

THE BARREN FIG TREE



Passages to Study: Luke 13:1-9.

Read with the class: Luke 13:1-9.

Texts for memorization:

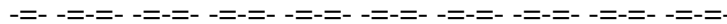
Younger: Luke 13:3 "Except ye repent, ...".

Older Romans 3:12.



OBJECTIVES: To teach:

1. That tragic events not be interpreted as the result of some great sin in the life of a victim, comparing him/her with others in whose life no tragedy has entered.
2. That ALL are sinners and ALL must repent.
3. That death can come unexpectedly to some, and is delayed in the lives of others.
4. That the repentance of each person is absolutely necessary if a person is to be saved.
5. That the meaning of the word repentance carries with it the idea of abandoning sin.
6. That the patience of God is great as He waits, as did the vineyard owner, for the repentance of His people.
7. That God's patience has its limits.



SCENE No. 1. VISUAL AIDS: In the temple grounds, near the altar, Roman soldiers attack some Galileans as they are worshipping.

Note: As a "bridge" to help the students identify with this story, ask them if they have heard on the news about some tragedy such as plane or vehicle accidents, natural disasters, etc.

Ask the students if they know of inexplicable things that have occurred among their own families or friends. From an early age children look for an explanation of tragic things that happen. It is not up to the teacher to give a reason for everything that happens and point out who is to blame, but rather to direct their attention to their own personal condition.

DEVELOPMENT:

- The people of Judea and Jerusalem believed that they themselves were not as sinful as others who lived farther away from the Holy City
- Galilee, the province of the Galileans, was the northernmost province of Israel.
- According to historians, there were "separatist" groups living there that rebelled against Roman authority.
- Some Galileans, who had come to Jerusalem to worship, provoked the wrath of Pontius Pilate and, while they were offering sacrifices in the temple, Pilate sent his soldiers to kill them.
- Jesus knew that the Jews thought that the Galileans suffered this terrible massacre on account of being great sinners.
- Jesus contradicts this idea of the Jews that these Galileans were great sinners, worse than other Galileans.
- God wants the tragedies and calamities that come into our lives or the lives of others to make us think carefully and make changes.
- The Jews thought themselves to be better than others.

Apl. Stress Romans 3:22-23 to show the universality of sin and that no one is more or less guilty than another. See also Galatians 3:22.

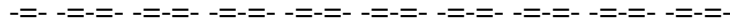
Cmt. COME SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD. The Glory of God is that which reflects His holiness and righteousness.

- There is nothing holy about man in his sinful state.

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- The Lord does not deny that the Galileans were sinners, but as He refers to a tragedy that occurred closer to home, Jesus shows that their own countrymen had also suffered a calamity.
- Was it because of being greater sinners? See the following scene.



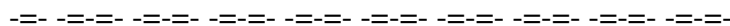
SCENE No. 2. VISUAL AIDS: Figures of a structure in Jerusalem which had fallen upon and killed eighteen people.

DEVELOPMENT:

- The people of the Jewish capital, Jerusalem, looked down upon those of the province of Galilee.
- Cmt.** The pride of the human heart motivates us to believe that we are better in some way than others whom we disdain or treat with contempt.
- The tower of Siloam was built in the southern end of Jerusalem.
- In this accident 18 people had died.
- Those who died in this accident were Jews, not Galileans as in the previous case.
- The people who died there were no more deserving of the wrath of God than were the other sinners in Jerusalem.
- Jesus wants this tragedy to be a warning to the Jews that they must repent, because sooner or later all must die although not everyone under the same circumstances.
- Jesus knew that within less than 40 years the Roman army would arrive, led by Titus.

Historical note: In the year 70 AD, following a long siege, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans and all its inhabitants killed in a bloody massacre.

- There is judgment awaiting all those who today do not repent of their sins.
- Repentance is a change of thinking that brings about abandonment of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus. (See Acts 20:21)
- God searches the hearts of each one for a change of thinking about God, about sin, about salvation, about the Lord Jesus, etc.
- This results in a change of attitude which rejects sin, and acknowledges the necessity to exercise faith in Christ for salvation, that is, to obtain forgiveness of sins.
- The evidence of true repentance is seen in a life that produces fruit for the glory of God.
- Cmt.** This fruit is seen in ways such as love of God, obedience to His Word, service in His Name, and imitation of the Lord Jesus.
- Cns.** Paul spoke of “following” (imitating) him as he imitated Christ. (1Cor.11:1)
- This involves adopting a pattern of behaviour similar to the practises seen in the Lord Jesus in His dealings with others.
- In order to illustrate the teaching He was giving, Jesus recounts the parable of the fig tree.
- The barren fig tree is an illustration of a life in which there has been no repentance nor fruit.
- Sug.** Before introducing the parable, ensure that the students have understood that those who suffer misfortunes in their lives are not necessarily worse than others, for innocent people also suffer and die. The Lord is teaching that **ALL** are sinners and **must repent**.



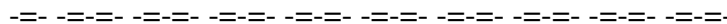
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SCENE No. 3. VISUAL AIDS: A field with figures of the owner of the vineyard talking with the caretaker about a fig tree planted there.

DEVELOPMENT:

- The fig tree was planted in a fertile place, one where there was plenty of water and care given to the soil.
- The owner had waited patiently for fruit, having been disappointed during the previous three years.
- Cmt.** It is possible that this was a new tree and it's fruit-bearing time had started three years previously.
- As owner he had a right to expect fruit and, if this was not given, he could exercise the same right to remove any tree and leave its place for another that would give fruit.
- The fruitlessness of this fig tree was not due to lack of care, but to a defect in the tree itself.
- The owner is a figure of God, who had given many privileges to the Jewish nation.
- The fig tree is a figure of the Jewish nation and is referred to in this way in several parts of the Old Testament.
- The Jews realized that the parable referred to them.
- The Jewish nation had not given God the fruit He wanted and was not at all repentant about this.
- The vineyard-keeper is a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who had come in the name of the Father seeking fruit.
- The lack of fruit from this nation is shown by the attitude they had toward the One who was sent by God.
- God had patience with His people due to the intercession of the Lord Jesus, but there was not much time left to them.
- During His ministry of more than a three years, the Lord Jesus Christ showed great mercy and patience toward those who opposed Him.
- Exm.** They tried to trap Him with tricky questions and at one time tried to thrust Him over a cliff outside of Nazareth, etc.
- Sug.** The teacher will be able to think of other occasions in which the Lord showed meekness and humility. (Matt. 11:29)
- At the end of His life and while hanging from the cross, Jesus requested, "Father, forgive them".
- God gave them yet another opportunity, sending them the gospel by way of the apostles.
- The result of this was that instead of repenting, they showed their hostility by stoning Stephen
- The Lord tried to dig about the soil of the hearts of His people with signs and miracles. He fertilized it with His teachings, without seeing the desired results.
- As He ended this parable, Jesus gave His hearers a solemn warning.
- If they did not give fruit, the Jewish nation would be cut off. This occurred in the year 70 A.D.
- Cns.** Because He it is who has given us life, God has a right to order our lives and He expects that we will be useful to Him.



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SCENE No. 4. VISUAL AIDS: Figures of fruit that the Lord wants to see in the lives of people.

DEVELOPMENT: Application figures could be as follows:

- A child sharing his candy.
- A child reading his Bible and praying.
- A child happily obeying his parents and helping in some household task, for example doing the dishes or cleaning the yard.
- Some of the fruit the Lord looks for are:
 - a)** obedience to His Word;
 - b)** showing kindness to others;
 - c)** respect shown to parents and teachers (even when other schoolmates do not show it),
 - d)** a clean life. Etc.
- This all begins with repentance and faith in Christ as Saviour.
- Works do not save. (Eph.2:8 and 9) Those who are saved are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” (Eph.2:10)
- This parable contains a solemn warning for the students about the future judgment that awaits each one that does not repent.
- Since the whole nation is guilty of sin, Jesus warns that they must repent or they will all likewise perish.
- The Jews were about to commit their greatest sin, that of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ as Messiah and Saviour.
- We all have sin of which we ought to repent, including that of not paying attention to the salvation that God is offering.

Cns. Repentance is a change of attitude that leads one to stop sinning and place faith in Christ.

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