

It's kind of the same way here in Luke 13:2. Who's responsible for this situation? And maybe the people who brought them to this are thinking, Man, these people really messed up because they got taken out. And Yeshua's response, **Do you suppose that these men were worse sinners than** all other men? What is His answer? Luke 13:3—**I tell you no.** But now He's going to take the discussion—I guarantee you they weren't expecting this. He's going to bring this discussion to them. And He says this, **but unless you repent you will all likewise perish** (emphasis added). You will all likewise perish. In other words, does this story disturb you guys? Is this troubling to you? Really? Well, take special note because what happened to them is going to happen to you.

What does Yeshua mean by that? Well, I can tell you this: this is very simple; the lesson is very easy. These Galileans left their homes, probably left their wives and children at home, to go up to offer, maybe the first fruits of their agriculture, maybe their firstborn of the flock, maybe just to come up with the *shelamim* (שלמים), the peace offering, the *khatat* (חַטָּאת), the *asham* (אֲשָׁם), or whatever it was; they came up to the Temple, and not one of them expected not to go home.

Think about the joy you would have going up to the Temple. I'm coming here to praise the Lord and to honor my God and the thoughts of thinking about tomorrow. Yeah, and tomorrow I'll make my journey back home, and the thoughts about the business that God has blessed me with are, I need to do this, this, and this. When I get home, I need to plant this, and I need to trim these things. All these thoughts are coming, not knowing for one second you'll never leave Jerusalem. In fact, in the context where you go up to offer to God, you'll be struck dead. Now, that is a sobering thought, and that is the thought that Yeshua brings to the table: guess what? You don't know if you have tomorrow.

Ecclesiastes says this; this is powerful. Ecclesiastes 9:12— **For man also does not know his time** (emphasis added). Now, take this in; isn't it interesting? One of the things that we've covered in the

parable series is the following: It's the fact that Yeshua comes back to every single generation. He comes back to every single generation because every generation is subject to death. And it's appointed for man to die once and immediately; what we're told is that after death is the judgment. So, it doesn't matter what generation you lived in; all I know is that when you die, the next thing you will know is the judgment of God.

Here's where I'm taking this. It is fascinating to me that when you talk about the coming of the Lord, the way the Bible talks about it, the Bible talks the same way about death. See, we're told that in regard to the coming of the Lord, no one knows the day or the hour. Nobody. Well, that's interesting because nobody knows the day or the hour of their death. You do not know. You may have plans for tonight, and you may have plans for tomorrow. You know nothing because you may never see them. And the key thing is, are you ready? Are you ready for judgment?

Ecclesiastes 9:12—**Like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them** (emphasis added). Suddenly, just as Pilate fell on these men who were busy about ministry, busy worshiping God, you know, I even think to myself, how foolish it is to think that I should have plans for ministry; I know nothing. I can't plan next week because guess what? I don't know my time. We should rather say, as James says in James 4:15—**"If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."**

Moses lays this truth on us in his prayer. It's a prayer of Mosheh in Psalm 90:12—**So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.** The only people that actually have good math, that know, that have numbered their days, are the ones who have repented. People who have repented and understand (Matthew 10:7), **'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'**, have done so. These are the ones that understand God-math. Teach us to number our days.

Then Yeshua builds on this. John 7:6—**Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready** (emphasis added). If your time is always ready, then you'd better be ready always because again, I'm not guaranteed the rest of this day; nobody is. I have a saying: "Live like there's no tomorrow, and die knowing there is!" The idea here is you'd better live for today to be intentional. You repent today. You focus on worshiping the Lord, making good decisions today. You live like there's no tomorrow, and when death comes, die knowing there is eternity through faith in Yeshua. That's how we're called to live.

So, the lesson as Yeshua drops this truth bomb in Luke 13:3—**I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish** (emphasis added). This is not something they were expecting for this thing to flip around on them. See, they were looking at this as, man, did they really screw up? Is this a judgment of God? They're looking out, and Yeshua brings it home. And so, this is the time to get the planks out of our own eyes; it's a radical teaching. One of the most persuasive teachers in life is death. It's why Yeshua is using it; it's a powerful instrument to learn—to prepare for self-introspection is death. In fact, it's so powerful, Yeshua doesn't stop; He's going to build upon this statement.

Look at what He says in Luke 13:4—**Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?** He doubles down on this. He grabs a story; clearly, He doesn't grab something that they have never heard of. Apparently, the Tower of Siloam, which would be within the walls of Jerusalem—how many of these eighteen do you suppose knew? Yeah, you know what? Today, I'm going to wake up, I'm going to go out, and it's going to be an interesting day. The tower's going to fall on me, and I'm going to die.

Not one of these men had a clue what was coming. They didn't wake up that day and go, I'll never have another day on this earth. They wouldn't have a chance to repent if they had not made it right with the Lord. Talk about giving your first and best of your day; when you wake up, you give it to the Lord because an hour later, you may be gone. I wonder how many of these eighteen did not have time to repent.

How does Yeshua, as He lays this out in Luke 13:4, **do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?** He goes on and says in Luke 13:5—I tell you, no; **but** get the lesson: **unless you repent you will all likewise perish.**" (Emphasis added). In other words, the lesson is that you want to repent before it's too late. And so, I want you to understand. Do you want to know the context of our parable? This is it in Luke 13:5; you want to repent before it's too late. That's the entire purpose of the parable.



So, with that said, let's break into the parable. Luke 13:6— **He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had, oh, a fig tree planted in his vineyard** (emphasis added). Now, take this in: We have a fig tree planted somewhere, specified in his vineyard, and in Greek, it's *ampelōn* (ἀμπελών). This is a term that you will find is all over the Synoptics. Over and over and over and over again, it is used in parables, and what does it represent? As you start going to these parables, they represent Israel. You have a fig

tree planted in the Lord's vineyard. That means this fig tree is in the vineyard of God's mercy. The fig tree is in the vineyard of God's grace, of God's promise, and the vineyard of God's covenant, and the vineyard of God's truth—everything that this tree needs to grow and to bear fruit it has because it's in His vineyard. The expectation is it's going to bear fruit because it's in the Lord's vineyard.

Luke 13:6 goes on, and it says this: **and he came seeking fruit on it and found none** (emphasis added). What in the world? But it's planted in the Lord's vineyard; how can this be? Well, it's interesting. The very situation that's being described is literally recorded as happening in Scripture. This is where it gets really fascinating. And you want to talk about blowing your mind and getting some real perspective here on this parable; we need to go look at the event actually happening, where Yeshua goes to the fig tree, a literal fig tree; it's a literal event. As we look at this, the veil is going to be pulled back, and we're going to get a tremendous amount of perspective.

What I want to do is to take you to Mark Chapter 11; this is where it's found. It's also found in the Gospel of Matthew, but we're going to look at Mark Chapter 11, and you can turn there. What you'll notice is in the front part of Mark Chapter 11; it's one of the most magnificent moments ever. It's the Triumphal Entry.

Yeshua the Messiah is coming down from the Mount of Olives and riding into Jerusalem, and as the prophets prophesied (Zechariah 9:9), **Behold, your King is coming to you; ... Lowly and riding on a donkey.** Yeshua is riding on a donkey that His disciples laid their clothes on. They're laying their clothes

before Him as He's making His way to Jerusalem, laying down palm branches, waving palm branches, and declaring (Matthew 21:9), *Hoshana le-ben David* (הושע נא לבן דוד), "**Hosanna to the Son of David**, and *Baruch Haba B'shem Adonai* (ברוך הבא בשם יהוה), '**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!**'

They're crying out, they're hailing the king, the King of Israel, and of course, the Pharisees were upset. The Pharisees wanted Yeshua to rebuke those who were crying out and confessing Him as the Son of David, the rightful King of Israel, and He said (Luke 19:40), If these remain quiet, then the rocks are going to cry out; I'm going to be glorified. I'm going to be glorified. This is His coronation as a king.

So, He's making His way from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem. And this is where we're going to pick this up. Mark 11:11— **And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple.** This is the amazing thing. All those cries, oh, *Hoshana le-ben David*, Hosanna to the Son of David. He goes into the Temple, and what we're told is that the children cry out, Hosanna, Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

The Chief Priests and the Scribes come and say, "Do You not hear what they're saying?" They're going to Yeshua, telling Him to make them stop. Matthew 21:16— '**Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have perfected praise.'**?" He shuts them down. He receives praise on His way into Jerusalem, and as king, He receives it in the Temple—absolutely magnificent.

And then we read this in Mark 11:11—**So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve** (emphasis added). There are two things I want to say here. Number one, what is being described here of Him, He's in the Temple, and now He's going to go back out to Bethany. Bethany is on the Mount of Olives; it's on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. We know from Scripture, for example, Luke, that Yeshua's tradition was during the day, going into the Temple, and at night, going to retreat to the Mount of Olives. And so, this is a consistent pattern with Yeshua.

The second thing I want you to note is what is highlighted here in Mark 11:11. It says, **So when He had looked around at all things** (emphasis added). It's not a mundane detail; it is vital. He is taking it in; He is bearing witness to the behavior of the men operating in the House of the Lord. And so, here's the deal: He takes that with Him and goes back out to the Mount of Olives.

Now follow this: Mark 11:12-13—¹² **Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany**, again, the Mount of Olives, He's making His way back into Jerusalem; this is important, the most important point. He's going back to the Temple, all right? **He was hungry.** ¹³ **And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves**, this is our parable; it has leaves. **He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it.** He's looking for fruit. **When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves**, for it was not the season for figs (emphasis added). Absolutely amazing. Exactly the same situation, only this is not a parable; this is a literal event.

Then you have Mark's parenthetical statement right at the end. Well, it wasn't the season for figs. Mark adds this to let you know that this situation that's being described is not some random experience with some physical fig tree on the way to Jerusalem. But there's a greater spiritual reality, a prophecy, that is being heralded, that transcends simply one little physical fig tree. It transcends it, and we'll see this as we continue in Mark 11:14—**In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it** (emphasis added). Yeshua comes to the fig tree; the expectation is that I see leaves, and there should be fruit. There's no fruit, so Yeshua's response is, "I'm going to curse it." He literally curses the fig tree. For me, this puts into perspective the words of Paul to Timothy when he said in 2 Timothy 4:2, **Be ready in season and out of season.** Be ready in season and out of season, lest this situation happen, of the cursing of the fig tree.

I want to begin to peel back the layers of prophecy here, because this is so profound. And I want to bring you to the Book of Jeremiah; we're going to spend some time here. Jeremiah 8:13—**"I will surely consume them," says the LORD.** That's a curse. That's a declaration of judgment. Now, this is in Jeremiah; this is what God is declaring through the prophet Jeremiah. I'm going to destroy them. How does he describe this? You cannot make this up. **"No grapes shall be on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree.** It literally describes judgment; this is the imagery that's utilized with judgment. **And the leaf shall fade; And the things I have given them shall pass away from them."** (Emphasis added).



Yeshua comes to this fig tree on his way into the Temple, and He finds no figs on the tree. Then what follows is amazing; He declares a curse. Let no fruit ever be found on you again; there will never be figs on this tree again. That is literally lining up with the Bible prophecy of judgment, so this is quite significant. There's more going on here than some random little physical fig tree getting cursed.

Mark 11:15—**So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple,** again because this is so important; He leaves the Mount of Olives and makes His way to Jerusalem to go into the Temple. On the way, He finds this fig tree. He's hungry and doesn't find figs, so He curses it, then goes into the Temple **and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves** (emphasis added).

I want to deal with a misnomer that is often applied to this situation. The misnomer is that what is going on here is that you have unequal weights and measures. You have corrupt men who are charging exorbitant rates for people that are coming in. And while that, let's just say, maybe that happened, that's not the issue of what Yeshua is upset with.

The issue that He's upset with is not commerce in and of itself, because, let's be clear, the Torah provides provisions for Temple commerce. In other words, if you want to sacrifice to the Lord and you're too far away, you exchange money, you bring your money, and you buy those things that are necessary.

Well, to be able to do that, you have to have a platform to do that. And so, commerce, to offer Temple sacrifices, was a provision established in the Torah.

It's not about the commerce; it's about where it's happening. It's happening in the Temple. Do you know that the archaeologists have actually found evidence, and scholars make note of this? They found evidence at the Mount of Olives of Temple commerce, of the buying and selling of the sacrificial animals. Well, that would make perfect sense. But to bring that stuff, and as John 2:16 says, to turn **My Father's house** into **a house of merchandise!**" That's problematic.

And furthermore, it's not even just that. We go on to Mark 11:16— **And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple.** Do you know what wares are? It's their business. So here you have businessmen, Jewish businessmen, using the Temple as a shortcut to get to their destination. Out of convenience, they are going through the Temple court with their business. And let's just say your business is the business of olives. That's my business; I sell olives, so you're bringing your carts through because it's shorter than having to go around. Do you understand what's going on here, what Yeshua's perceiving? There's a desecration of what is holy. They're losing sight of the holiness of God.

Mark 11:17—**Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written?** Now Yeshua is going to drop Scripture. He's going to lay Scripture on them, and what is it? It is this: **'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'**" (Emphasis added). Yeshua is quoting Jeremiah 7:11, and the only way you could possibly appreciate the magnitude of what He's saying and where He's saying it. He is saying these words at the Temple of God.

To help you appreciate literally what is going on and the ultimate overarching issue here, I'm going to take you back to Jeremiah Chapter 7, and this is really going to put this into perspective, because this is not Yeshua randomly just plucking out a verse that just seems to work at the time; it's very calculated and has deep meaning. It says in Jeremiah 7:1-2—¹ **The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,** ² **"Stand in the gate of the LORD's house—**meaning, go to the Temple. Jeremiah is to go to the Temple **and proclaim there this word, and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the LORD!'"** (Emphasis added).

So Jeremiah is commanded, "You need to go to My temple. You need to preach My word." But specifically, He's not asking him to go preach to the Gentiles, to the heathens, to the pagans, to the unbelievers, the agnostics, or the atheists. No, no, no, no, no, this word is for My people, it's for My vineyard, it's for My house; this is critical.

And what is the word? We go to the next verse; in part, this is the word. Jeremiah 7:3—**Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways and your doings,** and I will cause you to dwell in **this place** (emphasis added). Repent! That was the message.

So, when these men in Luke Chapter 13 ask Yeshua, Did you hear what Pilate did to the Galileans? Yeshua's message, the bottom line, was, "Yeah, you're going to end up just like them unless you repent." The first words in Yeshua's ministry, according to Matthew 4:17, are **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."** This is the heartbeat of the gospel. If there is a gospel that is not preaching repentance from sin, that is no gospel. This is the message: God is (2 Peter 3:9) **not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.** He wants them all to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved.

Now we drop down just a few verses, and we're going to get some more of the words that Jeremiah was commanded by God to speak to the people. Listen to this: Jeremiah 7:8— **"Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit.** You love the lie. You would rather feast on the lie than on the truth. By definition, what's being described here in Jeremiah's day is that the people are under delusion. They're coming to the house, they're singing the songs, they're raising their hands, they offer the sacrifice, they burn the incense, and they declare the name of Yahweh. Oh, they're doing all the things. They say the prayers, and yet the Lord responds, "You're delusional. You love the lie. You're trusting in the lie." That's what Eve did. God gave her the command of truth, and yet she believed the lie, and this is where they're at.

Why does this stuff happen? Well, it's interesting; let me just back up a couple of chapters, and we're going to be told how this stuff comes to pass. Jeremiah 5:31 — **The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; oh, and My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?** (Emphasis added). See, they have itchy ears. There's a time coming; I love what Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:4. There's a time coming when men **will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables**, to delusion, to deception, to the lies. And they will choose the lies over the truth. And the people heralding this, championing this cause, are the shepherds; they're the pastors, they're the preachers, and they're the teachers. They're the ones that are supposed to be bringing the unadulterated Word of God in the context of our Father's heart.

Yet, the enemy knows all too well that if he gets to the shepherds, he will feast on the sheep; it's absolutely demonic. And you will know when you're staring down the barrel of judgment; you will know it when the shepherds have been compromised. You will know it, and you will see the fruit of it.

We read this in Jeremiah 28:15—**Then the prophet Yirmeyahu, Jeremiah said to Chananyah, Hananiah the prophet, "Hear now, Hananiah, the LORD has not sent you, but you make this people trust in a lie** (emphasis added). The mark, the very mark of a false teacher, a false preacher, and a false prophet, is this: making you feel comfortable in walking away from the commandment of God, exactly what the serpent did to Eve in the garden; he made her feel comfortable. Oh, you're actually going to be better off; it's to your benefit that you walk away from this commandment. "You're only going to be enlightened. Your eyes are going to be opened; you're better off," said the false prophet, said the antichrist, and said the lying teachers.

Jeremiah 28:16—**Therefore thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will cast you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have taught rebellion against the LORD.'**" (Emphasis added). The mark of a false prophet or false teacher is that they teach the opposite of what God is saying, and it's an abomination; it is an absolute abomination.

When you peer out on social media today and you hear the rhetoric that is going on in our own camp and on the other side of the tracks, such as, you know what? Well, you can keep the Sabbath, but it's not necessary. You don't have to keep it, but if it's your conviction, then go ahead and keep it, but God doesn't command Gentiles to keep the Sabbath. It's a lie from the pit of hell; that is the mark of a false prophet. You're telling me something that is literally in direct opposition to a commandment of God. I'm not going to listen to you; you have nothing to say to me.

Moving on to Jeremiah 23:17—**They continually say to those who despise Me, 'The LORD has said, "You shall have peace"; and to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, 'No**

evil shall come upon you." (Emphasis added). They make you feel good, like Satan made Eve feel good. You surely will not die. Don't worry about it; you don't have to worry about what God says.

So, going back to Jeremiah 7:8, that gives you some perspective: **"Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit.** And now the Lord is going to get specific, and He gets into it. Jeremiah 7:9— **"Will you steal** (eighth commandment), will you **murder** (sixth commandment), **commit adultery** (seventh commandment), **swear falsely** (ninth commandment), **burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know** (first and second commandments)?

He starts burning through the list of the 10 commandments, and He doesn't stop here. If you go back to Jeremiah 6:13, He said, **"Everyone is given to covetousness"** (10th commandment). You go to Jeremiah 17:21-27, and He condemns them for desecrating the Shabbat (the fourth commandment). He goes through the whole list of the 10 commandments, all of it, and I think of this.

Then we go to Jeremiah 7:10—**and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered,** we're set free; we're under grace **to do all these abominations'?** (Emphasis added). See, literally, what they're declaring is we're not under law. We don't have to do those things. We're under grace; it's all good.

This is what Jude talks about; this is what he warns us about. Jude 1:4— **For certain men have crept in unnoticed,** into the church, the body of Christ, **who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men,** yeah, **who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our L Jesus Christ** (emphasis added).

All throughout history, even in the vineyard of the Lord, they're turning from the Grace of God. They've insulted, as the writer of Hebrews talks about (Hebrews 10:29), **insulted the Spirit of grace.** (Hebrews 10:26), and **sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth,** saying, "We're delivered, we're set free, we're okay."

I want to take you to the Book of Sirach. This is typically classified, especially in the Protestant realm, as the Apocrypha. But what I want to say is that this particular book has been read throughout the history of Christianity. It's part of the Christian narrative, all throughout Christianity, in its history. In fact, the first Bible, the Christian Bible, was the Septuagint. You will notice the Book of Sirach is in that. You will also notice that the early church fathers drew from it. I'm talking about the Greek and Latin church fathers; it doesn't matter. We're talking about Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian of Carthage, Hippolytus, and others. They are early church fathers, and they were drawing from the Book of Sirach. It's in the Wycliffe Bible, 1382. It's in the Coverdale Bible, 1535. It's in the Geneva Bible 1557, and most notably, it is in the King James Bible 1611; the Book of Sirach is included. And so all throughout Christianity, this has been read.

You know what's really amazing? When you study the Book of Sirach and you're grounded in the New Testament, what you discover is, oh my goodness, how much the Book of Sirach is in the New Testament. And certain phrases—where did these come from? You discover, oh my goodness, it came from Sirach.

I'll just give you a couple of examples, and then I'm going to get to my point. In Romans 12:15, we read the following: **Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.** This is the Apostle Paul.

Well, that's interesting because you go to Sirach 7:34, and it says, "Do not avoid those who weep, but mourn with those who mourn." The idea verbatim.

We look at James 1:19—So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be what? Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (emphasis added). Where did James get this? Did James just pull this out of thin air? Actually, it's from Sirach 5:11—Be quick to hear, but deliberate or slow. When you look at this in Greek, it's slow in answering (emphasis added). It comes directly from Sirach.

We look at Yeshua's words in Matthew 6:14—"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. And this is explicitly when Yeshua is teaching us how to pray. He teaches this to make sure, man, we're going to be hurt. Well, this is in the Book of Sirach. Sirach 28:2—Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray. Almost 200 years before the Gospel was going out, the Book of Sirach was laying these tracks.

And so, the simple point I'm making, and I could show you many, many others in the New Testament, is that all throughout the history of Christianity, this book has been drawn upon and seen as useful. Now, we can call it subservient to our canon, which it is; everything outside our 66 books is subservient, but it can be helpful at times. All throughout history, this has been something Christians have been reading, and I'm going to show you why and how this pertains to our subject.

And so, in the Book of Sirach, we read this: Sirach 5:4—Do not say, "I sinned, yet what has happened to me?" for the Lord is slow to anger. He is *arech appayim* (אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם). He is slow to anger. And man, did he hit it on the head. You want to talk about preaching it? Do not think to yourself, "That man, I sin," and then look around and see that lightning didn't come down and strike you. Something horrible didn't happen the next day, so on the next day, you do it again. And you're like, "Oh, I'm okay, I went to work, I have food on my table, I have money in the bank, things are good. I'm not worried, you know, we're good." You know, the delusion that we lie to ourselves and tell ourselves. You men think you can look at crap on your phone and filth on your computers, and yet you can go to work and still maintain your health. You think you're okay. Nothing bad happened to you.

You had better take this in because he goes on and says this: Sirach 5:5—Do not be so confident of forgiveness that you add sin to sin. See, we get delusional where we turn the Grace of God, like Jude says, into lewdness. Oh, it's a license to sin. That's what we turn this into. It gives us the ability to go on and just do whatever we want according to the dictates of our own heart, and you absolutely distort the Grace of God. That is not the Grace of God; that is the grace of the devil. I want God's mercy, not the devil's grace. Adding sin to sin, if my concept of grace is for me to live however I want, you're under the devil's grace."

And we read this, Paul said in Romans 6:1-2—¹ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Lawlessness, walk away. Should we do what these men are doing in Jeremiah's day? Should we do that? And the answer is: ² Certainly not! Don't you dare. How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Here's what I can tell you: if you're in bondage to sin, you're not free in Christ; you're living a lie. You're eating the fruits of lies. You are delusional, and by definition, you're deceived. And the worst part about being deceived is that deceived people don't know they're deceived because they're deceived. Yeshua says in John 8:31-32—³¹ "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." So that's when we start mapping out our behavior, our

thoughts, and the intents of our hearts. We start filtering them through the Word of God. And through that, I will acquire the fear of the Lord, and I will not add sin to sin. I will embrace the grace that is in Messiah Yeshua. And the whole concept is Psalm 119:88— *"Kechasdecha chayyeni ve'eshmerah edut picha."* (בְּחַסְדֶּךָ חַיֵּנִי וְאֶשְׁמְרָה עֵדוּת פִּיךָ). **Revive me**, bring me to life, **according to Your lovingkindness, so that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth**. That's the lesson over and over again.

When the Lord told Israel to keep the Shabbat, He said (Exodus 20:2), **"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt"** I have delivered you; therefore, you shall keep My Sabbath. Because of grace, because of mercy, the expectation is obedience, amen?

Sirach 5:6— **Do not say, 'His mercy is great, he will forgive the multitude of my sins,' ...** I want you to understand what the writer is saying. He's saying, "Wow, I'm going to live like hell today, and tomorrow I'll repent." Tomorrow I'll repent of my covetousness. Oh, tomorrow I'll repent of my idolatry. Tomorrow I'll repent of my immorality. Tomorrow I'll repent of my doubt. Tomorrow I'll repent of my selfishness. Today, I'm going to live for myself; I'll do it tomorrow. Do not think that you have tomorrow, and if you've already made that decision today, you're a dead man.

And we move on: Sirach 5:6— **... for both mercy and what? And wrath are with him, and his anger will rest on sinners.** See, what the devil wants to do is to only show you one picture as you are chasing after the devil. As you are going to do the devil's work, he just wants to show you the grace of Jesus. And don't worry about it. You can keep coming. You can keep walking down this path. You can repeat the same habitual patterns you've always had; it's okay. God loves you just as you are. You don't need to change.

Sirach 5:7— **Do not delay to turn back to the Lord, and do not postpone it from day to day.** That is the lesson: repent before it's too late; that's the message. The concept of Joshua 24:15, **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve**, and Psalm 95:7-8, **⁷Today, if you will hear His voice: ⁸"Do not harden your hearts.** You get right with the Lord. And He's going to tell you why: a little motivation, **for suddenly the wrath of the Lord will come upon you, and at the time of punishment you will perish** (emphasis added).

Well, that's what happened to the eighteen at the Tower of Siloam. They didn't have another day to repent. Death came upon them suddenly when Pilate gave the order to come down. When they're thinking, "I'm going up to offer sacrifices." The last thing you'd be thinking is, "I'm going to be cut down today." And they'll never have tomorrow to repent.

So going back to Jeremiah 7:10-11—**¹⁰and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'?** And the people said, "We are delivered to do these abominations." How does the Lord respond to the mindset of perverting the grace of God and walking in lawlessness? This is how He responds: **¹¹"Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the LORD** (emphasis added).

The Lord knows. So you can come in here, and you can raise your hands, and you can sing the songs all you want, and you can have fellowship. But if you are sinning in secret, just know today, He knows; He's looking down, and the last thing you want to come out of His mouth is **"Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves"** because this is a declaration of judgment.

Only when you understand this declaration of judgment do you understand the magnitude and the context of Yeshua, who was in the Temple, the very place Jeremiah was. Jeremiah was in the Temple speaking these words, and Yeshua was in the Temple speaking these words. Well, what happened? What followed the days after Jeremiah prophesied that? Jerusalem fell; the Temple was burnt to the ground, and men were slaughtered. An unbelievable, horrifying judgment followed. And now Yeshua is speaking those very words in the Temple yet once again.

Well, in 70 AD, look at what happened. Now you can't make this stuff up; this is not a coincidence; this is not an accident. And it's interesting as we continue here; they responded the same way they responded to Jeremiah. Mark 11:18— **And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him;** that's not the first time these scribes, experts in the law, heard these words. They knew that these very words were spoken in Jeremiah, and they knew what they meant, and they're offended—**for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching** (emphasis added).

In the days of Jeremiah, the scribes and the chief priest were offended; they wanted to kill him because he prophesied such things. It is interesting that, in Matthew 16:13-14, when the disciples come to Him and Yeshua asks them the question, **"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"** Well, **"Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah,** and then there's the third name, **and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."** Do you want to know why? Take this in: some people believed He was Jeremiah the prophet. The only reason they would say that is because He's doing the things that Jeremiah did. He was prophesying the very same things. Now that's unnerving because I know what followed that: total judgment and destruction coming suddenly. No more time to repent. No more second chances; it's done.

Mark 11:19-20—¹⁹ **When evening had come, He went out of the city.** ²⁰ **Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots** (emphasis added). Now you have to see this because this is mind-blowing—two things. The fact that it mentioned dried up from the roots—do you know when you go to the prophets, for example, Malachi? And it's talking explicitly about the judgment of God coming upon the wicked of the earth; it literally says it will leave them neither root nor branch. The fact that it's dried up from the roots means there's no coming back; judgment is final.

It's one thing to trim off the branches; you still have the tree, it can still grow, and it still exists. You can trim the branches. You know, all of us are likened to trees; we really are. Scripture likens us to trees. And you know what? There are times when we need to be pruned. We have to cut some ugly stuff off. What you don't want is what you're seeing right here. When it finally comes to the time where He curses and you're dried up from the roots and there's no more time and there's no second chance to repent.

The second thing that I want to point out here, which is amazing, is that you'll notice how Mark creates an inclusio. All that means is he creates this literary pair of bookends where the story starts with Yeshua descending from the Mount of Olives to go to the Temple, and on the way, He goes to look at the fig tree, He curses it, and then goes into the Temple and declares, **Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves** (emphasis added), proclaims judgment, and then He comes back out to go back to the Mount of Olives. They wake up the next morning and go out and look at the fig tree and see that it's dried up from the roots that He cursed. This is not a coincidence how this story is structured, literarily speaking.

And we go to our last verse here. Mark 11:21— **And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away."** (Emphasis added). It's gone, and we don't want to be in that camp.

And so, we're going to close in prayer.

[Closing prayer]

Abba Father, man, the more we peel back the layers of Your parables, the heavier it gets. And there is an urgency, with every parable, there is an urgency to repent. There's an urgency to turn back. There's an urgency to confess sin. There's an urgency to get in the right relationship with Yeshua the Messiah. There is an urgency to bear fruit worthy of repentance.

And Lord, I pray that Your flock take Your words. They take of You, and they take this home, and they let Your Spirit do what Your Spirit does best, casting light upon darkness, unearthing the secret sins that bind us in deception. Lord, I pray against the lies of the enemies, the principalities and powers that try to convince us we're okay. It's okay that we're doing these things because we see this being done throughout the world, and nobody's dying for it. As though everything is good, no harm will follow. Lord, I pray against that deception. I pray for the fear of the Lord to be in this place. I pray for the fear of the Lord to be in my house. I pray for the fear of the Lord to be amongst the leaders of this community.

Lord, may we (Psalm 119:11) hide **Your Word** in our **hearts** that we **might not sin against You**. May we have people who don't just come to the cross, but they're willing to pick it up, and they're willing to follow You wherever that may be, carrying that cross to their death, not loving their lives to the death.

And so, we just thank You, Lord, for Your compassion and Your goodness. The only reason every single one of us is here today and we have air in our lungs is because of Your mercy and Your loving kindness. And so, Lord, may we take this time as we get into the last song to praise Your great name. And we pray this in the name of Yeshua, the Messiah. Amen.