

Israel – The Olive Tree

Throughout the Scripture the Olive Tree is consistently used as a symbol for Israel. The Olive Tree also symbolizes faithfulness and steadfastness.

One interesting fact about the Olive Tree is that no matter what the conditions: whether hot, dry, cold, wet, rocky, or sandy, the evergreen Olive Tree will live and produce fruit. It is said that you can never kill an Olive Tree. Even when cut down or burned, new shoots will emerge from its roots. All of this reflects the toughness and durability of the tree. This Scripture passage reminds us that no matter the conditions of life, we should remain steadfast as the Olive Tree in the presence of God - evergreen (faithful) and bearing fruit.

Psalms 128:3 says, "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house; Your children like olive plants all around your table."

The analogy of your children being "like olive plants all around your table" would tell the ancient Bible reader that his offspring would be plentiful, hearty, and even dutifully responsive to the parents. All you have to do is look at almost any Olive Tree and you will see as many as ten or more new tree shoots growing up out of the root system around the tree. Psalms 128:3 would have been a comforting and faithful promise from the Lord!

The Olive Tree, Israel and The Church

The most striking use of the image of the Olive Tree in the Bible is in Romans 11 where Paul describes the relationship between Israel (i.e. the Jewish people, and God's ancient and ongoing covenantal relationship with them) and the Church. In fact, the entire three chapters of Romans 9-11 are focused on this topic and culminate with the Olive Tree image. Paul shows us that the Olive Tree represents the covenants and promises that God made to Israel, growing from its holy Root, which is the Word of God. The natural branches are the people of Israel. Those who turned away from that relationship were broken off. Christians are simply the wild branches grafted in among the natural branches to "became a partaker with them of the root and fatness of the Olive Tree," which God established (Rom. 11:17).

It is evident from Scripture, as well as from nature, that the root and trunk support the branches, and not vice versa (11:18). In this position, there is no room for pride or the notion that we Christians have replaced Israel (the Jewish people), or that God rejected His own covenants and promises in the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament). There is no room for boasting and arrogance, as the

Church has been prone to do, since both the natural branches and the engrafted wild branches only remain by faith (Rom. 11:18-21). The Church is an extension of a plan that pre-existed it. Therefore, there should only be Godly fear (11:20) and thankfulness for the Lord's great mercies to us (11:33-36), as well as an attitude of love and mercy towards the Jewish people who are beloved for the sakes of the fathers (Rom. 11:28). After all, it is through Israel and His covenant people that God gave us everything we Christians hold spiritually dear! There is only one tree, not two, and we "wild branches" have been privileged to drink in new life from the cultivated, established tree.

Historically, the Church has not honored these passages as it not only boasted against the Jewish people (the natural branches), but severely persecuted them to the point of death.

Often, the Church has lacked even the most basic understanding of our Hebrew roots. Also, it has not recognized that we cannot fully grasp who we are, without acknowledging these roots.

As a result, the historical Church has sadly perpetrated outrageous acts towards the "natural branches" (i.e. the Jewish people) during the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Pogroms, and even in the formulations of the teachings that became a religious justification for Hitler's Final Solution of the so-called "Jewish problem" in the Holocaust. Instead of mercy, Christianity showed contempt.

Honoring Our Roots

Christianity did not spring forth from a vacuum. It sprang from the highly developed religious tradition and culture of ancient Israel. It is all too easy for us Gentiles to forget this all-important fact. The Gentile church actually has no root system of its own. It is a previously wild branch grafted on to the trunk and roots of Israel.

For instance, if Yeshua were present with us today, His "Jewishness" would probably shock most Christians. Yet, we know from Scripture that a woman once came to Him and touched the tzit- or fringes, of His garment (Luke 8:44). He wore the garments of Jewish tradition, just as many orthodox Jews do today, fulfilling the commands of the Law (Dt. 22:12).

Likewise, the earliest church was a Jewish church. It was headquartered in the Jewish capital, Jerusalem, and was presided over by a Jewish leader.

Jesus said, "Think not that I came to destroy the Law and the prophets...I came not to destroy them but to fulfill them!" (Mt. 5:17). Jesus is "the same yesterday,

today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). As Christians, we should see that Yeshua epitomized the Law and the teachings of the prophets as the living Word of God. And yet, so many of us know so little of the Tanach, the Hebrew Scriptures.

Christians refer to these writings of the "Old Testament" as though the term "old" means it is of little value when compared with the "new." Yet, without the "old," the "new" loses much of its meaning and it is often misinterpreted or not fully interpreted. When we do this, we are missing out on so much God that has for us in His Word.

It was from this "Jewish/Hebrew" perspective that the Church began to reach out to the world of the Gentiles. It was as if Judaism had been uniquely tailored by Yeshua and the apostles to be made "attractive" to Gentiles. Gentiles would now be able to receive the Jewish Scriptures, to heed the Jewish prophets, and to sing the Jewish Psalms. As Paul went out with the Gospel message, he was careful to stress that the message was emanating from Jerusalem and Israel. He encouraged Gentile saints to collect funds for the needy in Jerusalem (I Cor. 16:2-4); he referred difficult doctrinal decisions to Jerusalem and to the Jewish elders there (Acts 15:2); his Gospel journeys usually began or ended in Jerusalem.

He even gave the Gentile church an example of keeping Jewish feasts in Jerusalem (Acts 20:16).

Acts 20:16 Paul had decided against stopping at Ephesus this time because he didn't want to spend further time in the province of Asia. He was hurrying to get to Jerusalem, if possible, for the Festival of Pentecost. NLT

The Apostle Paul did something else as he ministered among Gentiles. He stressed the importance of keeping the right attitude toward Israel and the Jewish people. That attitude was to be one of humility (Rom. 11:20), mercy (Rom. 11:31) and kindness, even to the point of stressing an obligation in sharing material gifts with the people of Israel (Rom. 15:27). It was a wonderful ideal. But, in time, Paul's exhortations began to go unheeded.

There were many factors which brought about the vast chasm which exists today between Israel and the Church. The two unsuccessful wars fought by the Jews against the Romans in AD 70 and in AD 133-135 undoubtedly did much to strain relations, since the early Church refused to help their Jewish brothers in these wars. The very vulnerability and isolation of the early Church also might have contributed to their sense of separation from those who began to persecute them.

Finally, the early Church Fathers certainly did not help the situation, since many were openly anti-Semitic. The young Church fought for its life against Roman persecution from without and heresies from within. All this led the Church toward exclusivity and into taking a stand against its Jewish roots.

With the conversion of Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century, and the subsequent "Christianization" of the whole Roman Empire, this anti-Semitic trend became crystallized. The Church moved rapidly to rid itself of all Jewish trappings. For example, the Christian holiday of Easter was divorced from its Jewish origins in the Passover; Saturday (Sabbath), the biblically prescribed day of rest and worship, was changed to Sunday; Pentecost was disassociated from Shavuot, etc., as the Church attempted to cast off the influence of "this odious people" (as the Jews were described by some Church leaders).

A theology generally termed as Triumphalism began to be in vogue. The same theology has persisted to this day, occasionally finding renewal under different names, including Replacement Theology.

Basically, this belief proclaims that God is finished with the Jews: that Christianity has indeed replaced Judaism and that the Church is the true Israel. This theology universally applies all the scriptural blessings to the Church, and all the curses to Israel.

To show the fallacy of this teaching, read Romans 9-11 and everywhere it reads "Israel," replace it with the words, "the Church." You will quickly see how erroneous this theology really is. Israel is Israel, even in the New Testament. And, when the Gentile Church is included in that concept, we are given that position by virtue of "grafting in," "adoption," "partakers," and being "made near:" never by "replacing."

Of course, the almost immediate result of such a theology was the outright persecution of Israel by the Church. This painful malady has persisted through most of the 2,000 years of Christian history, contributing even to the Nazi Holocaust. It is surprising for most Christians to learn that Hitler only put into practice what the Church in Europe had believed and taught for centuries.

Even today, after this awful disaster, anti-Semitism abounds in the Church. An example of this is seen in the fact that many otherwise loving Christians are suspicious of "those Jews." Perhaps this is an expression of the ultimate in anti-Semitism, the denial that the Jewish people have any place in God's plan today.

Recovering Our Roots

What we see prescribed in the Bible is a far cry from what we see in the Church today. We see that God had purposed from the outset that Gentiles are to be a part of His plan, but not the whole plan. We receive glimpses of this program of God as far back as Father Abraham. God promised the patriarch Abraham that he would be the father of multitudes of goyim (peoples, nations, Gentiles) (Gen. 17:4), and that all nations would be blessed in him (Gen. 12:3). This theme is carried on in the descendants of Abraham.

We see the theme picked up in the woman Rahab, who was saved from the doomed city of Jericho and allowed to join with the people of Israel; and again as the prophet Isaiah describes the Messiah of Israel, called the "Root of Jesse." It is said that this Messiah would "stand as a banner for the peoples (Gentiles); the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious" (Isa. 11:10). But perhaps we see the theme of Gentiles being joined to Israel most clearly in Ruth the Moabite, who was not only allowed access into Israel, but who became the great-grandmother of King David.

The beautiful story of Ruth expresses for us most clearly what a proper attitude toward Israel should be.

Ruth 1:15 And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

16 But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.

17 Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me." NKJV

In fact, this woman seems to illustrate, in her life, most of the fruits of the Spirit mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23. She was truly devoted to her Israelite mother-in-law. She loved her with a deep love and commitment which led her to forsake her own heritage, and even her country, in order to be with Naomi. When Ruth arrived in Israel it was not with a feeling of superiority as many Christians have today. Instead, "she bowed down with her face to the ground..." (Ruth 2:10). She was willing to abase herself to a position lower than a servant girl's (2:13). Her attitude was one of continual mercy and generosity as she shared her meager gleanings with Naomi (2:18).

The life of Ruth was also marked with obedience (3:5), kindness (3:10), holiness (3:10), discretion (3:14), true love, faithfulness and commitment to Israel (4:15). Ruth said to Naomi, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

Perhaps in Ruth's life we get a visual example of what the engrafting into the Olive Tree of Romans 11 is all about. It is time that we, the Church, put aside our arrogance and, in humility, understand what it means to be that wild olive branch graciously grafted in by God to receive from Israel those everlasting covenants, promises and hopes that we have been "made near" (Eph. 2:11-13) -- lest we be broken off for our arrogance and boasting.

Let us honor our roots and show love and mercy to God's natural branches!

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A Symbol Deciphered - The Fig Tree

The fig tree is also one of the more frequently mentioned trees in the Scriptures. It was from its leaves that Adam and Eve made their first covering (Gen. 3:7). The fig tree was valued first of all for its delicious, sweet fruit (Judges 9:11).

Judges 9:10-11

10 "Then they said to the fig tree, 'You be our king!'

11 But the fig tree also refused, saying, 'Should I quit producing my sweet fruit just to wave back and forth over the trees?' NLT

It was also a symbol of prosperity and security: "*and Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree*" (1 Kings 4:25). It was an enjoyable thing to rest, meditate on God's word, and pray in the shade of the fig tree as Nathaniel did in John 1:48.

Figs are considered a typical fruit for the land of Palestine. The best loved and most nutritious were the spring fruits, which ripened in May and referred to as figs in the fig tree of the first time (Hosea 9:10). The main harvesting of figs occurred in the later months of the summer and in the fall. Those figs were called late figs. They were inferior in their quality. The poorest ones were even fed to cattle.

The Fig Tree As A Symbol

The Prophet Joel uses the vine and the fig tree as symbols of Israel and the church to predict first of all a withering drought and afterwards a glorious restoration when the Former and Latter rain fall in the same month.

Joel 1:12 The vine has dried up, and the fig tree has withered; The pomegranate tree, The palm tree also, And the apple tree — All the trees of the field are withered; Surely joy has withered away from the sons of men. NKJV

Joel 2:21 Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the LORD has done marvelous things!

22 Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; For the open pastures are springing up, And the tree bears its fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength.

23 Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month. NKJV

Some other places in the Bible indicate that the fig tree also has a symbolic meaning. One of the Lord's miracles is most intriguing when his cursing of the fig tree caused it to wither. This seems to have been the only miracle in which Jesus used his power to destroy something. It also is the only miracle which was of no benefit to anyone. All others were done for the benefit of men. The Lord multiplied bread, healed diseases, and raised the dead. This miracle however was in conflict with our Master's disposition, who to the suggestion of destroying the wicked, answered back to his disciples: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of". (Luke 9:55).

All these facts imply an exceptional character of that miracle and its symbolic meaning. But to understand this symbolism, the miracle must be considered in the light of our Lord's parable of the barren fig tree.

In Matthew 24 : 32; Jesus used the descriptive analogy of a "fig tree", to instruct his disciples about how we could discern the timeliness of his return to Israel. He said

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh:"

The fig trees of the Middle East region are a fruit- producing tree or shrub. The size of the tree, and the capacity to produce figs depends mainly on the soil that the tree is rooted in.

Typically, the fig tree produces its fruit before sprouting forth its leaves in the spring, and normally would produce, not one, but two crops of figs each year.

In Mark 11:13 Jesus, after leaving Bethany, which is just to the east of Jerusalem; saw a fig tree in the distance, and noticed the leaves that were on it; and eagerly looked forward to partaking of the fruit of it as he neared it; yet when finally arriving at the tree, he found there was no fruit upon it; for the time for figs was not yet in season. Upon seeing that the fig tree produced no fruit, Jesus cursed the tree, with the disciples standing by observing.

He then proceeded on down to the city of Jerusalem, and into the Temple, whereupon he went into a rage, chasing out the moneychangers, and calling the holy place nothing more than a den of thieves.

The disciples must have thought these actions were the actions of a madman. After all, what sane person talks to a tree and pronounces a curse upon it? I believe that everything in the Bible and in the entire life of Jesus has a divinely intended purpose or message. I don't think God wastes his words, nor would Jesus have behaved in such a manner without it having some significant meaning.

But, try to imagine the disciples' astonishment, when out on the same road back to Bethany, they pass right by that very same fig tree, and lo and behold, it has already withered up and dried. Why would Jesus curse a fig tree?

During the first dispersion of Israel, God sent a vision to the old prophet Jeremiah, of two baskets full of figs. One of the baskets had good figs while the other basket contained bad figs.

Jeremiah 24:5-7: Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans, for their good.

For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down, and I will plant them, and not pluck them up.

And I will give them an heart to know me, that "I AM" the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.

Here, in these verses, God likens the captive exiles of Israel to the those good figs in the basket. The Jewish remnant which was still left in Jerusalem, God likens to the bad, or evil figs retained in the second basket.

I should point out that Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon rose up against Israel and took captive all the children of Israel except those princes who were left as mere puppet rulers in the holy city. The year of Israel's defeat by Babylon was 606 B.C. Then nineteen years later in 587 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar returned back to Jerusalem and destroyed the city and executed King Zedekiah.

Anyway, God promised through Jeremiah that he would return Israel once again into the land, and afterwards that Israel shall no more be uprooted from the promised land; and that He would write his law in their hearts. (Jeremiah 31:33)

This promised dream has never been fulfilled during the long history of Israel. It is still a future eventuality. But the fact has been historically established that

Israel has forever become prophetically typecast, in a figurative sense, as a fig tree.

When Jesus came strolling down Bethany Road to the city of Jerusalem on that day, he wasn't simply looking for something to eat off the fig tree to satisfy his bodily appetite; but rather, He was looking for "Good Figs". It is national Israel that God has planted in the midst of the garden of nations to portray himself to all the rest of the nations of this world. God has historically longed for Israel to bear fruit (figs), but unfortunately, Israel has never acknowledged the true "Branch"; for which she has been a vehicle to bring fruit from the world.

In Jeremiah 23:5; God says:

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise to David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and also prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth.

This scripture continues on to say that in the days of the rule of the righteous Branch, Judah itself shall be saved, and Israel will dwell safely in their land.

Of course Jesus is the righteous Branch that was born from out of the stem of Jesse; as Isaiah 11:1 foretold. In the strictest definition, God is in reality the fig tree; with the righteous branch being Jesus; while the figs are the fruit of the tree. Israel is symbolically represented as the early blooms on the fig tree, while the church is typified by the leaves that are on the branch. Later in Romans chapter 11 we find that the Gentiles have been grafted into the branch.

So, when Jesus found no figs upon the fig tree, on that afternoon, and cursed the tree; He was displaying to the openly disciples in a figurative way, that national Israel still as yet had not bore any fruit from the branch; by the mere fact that their immediate generation still simply did not recognize the "time of their visitation" by their Messiah.

In Luke 18:31-33; Jesus had already instructed the disciples that he was going down into Jerusalem, and while there all the things prophesied concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. He informed them that he would be mocked, scourged, and put to death; and yet rise up again on the third day.

The symbolic paradigm acted out at the roadside fig tree was a public display of the rejection of Israel's king, and that "ISRAEL", would suffer the a historical curse in like manner as the fig tree that the disciples saw.

In Luke 12:56, that Jesus took to task the Scribes and Pharisees for not being able to discern the signs of the times. Israel should have anticipated that the season for the Messiahs appearance was at hand, and that the time for the harvest of good figs was nigh at hand.

In Daniel 9:25-26; the prophet Daniel had foretold that the Messiah would make an appearance in the rebuilt city of Jerusalem exactly 483 years of the Hebrew calendar; after the commandment went forth from the Persian King Artaxerxes Longimangus, which was issued on March 14, in the year of 445 B.C. This commandment is recorded in the Bible in the book of Ezra 7:12-13, and again in most of the book of Nehemiah.

So then, on Palm Sunday, in the year of 32 A.D., every single Jewish believer should have been down at the Eastern Gate in anxious anticipation of giving a rousing welcome to the expected King of the Jews.

Although there was a moderate crowd assembled to welcome Jesus into the city, spreading some palm branches before him; by and large, Israel was very unimpressed with Jesus appearance.

Even the disciples were not altogether sure as to who Jesus was. In Luke 10:23-24, Jesus said to them: *Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; 24 for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."* NKJV

Many people throughout Israel's history had desired to see the Deliverer, or the Messiah King; but to no avail. They were never afforded that wonderful opportunity. However, a particular generation was providentially destined to be witnesses of the Kings' timely presentation.

Even today, there is a generation that has a divine destiny to not see death, but to be transported away by the returning King; much in the same manner that Old Testament Enoch was ushered up into Heaven.

The Bible is accurate, right down to the very minutest detail. God expresses everything in a carefully designed pattern. Every single word, phrase, jot or tittle, has purpose. It is absolutely foolhardy to alter any of it, or to not consider any portion as intensely significant.

Consider Galations 4 : 4, for example:

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

Notice the phrase, ("The fullness of The Time"). It is an indication that Jesus birth was synchronised to occur at a definite and prearranged point in human history, an event which God foretold (prophecy), so that there would be absolutely no confusion about who the son of God, the seed of the woman, really and truly was.

All of Israel should have been on hand that Palm Sunday to thank God for being faithful to his word.

There was indeed a very devout man, who had discerned that the Messiah would come during his lifetime, and he had been individually promised via the Holy Spirit that he would see Jesus arrival before his death.

Luke 2:25; And, behold there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Simeon had a direct promise from God of seeing the Messiah before he ever passed away.

Simeon probably believed that Israel would accept their long awaited King. He had no idea that Israel would kill the very one that was the lifeblood of the kingdom of Israel. He most likely died comforted in the notion that Israel was rejoined to their King. The generation that immediately followed Simeon should have expected Jesus. Jesus very own generation should have had great expectation from among its own ranks that someone special from God would emerge.

Alas, that generation would fail to recognize him; and would cut him off, and then endure later in life to see the total destruction of the beloved rebuilt city of Jerusalem.

In Luke 19:41-44; Jesus approached the city, and on a high overlook, viewed out upon the city, and wept over it.

Luke 19 : 42: Jesus said, If you had known, even you at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace! but now they are hid from your eyes.

Even at this late date, Jerusalem could have received its King, and enjoyed the promised Kingdom of God, but still their eyes were not opened to the reality of his imminent visit.

Saddened because of Israel's ignorance, Jesus went on to proclaim that Jerusalem would undergo the loss of its national homeland, including the Holy City, and Temple.

Luke 19:43 For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, 44 and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation." NKJV

The season for Israel's blossoming had arrived, and good figs were anticipated, but although the fig tree had blossomed, the time for figs was premature.

Mark 11:13 expresses thusly: *And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing on it, and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.*

Jesus knew there were no figs on the tree even at a great distance away, and indeed everyone of the disciples knew that the season for figs was still early a little early. So, in essence Jesus was exposing the disciples to the fact that their nation of Israel was not yet ready to produce fruit for the Lord either. But alas, remember, a fig tree produces not one harvest, but two harvests in a growing season.

The fig tree normally produces a crop of figs in late June, and then again another crop comes along in early September. That first crop is produced on the branch grown the previous season.

The first crop produced by the Branch is symbolic of the harvest of the Church. It was to the Gentile world that Jesus turned his attention, after Israel had bypassed its time of visitation.

Acts 15:19 says: Simeon hath declared how God at first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

Israel did indeed produce the righteous Branch, but the first crop of good figs has been cultivated from the nations of the rest of the world, instead of Israel.

Israel, by failing to acknowledge the timely visit of their Messiah, was thus subjected to the soil (world) of the earth, and became dried up and dispersed from its originally planted spot, to await yet another visitation, or season of harvest.

Make no mistake about it though, Gods promises to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the good basket of figs still remains intact. God still intends to glean a second harvest from the fig tree of Israel, but only after that fig tree (Israel) has again put forth its leaves; and produces another budding of the fig tree later on in the growing season.

Why has this taken place, and when will the rebudding season of the fig tree take place? It would seem obvious that Israel, after 2,500 years of Diaspora, has been planted again in her God given land and the desert is becoming a glorious garden as predicted by Isaiah.

Gentile Domination Ceased in 1967

Romans 11:25, For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, till the "Fullness of the Gentiles" be come in.

Isaiah 35:1 speaks of The Future Glory of Zion

The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;

2 It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, The excellency of our God. NKJV

The church is grafted onto the righteous "Branch" of Israel, and Israel is indeed our tree of heritage, with the God of Israel being the root of it all.

For nearly 2000 years, Israel had lain dormant, like that old barren fig tree that Jesus cursed. Like the old fig tree, Israel was uprooted from the land, and left in desolation, while the Gentile nations have trodden across the land of Israel. Jesus said this condition would persist until the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21:24)

Jeremiah prophesied that Israel would be fruitless at the time of their initial visitation, and would lose their land at the first seasonal opportunity.

Jeremiah 8:13, I will surely consume them, saith the Lord: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor "figs on the fig tree" and leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.

The fading leaf of the fig tree is a prophetic glimpse of the apostate condition of the church in the Last Days when the fig tree of Israel shall indeed begin to rebud for its season of finally producing good figs.

The word "Gentile", is a translation of the Hebrew word, "Goy", with "Goyim" being the plural form of the word for Gentile Nations. The phrase that Jesus used, "Times of the Gentiles", is a term which is synonymous with the Biblical concept of Gentile history; based on the two-fold relationship of the nations of the world with God, and his relationship with his selected nation, Israel. It could more aptly be termed as "the Times of the Nations".

The times of the Nations historically and Biblically commenced with Israel's demise at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, as has already been pointed out, and those times of the Gentiles have continued right on up to the present day.

Thence, we come to the specific point of the usage by Jesus of the analogy he used in comparing Israel with his parable of the fig tree. Again he said:

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:"

The command to "learn" is invoked in this usage. What have we learned from the fig tree? We know that Israel was the good figs that God promised to restore a kingdom to; and that when God sent forth HIS Branch, (Jesus) that while it was still yet "tender", that the branch ? (Jesus) would be "cut off"; (killed) but not to worry, the Branch would sprout forth "leaves", (the church) and that those leaves would be a grafting addition to the branch; and then afterward, that fig tree (Israel) would rebud, or blossom, and then the second crop of good figs would be harvested. (This refers to Israel's salvation)

Israel is the natural branch of the fig tree, while the church, or Christians, are the previously wild grafted on branches.

The Church does not replace Israel, it was simply included into the productivity or fruitfulness of the tree.

Romans 11:21: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

This is a point of emphasis to the Gentile world, that if the nations-church does not heed the lesson of the fig tree, then likewise; the curse of death will overtake all who reject Christ.

Paul's prayer in Romans 1:1; was that Israel might be saved and it is Gods desire that ALL be saved; Jew and Gentile alike.

During Jesus first visitation to Jerusalem, he was questioned by the Pharisees and Sadducees, desiring that Jesus would simply show them a sign, so as to verify that Jesus was indeed the anticipated Messiah.

Now Jesus could have given them any sign that they might have required of him, or performed some tantalizing miracle, but he chose not do so. Why not? God does not play games, or seek to entertain men with mindboggling magical wonders. He does not need the approval or popularity of mankind. The Lord does not bend to temptation, nor to the confidence of public opinion. Ironically, Satan does entertain men with such exploits, performing seemingly miraculous things, all for the express purpose of self-glorification and deceit.

Matthew 16:4: A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and no sign shall be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Jesus didn't need to give the Sadducees any more signs than those already that were already foretold of his coming. They had the prophetic information of the Old Testament detailing fully his visitation. God does not repeat himself, just to hear himself be doubted by the agnostic. The problem here was not verification, it was simply unbelief.

What was the sign of Jonah that Jesus referred to?

Just as Jonah had spent 3 days and 3 nights within the belly of the great fish; Jesus also would spend three days and nights in the belly of the earth, rising out on the third, just as Jonah came out of the belly of the fish on the third day. Jesus was here predicting that he would arise the third day after they had destroyed the temple which he himself embodied.

John 2:19: Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up.

This is the only sign that Israel would get. They already had rejected numerous signs.

Jesus used the parable of fig tree to display to the disciples, and then to whole house of Israel that although they would reject their Messiah, still he would

come back unto them a second time, but only after they had learned to cry out to for him, as one mourneth for his only son.

The Old Testament prophet Hosea had hit upon this very delay in Israel's restorative seasonal rebudding:

Hosea 6:1-2; Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten. and He will bind us up.

After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us (Israel) up, and we shall live in his sight.

The fig tree of Israel was destined to be scattered among all the nations of the world for two complete days of God's timetable, (1000 years/ one day) but on the third day, Israel would be providentially returned to its land, and begin the rebirth process.

So then, Jesus' very death and resurrection served as a paradigm for the restoration, and the rebudding of the fig tree which is national Israel.

What a tremendous SIGN that is! What could God have done any better to prove his love and genuine desire for Israel, and indeed the whole world?

Have you ever thought about Satan preserving a nation unto himself with such a precise prophetic analogy? It would be preposterous to think of. Satan can't do such a thing, because he is not alpha and omega. He can only destroy nations. The miracle of Israel is the divine proof of the supremacy of the God of Israel.

Is it any wonder then, why Satan, the Great Red Dragon will pursue Israel with an all out vengeance during the Tribulational era?

The reemergence of the state of Israel has always been a prerequisite for the fulfillment of prophetic destiny for all nations. The nations of this world are afflicted with a demonic disease that ultimately points to the acute peculiarity of the peculiar people, Israel.

The leaves that sprouted forth from the Branch of the fig tree could have been for the healing process to be instilled in the souls of all the nations of this world. Had the church so conquered the nations in total, as did the preaching of Jonah to the Ninevites, Israel may have been spared the onslaught of Anti-Semitism.

But alas, the church has not brought peace, but it has brought separation. The nations are all at enmity with the God of Israel, and its grafted Christians!

Perhaps this is the basis for the nations' healing in the Post Millennial Kingdom of Israel.

Revelation 22:2: In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river of life, which bare twelve manner of Fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and "The Leaves" of the Tree were for the healing of the Nations.

God says in Ezekiel 28:25-26, that when He has gathered the house of Israel from among all those nations to where they were scattered, that He will execute His judgements upon all those nations that despised Israel; and that they will know that the "I AM" of Israel is indeed God.

From Isaiah 4:2 In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the Fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

Without question, the rebudding of national Israel 50 odd years ago now, is the most powerful message that God has sent to the nations-peoples in the last 20 centuries, since the first visitation of the Branch. In restoring Israel once again in their homeland, God is raising up an ensign, or banner, which the nations of the world cannot ignore.

To the nations, God says from Ezekiel 36:23:

And I will sanctify My great name, which was profaned among all the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them, and the heathen shall know that I AM the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you (Israel) before their (nations) eyes.

God is about to undertake a great shaking in the land of Israel. The Fig Tree has been planted, but just as in the vision of the "Valley of Dry Bones", Israel still is not spiritually alive; but that blossoming will take place upon the return visit of Jesus Christ to ISRAEL.

The second crop of good figs is already budding on the Branch. The Satanic hosts which are staged to pursue Israel will lead the nations to their fates; when God shakes the Fig Tree.

The parable of the fig tree carries with it a like promise as the one which was made to Simeon. As Simeon was promised to not see death until he had seen

the Messiah, also the rebudded generation of regathered Israel will see all things fulfilled before it passes. (Matt 24:34)

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:"

The Fig Tree is planted once again in its natural homeland, it is ALIVE, and the blossoms are budding forth, and it signifies that the Branch shall returneth soon!

How soon was Christ's prophecy fulfilled about the withering of the symbolic fig tree to be fulfilled?. In the year 70 A.D. the temple was destroyed. No longer was there a place to offer sacrifices, the opportunity to serve the Lord according to the precepts of the Law thus ended. Jerusalem fell into ruin, and the whole nation was expelled from their own land and dispersed throughout the world. Speaking about the time of his Kingdom approaching, Christ again turns his disciples' attention to the fig tree. "Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth his leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the door". (Matt. 24:32, 33)

It should be observed that this parable was uttered on the same day when the barren fig tree was cursed. Therefore it would be difficult to assume that when Christ told them to watch for signs taking place on that very kind of a tree, it was merely accidental. These two events constitute one whole. As a result of the rejection of the Messiah on the part of the Jews, during his first advent, God's favor was turned away from them, as shown in the withered tree. Whereas, the softening of the branches and the bringing forth of leaves represents the return of favor to this nation during the time of the establishment of the Kingdom in Christ's second advent. Let us, then, carefully observe this symbolic fig tree.