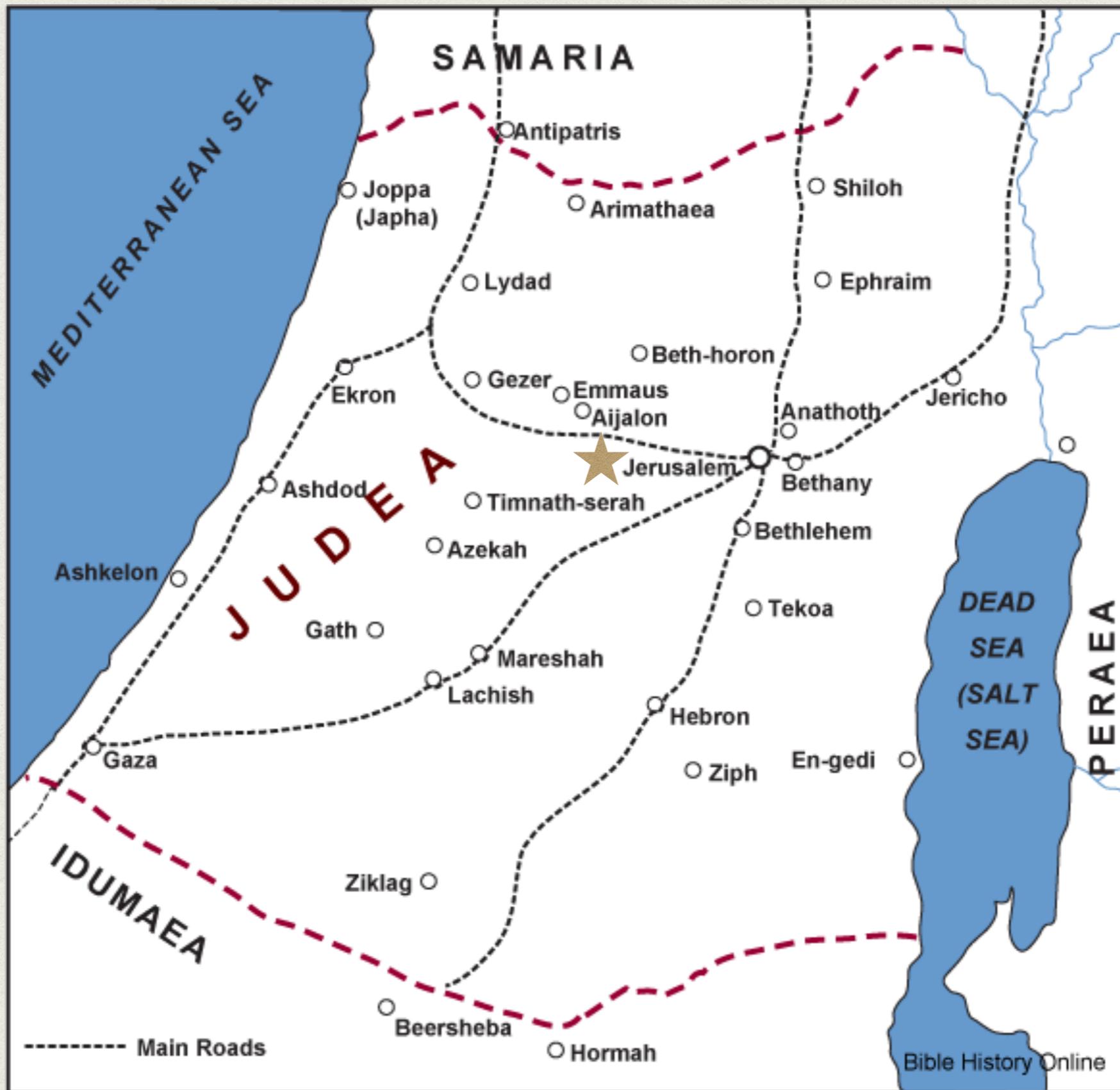




THE BOOK OF MARK

Lesson 19—Mark 12:1–12

The Parable of the Vineyard



Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: (John 11:18) (Margin—2 miles)

Part 3—Barren Fig Tree

Mark 11:12–14, 20–26

Matthew 21:18–22

The entire night Jesus spent in prayer, and in the morning He came again to the temple. On the way He passed a fig orchard. He was hungry, “and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.” (*DA* 581.3)

It was not the season for ripe figs, except in certain localities; and on the highlands about Jerusalem it might truly be said, “The time of figs was not yet.” But in the orchard to which Jesus came, one tree appeared to be in advance of all the others. It was already covered with leaves. It is the nature of the fig tree that before the leaves open, the growing fruit appears. Therefore this tree in full leaf gave promise of well-developed fruit. But its appearance was deceptive. Upon searching its branches, from the lowest bough to the topmost twig, Jesus found “nothing but leaves.” It was a mass of pretentious foliage, nothing more. (*DA 581.4*)

The cursing of the fig tree was an **acted parable**. That barren tree, flaunting its pretentious foliage in the very face of Christ, was a *symbol of the Jewish nation*. The Saviour desired **to make plain** to His disciples **the cause and the certainty of Israel's doom**. For this purpose He invested the tree with moral qualities, and made it the expositor of divine truth. The Jews stood forth distinct from all other nations, **professing allegiance to God**. They had been specially favored by Him, and they laid claim to **righteousness** above every other people. But they were corrupted by the love of the world and the greed of gain. They **boasted of their knowledge**, but they were ignorant of the requirements of God, and were **full of hypocrisy**. Like the barren tree, they spread their pretentious branches aloft, luxuriant in appearance, and beautiful to the eye, but they yielded "nothing but leaves." The Jewish religion, with its magnificent temple, its sacred altars, its mitered priests and impressive ceremonies, was indeed fair in outward appearance, but humility, love, and benevolence were lacking. (*DA 582.4*)

All the trees in the fig orchard were destitute of fruit; but the leafless trees raised no expectation, and caused no disappointment. By these trees **the Gentiles were represented**. They were as destitute as were the Jews of godliness; but they had not professed to serve God. They made no boastful pretensions to goodness. They were blind to the works and ways of God. With them the time of figs was not yet. They were still waiting for a day which would bring them light and hope. The Jews, who had received greater blessings from God, were held accountable for their abuse of these gifts. The privileges of which they boasted only increased their guilt. (*DA 583.1*)

Jesus had come to the fig tree hungry, to find food. So He had come to Israel, hungering to find in them the fruits of righteousness. He had lavished on them His gifts, that they might bear fruit for the blessing of the world. Every opportunity and privilege had been granted them, and in return He sought their sympathy and co-operation in His work of grace. He longed to see in them self-sacrifice and compassion, zeal for God, and a deep yearning of soul for the salvation of their fellow men. Had they kept the law of God, they would have done the same unselfish work that Christ did. But love to God and man was eclipsed by pride and self-sufficiency. They brought ruin upon themselves by refusing to minister to others. The treasures of truth which God had committed to them, they did not give to the world. In the barren tree they might read both their sin and its punishment. Withered beneath the Saviour's curse, standing forth sere and blasted, dried up by the roots, the fig tree showed what the Jewish people would be when the grace of God was removed from them. Refusing to impart blessing, they would no longer receive it. "O Israel," the Lord says, "thou hast destroyed thyself." Hosea 13:9. (*DA 583.2*)

Faith vs Feeling

I have frequently seen that the children of the Lord neglect prayer, especially secret prayer, altogether too much; that many do not exercise that faith which it is their privilege and duty to exercise, often waiting for that feeling which faith alone can bring. **Feeling is not faith**; the two are distinct. **Faith is ours to exercise, but joyful feeling and the blessing are God's to give.** The grace of God comes to the soul through the channel of living faith, and that faith it is in our power to exercise. (*EW* 72.1)

True faith lays hold of and claims the promised blessing before it is realized and felt. We must send up our petitions in faith within the second veil and let our faith take hold of the promised blessing and claim it as ours. We are then to believe that we receive the blessing, because our faith has hold of it, and according to the Word it is ours. “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” Mark 11:24. Here is faith, naked faith, to believe that we receive the blessing, even before we realize it. When the promised blessing is realized and enjoyed, faith is swallowed up. (*EW 72.2*)

But many suppose they have much faith when sharing largely of the Holy Spirit and that they cannot have faith unless they feel the power of the Spirit. Such confound faith with the blessing that comes through faith. The very time to exercise faith is when we feel destitute of the Spirit. When thick clouds of darkness seem to hover over the mind, then is the time to let living faith pierce the darkness and scatter the clouds. **True faith rests on the promises contained in the Word of God**, and those only who obey that Word can claim its glorious promises. “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” John 15:7. “Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” 1 John 3:22. (*EW* 72.2)

There are many who long to help others, but they feel that they have no spiritual strength or light to impart. Let them present their petitions at the throne of grace. Plead for the Holy Spirit. **God stands back of every promise He has made.** With your Bible in your hands say, I have done as Thou hast said. I present Thy promise, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” (*COL* 147.2)

The rainbow round about the throne is an assurance that God is true, that in Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. We have sinned against Him, and are undeserving of His favor; yet He Himself has put into our lips that most wonderful of pleas,

“Do not abhor us, for Thy name’s sake; do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory; remember, break not Thy covenant with us.”

Jeremiah 14:21. When we come to him confessing our unworthiness and sin, He has pledged Himself to give heed to our cry. **The honor of His throne** is staked for **the fulfillment of His word unto us.** (*COL* 148.1)

We must not only pray in Christ's name, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This explains what is meant when it is said that the Spirit "maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." Romans 8:26. Such prayer God delights to answer. When with earnestness and intensity we breathe a prayer in the name of Christ, **there is in that very intensity a pledge from God** that He is about to answer our prayer "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Ephesians 3:20. (*COL* 147.3)

Prayer and faith are closely allied, and they need to be studied together. **In the prayer of faith there is a divine science**; it is a science that everyone who would make his lifework a success must understand. Christ says, “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” Mark 11:24. He makes it plain that our asking must be according to God’s will; we must ask for the things that He has promised, and whatever we receive must be used in doing His will. The conditions met, the promise is unequivocal. (*ED 257.7*)

DIVINE SCIENCE IN THE PRAYER OF FAITH

- Science—In a general sense, knowledge, or certain knowledge; the comprehension or understanding of truth or facts by the mind.
- What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. Mark 11:24. The conditions are:
- The prayer of faith must be according to God's will.
- We must ask for things that he has promised.
- Whatever we receive in answer to the prayer of faith must be used in doing God's will.
- "The conditions met, the promise is unequivocal."
- Unequivocal means leaving no doubt. It is certain, indisputable, undeniable.

For the **pardon** of sin, for the **Holy Spirit**, for a **Christlike temper**, for **wisdom** and **strength to do His work**, for any gift **He has promised**, we may ask; then we are to believe that we receive, and return thanks to God that we have received.

We need look for no outward evidence of the blessing. The gift is in the promise, and we may go about our work assured that what God has promised He is able to perform, and that the gift, which we already possess, will be realized when we need it most.

(ED 258.1–.2)

How to exercise faith should be made very plain. To every promise of God there are conditions. **If we are willing to do His will**, all His strength is ours. Whatever gift He promises, is in the promise itself. “The seed is the word of God.” Luke 8:11. As surely **as the oak is in the acorn**, so surely is the gift of God in His promise. If we receive the promise, we have the gift. (*ED* 253.3)

God wishes us to have the mastery over ourselves. But He cannot help us without our consent and co-operation. The divine Spirit works through the powers and faculties given to man. Of ourselves, we are not able to bring the purposes and desires and inclinations into harmony with the will of God; but if we are “willing to be made willing,” the Saviour will accomplish this for us, “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:5. (AA 482.3)

The Laodicean Church

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Revelation 3:20–22)

Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul. "I counsel thee," He says, "to buy of Me ... white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Revelation 3:18. (*COL 311.3*)

When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. **This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. (COL 311.4)**

They need the divine love of God which is represented by **gold** tried in the fire; they need the **white raiment** of Christ's pure character; and they need the heavenly **eyesalve** that they might discern with astonishment the utter worthlessness of creature merit to earn the wages of eternal life. (*FW* 23.2)

The **gold** tried in the fire represents love and faith. Many are nearly destitute of love. Self-sufficiency blinds their eyes to their great need.

There is a positive necessity for a daily conversion to God, a new, deep, and daily experience in the religious life. (CH 402.3)

The **gold** tried in the fire is faith that works by love. Only this can bring us into harmony with God. We may be active, we may do much work; but without love, such love as dwelt in the heart of Christ, we can never be numbered with the family of heaven. (COL 158.3)

The **gold** here recommended as having been tried in the fire is faith and love. It makes the heart rich; for it has been purged until it is pure, and the more it is tested the more brilliant is its luster. The **white raiment** is purity of character, the righteousness of Christ imparted to the sinner. This is indeed a garment of heavenly texture, that can be bought only of Christ for a life of willing obedience. The **eyesalve** is that wisdom and grace which enables us to discern between the evil and the good, and to detect sin under any guise. (*4T 88.2*)

Put your whole being into the Lord's hands, soul, body, and spirit, and resolve to be His living, consecrated agency, moved by **His will**, controlled by **His mind**, infused by **His Spirit**. Then the eyes of your understanding will be anointed with heavenly **eyesalve**. Then you will see heavenly things clearly. Like Moses, you will catch glimpses of the Holy One of Israel.—Manuscript 24, 1891, 16, 27. (Diary, undated. From Manuscript 5, 1903, transcribed in February 1903.) (*10MR* 233.3)

We thank God that there are souls who realize that they are in need of something which they do not possess—gold of faith and love, white raiment of Christ's righteousness, **eyesalve** of spiritual discernment. (*FW* 84.3)

The **eyesalve** is that wisdom and grace which enables us to discern between the evil and the good, and to detect sin under any guise. (*4T* 88.2)

The Work of Service

He who came from heaven to be our example spent nearly thirty years of His life in common, mechanical labor; but **during this time He was studying** the word and the works of God, and helping, teaching, all whom His influence could reach. When His **public ministry** began, He went about healing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, and preaching the gospel to the poor. **This is the work of all His followers.**

(Ed 267.4)

Jesus saw in every soul one to whom must be given the call to His kingdom. He reached the hearts of the people by going among them as one who desired their good. He sought them in the public streets, in private houses, on the boats, in the synagogue, by the shores of the lake, and at the marriage feast. He met them at their daily vocations, and manifested an interest in their secular affairs. He carried His instruction into the household, bringing families in their own homes under the influence of His divine presence. His strong personal sympathy helped to win hearts. He often repaired to the mountains for solitary prayer, but this was a preparation for His labor among men in active life. From these seasons He came forth to relieve the sick, to instruct the ignorant, and to break the chains from the captives of Satan. (*DA* 151.2)

The example of Christ in linking Himself with the interests of humanity should be followed by all who preach His word, and by all who have received the gospel of His grace. We are not to renounce social communion. We should not seclude ourselves from others. In order to reach all classes, we must meet them where they are. They will seldom seek us of their own accord. Not alone from the pulpit are the hearts of men touched by divine truth. There is another field of labor, humbler, it may be, but fully as promising. It is found in the home of the lowly, and in the mansion of the great; at the hospitable board, and in gatherings for innocent social enjoyment. (*DA 152.2*)

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

(Hebrews 10:25)

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

- In the parable the householder represented God, the vineyard the Jewish nation [Isaiah 5:7], and the hedge the divine law which was their protection. The tower was a symbol of the temple. (*DA 596.3*)

To this people were committed the oracles of God. They were **hedged** about by the precepts of His **law**, the everlasting principles of truth, justice, and purity.

Obedience to these principles was to be their protection, for it would save them from destroying themselves by sinful practices. And as the **tower** in the vineyard, God placed in the midst of the land His holy **temple**. (*COL 287.2*)

The husbandmen who had been **placed in charge of the Lord's vineyard** were untrue to their trust. The **priests** and **teachers** were not faithful instructors of the people. They did not keep before them the goodness and mercy of God and His claim to their love and service. These husbandmen sought their own glory. They desired to appropriate the fruits of the vineyard. It was their study to attract attention and homage to themselves.

(COL 292.1)

The Lord had instructed His people that He was the owner of the vineyard . . . (*COL 292.3*)

Prophets and messengers were sent to urge God's claim upon the husbandmen . . . (*COL 293.1*)

The parable of the vineyard applies not alone to the Jewish nation. It has a lesson for us. The church in this generation has been endowed by God with great privileges and blessings, and He expects corresponding returns. (*COL 296.2*)