

Why Most American Christians Resemble Jesus' 'Barren Fig Tree'

"When He saw a fig tree by the road, He went to it but found nothing on it except leaves. He said to it, 'Let no fruit ever grow on you again.' Immediately the fig tree withered away" (Matt. 21:19).

Today most American Christians are barren of godly fruit but only have attractive leaves on their trees. There is a great misunderstanding concerning the difference in bearing the fruit of God versus going to church or being involved in religious activities.

Jesus said that a good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. So how can this be, since none of us are perfect all of the time? If a good man or woman (a good tree) happens to sin and quickly repents of that sin, confesses his sins to God and to others, makes everything right with those who were wronged and restores anything needed to correct the situation, then that is good fruit, and his tree is certainly good with good fruit.

Being a good tree that bears good fruit is not about always being perfect, but is about how you handle your faults and sins. If anyone claims to be a good tree (to belong to Jesus) but doesn't repent quickly when stumbling in a sin and is unwilling to humble himself and confess his sins to God and to others, then he is a bad tree. Nor does he make anything right with others he may have wronged, then he is a bad tree. Or if he does not forgive from the heart those who have wronged him, then he is a bad tree.

If Jesus passes by you to get some fruit off your tree, will He only find leaves? Leaves are things like church attendance,

paying tithes, singing at worship service, supporting missionaries, teaching Sunday school, preaching, prophesying, speaking in tongues, and so on. Leaves are not fruit. Fruit is the fruit of the Spirit, that which looks like Jesus; fruit like love, joy, humility, patience, forgiveness, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, diligence, being a seeker of God, being an obedient son of God, living in repentance of sin, overcoming the world and so on.

"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonderful works in Your name?'" (Matt. 7:22). This means Jesus rejected certain ones who could prophesy in His name, cast out demons and do miracles. The problem was with their heart and the lack of true fruit. You see, just because you can prophesy in the name of Jesus, cast out demons or even perform many miracles does not mean you have the fruit of the Holy Spirit He is looking for.

The devil can give bad trees the supernatural power to do all of those things without that person being holy and humble on the inside. It happens all the time. Remember the magicians of Egypt. And remember that Jesus and the apostles warned us beforehand that in the last days, false prophets would be coming with great power to perform signs and wonders. Even though these trees who were rejected looked good, and even though they had nice leaves, they were really bad trees at heart and were cast out of the kingdom of God (Matt. 7). This is why Jesus said you would know them by their fruit. Fruit is not church services, nor is it signs and wonders, but a crucified life of holiness, humility and love.

There certainly are false prophets everywhere, but what about you? Does your tree have fruit hanging on it or just nice green leaves?

For more teaching on this topic, listen to the entire episode of *The Great Deception* podcast here. {eoa}