

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE TIME OF FIGS

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. Mark 11:13

When the LORD created the world, HE made everything in it exactly as HE desired for it to be. He was completely satisfied with HIS creation. *“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”* (Gen 1:31) Nothing in HIS creation could or would take HIM by surprise, nor could anything occur in it which was not ordained to occur in order to fulfill HIS sovereign purpose. Many have here, stumbled, growing anxious at this very fact and picture the GOD of all gods, trying to remedy unplanned occurrences. *“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”* (Acts 15:18)

HE made man exactly as HE determined for him to be, blessed him greatly with all necessary provisions, set before HIM the Law of sin and death, and then declared to Adam what his actions would be and what would be the consequences of those actions. *“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* (Gen 2:16-17) Just as surely as he ate of the other trees of the garden, “freely” so too did he “freely” eat of that forbidden fruit. The fact that GOD ordained his steps does not in any way mitigate his sin (i.e., disobedience to the Law) even as James declares, *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren.”* (Jas 1:13-16)

Yet multitudes of religious men have railed against the absolute predestination of all things by the ANCIENT OF DAYS, (or ignored it as if it were some odd or unnecessary truth) as if it were possible for men to sit in some kind of judgement of HIS actions and thereby exonerate men of their innate wickedness which leads them to sin. Men are corrupt to the core and apart from the mercy of GOD to deliver them from their sin, they shall surely and rightly perish therein. *“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”* (John 3:19) Paul comments further upon this truth. *“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”* (Rom 1:21-22)

The LORD made all of the trees of the field for an exact purpose even as HE has created and ordained the “*prince of darkness*” (i.e.; Satan, the serpent, the devil) and all of his minions to carry out that purpose for which they are appointed as well as the fiery destruction which awaits them. All things in the Earth or the Heavens await HIS nod as Isaac Watts solemnly declares, “Keep silence all created things, And wait your Maker’s nod; My soul stands trembling while she sings The honours of her God. Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown, Hang on his firm decree; He sits on no precarious throne, Nor borrows leave TO BE. Chained to his throne a volume lies, With all the fates of men With every angel’s form and size, Drawn by the eternal pen.” (#4 Gadsby’s Hymns)

Thus, we see that HE planted at least one fig tree in Eden. For it was the leaves of this tree that Adam and Eve used to make aprons in their quest (as religious men will do) to hide their nakedness from the LORD. In like fashion are all false religions in this world ordained by HIM to be a snare unto those *“Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.”* (Rom 1:25) And who is it that can deliver himself from this darkness of man’s choosing? Were it not that the mercy of GOD is visited upon the sons of men to bring HIS elect out of that darkness, we should all rightly perish in ignorance and happily tread the path to our own destruction. *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* (Eph 2:4-6) Who maketh thee to differ from another?

Figs and the fig tree are mentioned over forty times in the KJV. Figs were an important part of the diet of the people in the region where the people of Israel dwelt. The blessings of peace and contentment are often described as: *“They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.”* (Mic 4:4)

It was under a *“fig tree”* where the LORD saw Nathaniel, even though no one was with him at the time. When the LORD revealed this to him, he worshipped the LORD as was brought to his mind such a truth as this, *“O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.”* (Psa 139:1-6)

Is it not true that the LORD placed that fig tree exactly where it needed to be, for Nathaniel to sit, alone, perhaps in prayer unto the very ONE who revealed HIMSELF to him? In like fashion did the sycamore tree grow up in the exact place that was needful for Zaccheus to climb so that the LORD might tell him to come down, for HE was going to abide in Zaccheus’ house that very day. Both of these instances illustrate that it is the LORD who ordains *“the time of figs”* and causes some trees to bear much fruit while others are barren.

The LORD also caused a fig tree to grow up with an abundance of leaves off from the road side that HE might teach HIS disciples a lesson. Though this tree had many leaves and was no doubt a thing of beauty, yet it had on it no figs. I am no botanist, to be sure, but I think that it is generally the case that when one sees a fully leaved fig tree, that it will usually have figs on it. But we see quite clearly that *“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”* (Psa 127:1) A fig tree can no more have figs on it apart from the LORD’s direction, than a man can deliver himself from his dilemma by an action of his free will. *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”* (John 5:39-40)

In this account of this *“fig tree”*, do we not see a picture of the nation of Israel. An elect nation out of all nations upon the Earth, having outward signs of religion, but having no fruit unto eternal life. Is this not the nation of which the LORD said, *“Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.”* (Isa 29:13) They have gone about to establish their own righteousness, and thereby missed the RIGHTEOUS ONE. *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”* (John 1:11)

And in this barren fig tree of Israel, do we not see all the nations and peoples of the Earth who have pursued their religions bearing multitudes of *“leaves”* that appear as fruitfulness unto men, but have no fruit unto eternal life, because the *“time of figs was not yet”*. All of the righteousnesses of men, however sincere, in their worship of free-will are as filthy rags in HIS sight. The LORD cursed that barren fig tree and it withered to the amazement of HIS disciples. This same curse is upon all who will not worship HIM who is the REDEEMER of sinners and most especially upon those who declare a message which exalts the free will of men, making that redemption which HE has wrought by the pouring out of HIS blood to not be completely sufficient and efficient to save them. *“Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”* (Rom 5:9) mam