

119

M I N I S T R I E S

"The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below."

Messiah and The Fig Tree

Part 1

During his ministry, Jesus—or, as we call him in Hebrew, Yeshua—performed many miracles. He cast demons out of people, healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, and made the lame able to walk. He even raised people from the dead. It's easy to understand why Yeshua did many of these miraculous deeds: he loved people, and he miraculously healed people in order to help them. However, there are some miracles that Yeshua performed that are a bit puzzling, because they don't seem to fit this idea of helping people. In particular, there is this account of Yeshua miraculously causing a fig tree to wither:

Matthew 21:18-22

In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once. When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" And Jesus [Yeshua] answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

So, why did Yeshua perform this miracle when it doesn't seem to have any practical value? Well, sometimes Yeshua's miracles served a prophetic purpose as well as a practical purpose. That is to say, sometimes Yeshua's miraculous acts fulfilled a particular prophecy, or taught a particular lesson. For example, Yeshua's healings were practically beneficial, but they also fulfilled a prophecy, as Matthew noted:

Matthew 8:14-17

And when Jesus [Yeshua] entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."

The miracle of making the fig tree wither did not seem to serve a practical purpose, but as we will see, it did serve a prophetic purpose. In this teaching, we're going to take a closer look at this miracle. Why did Yeshua cause this fig tree to wither? What was that meant to accomplish? What does that have to do with faith and moving mountains? And what can we learn from this story?

To understand the prophetic purpose behind this miracle, we need to understand some of the elements that appear in this story. In particular, there are six elements to this story that other Scriptures can help us to define. Those elements are:

- 1) A tree that does not bear fruit
- 2) A tree that withers
- 3) Having faith
- 4) Not doubting
- 5) Moving mountains, and
- 6) Receiving what is asked for in prayer

Let's take a look at these topics and see what meaning the Scriptures ascribe to them.

Bearing Fruit

The Scriptures mention bearing fruit frequently, and it is usually used as a metaphor for righteous behavior. For example:

Proverbs 12:12

Whoever is wicked covets the spoil of evildoers, but the root of the righteous bears fruit.

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD [YHWH], and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.

Matthew 12:33-35

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.

These verses show the metaphor pretty clearly: the righteous person, who is not wicked, not an evildoer, produces good fruit, which means that he produces good works. In the story of the fig tree, however, the fig tree is not producing fruit; it only has leaves. The Scriptures also have a lot to say about trees that do not produce good fruit, like in these verses:

Matthew 7:15-20

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A

healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Matthew 3:7-10

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

So, the trees that produce good fruit represent the righteous, those who serve God, and they will prosper, while the trees that do not produce good fruit represent the wicked, those who sin against God, and they will perish. So, the fruitless fig tree that Yeshua caused to wither seems to represent a wicked person, or a group of wicked people. Next, we will see who this fig tree is meant to represent.

The Tree That Withers

The Scriptures mention trees that wither in numerous places, and those trees usually symbolize a group of people that are about to be destroyed. Here are some of those scriptures:

Hosea 9:13-17

Ephraim, as I have seen, was like a young palm planted in a meadow; but Ephraim must lead his children out to slaughter. Give them, O LORD [YHWH]—what will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal; there I began to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more; all their princes are rebels. Ephraim is stricken; **their root is dried up; they shall bear no fruit.** Even though they give birth, I will put their beloved children to death. My God will reject them because they have not listened to him; they shall be wanderers among the nations.

Hosea was speaking about Ephraim, the leading tribe in the kingdom of Israel. Because of their wickedness, their fruitlessness, Ephraim's root withered; their kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians, and their people scattered across the world. The prophet Jeremiah used a similar metaphor in reference to the kingdom of Judah:

Jeremiah 8:8-13

How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the law of the LORD [YHWH] is with us’? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie. The wise men shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken; behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD [YHWH], so what wisdom is in them? Therefore I will give their wives to others and their fields to conquerors, because from the least to the greatest everyone is greedy for unjust gain; from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among the fallen; when I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the LORD [YHWH]. When I would gather them, declares the LORD [YHWH], **there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered,** and what I gave them has passed away from them.”

Just like the kingdom of Israel, the kingdom of Judah was sinning against God, they were not bearing the fruit of repentance and righteousness, so their kingdom was conquered by the Babylonians, and their people taken into exile.

What were the wicked acts that these nations, Israel and Judah, were committing? Idolatry, the worship of other gods, was one of the main ones (Jeremiah 5:19; Ezekiel 6:3-7), but there were many others as well. In the case of Israel, their leaders were oppressing the poor, and offering defective sacrifices to God, as the prophet Amos described:

Amos 4:1-5

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, ‘Bring, that we may drink!’ The Lord GOD [YHWH] has sworn by his holiness that, behold, the days are coming upon you, when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks. And you shall go out through the breaches, each one straight ahead; and you shall be cast out into Harmon,” declares the LORD [YHWH]. “Come to Bethel, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days; offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings, publish them; for so you love to do, O people of Israel!” declares the Lord GOD [YHWH].

In Judah, one of their sins was that their leaders were unlawfully enslaving people:

Jeremiah 34:8-22

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD [YHWH], after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to make a proclamation of liberty to them, that everyone should set free his Hebrew slaves, male and female, so that no one should enslave a Jew, his brother. And they obeyed, all the officials and all the people who had entered into the covenant that everyone would set free his slave, male or female, so that they would not be enslaved again. They obeyed and set them free. But afterward they turned around and took back the male and female slaves they had set free, and brought them into subjection as slaves. The word of the LORD [YHWH] came to Jeremiah from the LORD [YHWH]: “Thus says the LORD [YHWH], the God of Israel: I myself made a covenant with your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, saying, ‘At the end of seven years each of you must set free the fellow Hebrew who has been sold to you and has served you six years; you must set him free from your service.’ But your fathers did not listen to me or incline their ears to me. You recently repented and did what was right in my eyes by proclaiming liberty, each to his neighbor, and you made a covenant before me in the house that is called by my name, but then you turned around and profaned my name when each of you took back his male and female slaves, whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them into subjection to be your slaves. Therefore, thus says the LORD [YHWH]: You have not obeyed me by proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and to his neighbor; behold, I proclaim to you liberty to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine, declares the LORD [YHWH]. I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts—the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf. And I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth. And Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials I will give into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of

those who seek their lives, into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon which has withdrawn from you. Behold, I will command, declares the LORD [YHWH], and will bring them back to this city. And they will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire. I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.”

So, then, when the leaders of Israel and Judah turned away from God, sinned against him and mistreated the people that they ruled over, they were considered to be fruitless. The prophets called them dried up and withered, which meant that their kingdoms would be destroyed. So, when Yeshua caused the fruitless fig tree to wither, he was using that tree to illustrate the condition of Israel’s leaders. He was saying that they were fruitless, that they were sinning against God and against their people, and that they were going to be destroyed. Immediately after the story of the fig tree in Matthew 21, Yeshua tells a parable, which confirms this interpretation of the fig tree. Here’s that parable:

Matthew 21:33-46

Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?’ They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants **who will give him the fruits in their seasons.**” Jesus [Yeshua] said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore I tell you, **the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.** And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, **they perceived that he was speaking about them.** And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

So, here we see exactly what Yeshua was symbolically referring to when he made the fig tree wither. The scribes and Pharisees were the leaders of the people, and they were fruitless; they were sinning and taking advantage of the people under their care. Therefore, they were going to ‘wither’, their ‘kingdom’ was going to be destroyed.

What sins were the chief priests and Pharisees committing? Yeshua said that they left the commandments of God and held to the traditions of men (Mark 7:6-8). He said that they would persecute and kill prophets (Matthew 23:34) and allowed people to swear falsely (Matthew 23:16-22). He said that they made themselves appear righteous, but were actually full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matthew 23:28). He said that they laid heavy burdens upon the people (Matthew 23:4) and kept them out of the kingdom of God (Matthew 23:13), and he told his disciples to beware of their teachings (Matthew 16:12).

These actions sound a lot like the actions of the “withered trees” from Jeremiah and Amos; these Pharisees were making a show of their virtue, but actually ignoring God’s law. They were oppressing the people who they were supposed to be protecting and caring for. They valued their own status and wealth more than they valued the well-being of God’s people. And so, Yeshua declared, like the

prophets before him, that these corrupt rulers were going to be destroyed. In 70 A.D., about forty years later, this prophecy was fulfilled, when the Romans besieged Jerusalem, destroyed Herod's temple, and struck a fatal blow to the rulership of the corrupt Pharisees and priests. Just like he had done with the Assyrian and Babylonian armies, God used the Roman army to bring judgment upon the faithless leaders of Israel.

Now that we see the prophetic and historical significance of Yeshua causing the fig tree to wither, let's examine what he said about faith, doubt, and moving mountains.

What is Faith?

Matthew 21:21-22

And Jesus [Yeshua] answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

We cannot possibly cover everything that the Scriptures have to say about faith in this teaching, but in context of this story, there are some elements of faith that we can focus on. In Matthew 21, Yeshua is making a contrast between the Pharisees and his disciples. Faith was one of the things that the Pharisees were lacking:

Matthew 23:23-24

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and **faithfulness**. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

The Greek word for faith, *pistis*, comes from the word *pisteuo*, which means to believe. That word is found in this verse, referring to the Pharisees as well:

John 5:42-47

But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you **believed** Moses, you would **believe** me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not **believe** his writings, how will you **believe** my words?

So, the Pharisees and other religious leaders did not believe or have faith in two things: the writings of Moses, that is, God's law, and the words of Yeshua. What does it mean to have faith in those things? As the following verses demonstrate, faith means believing that the words of Moses or Yeshua are true, and consequently, it results in obedience to those words.

John 3:36

Whoever **believes** in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

1 John 5:1-5

Everyone who **believes** that Jesus [Yeshua] is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our **faith**. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who **believes** that Jesus [Yeshua] is the Son of God?

James 2:14-17

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has **faith** but does not have works? Can that **faith** save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also **faith** by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

The Pharisees did not believe or have faith in the writings of Moses, or in the words of Yeshua. As we have seen, true faith results in obedience. So, the Pharisees' lack of faith would have resulted in disobedience. In other words, because they didn't believe Moses, they also didn't do what Moses said to do. The same was true of their lack of belief in Yeshua. Because they did not believe Yeshua, they also did not do what Yeshua instructed them to do. Their faith was dead—just like the dead and withered trees that do not produce good fruit (Matthew 3:10). However, the faith that Yeshua instructed his disciples to have was a living faith—a faith that does produce good works. Whoever has this kind of faith loves God (1 John 5:3), loves the children of God (1 John 5:1-2), overcomes the world (1 John 5:4-5) and has eternal life (John 3:36). Faith results in a healthy tree that bears good fruit (Matthew 7:17). As we will see next, there is a particular kind of good fruit that Yeshua was emphasizing.

What is Doubt?

Faith is sincere belief that results in obedience. “Doubt”—in Greek, *diakrino*—is used here in Matthew 21 as a term that stands in opposition to faith:

Matthew 21:21

...Truly, I say to you, if you have faith **and do not doubt**, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen.

Usually, we think of “doubt” as being disbelief. That makes sense, of course; if faith is belief that results in obedience, then doubt would be its opposite, disbelief that results in disobedience. But, the way the Scriptures use this term “doubt” suggests that it is focusing on a specific manifestation of disbelief. To illustrate this point, here are some of the other verses where the Greek term *diakrino* is used:

1 Corinthians 6:1-6

When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to **settle a dispute** [*diakrino*] between the brothers, but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers?

James 2:1-4

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua], the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” have you not then made **distinctions** [*diakrino*] among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Acts 15:7-9

And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no **distinction** [*diakrino*] between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.

It's clear from these verses that there is more to this word *diakrino* than just having doubts, and that it means something more specific than just being disobedient. It wouldn't make much sense to translate it as “doubt” or “unbelief” in any of these passages. Rather, this word seems to indicate a form of interpersonal conflict, of treating people badly. Sometimes that bad treatment is based on them being rich or poor, or being a Jew or a Gentile. The root of this word *diakrino* is the word *krino*, which means to judge. We can see some examples of this root word in the following verses:

Matthew 7:1-5

Judge [*krino*] not, that you be not **judged** [*krino*]. For with the judgment you **pronounce** [*krino*] you will be **judged** [*krino*], and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Romans 2:1-5

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who **judges** [*krino*]. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who **judge** [*krino*] those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

It's important to note that the word *krino* is not always used in a negative context; many times, *krino* is used to refer to legitimate and good judgments (e.g., Matthew 19:28; Luke 7:43; John 8:16; Acts 15:19). However, in these particular verses, the term is used to mean *hypocritical judgment*, that is, correcting another person for a fault that the judge has not corrected in himself. As Paul said in Romans, God's kindness is supposed to lead us to *repentance*; we should be removing the sins from our own lives before we condemn others for their sins. Consequently, we should not be eager to condemn others for their sins, but instead eager to repent from our own sins, and to forgive others who repent from their sins.

So, this “doubt” in Matthew 21 seems to be referring to this lack of repentance and forgiveness, and to this eagerness to hypocritically condemn other believers. This “doubt” is what the Pharisees were engaged in, since they were “hypocrites” who “preach but do not practice” (Matthew 23:3). They were neglecting justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matthew 23:23); they were “straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel” (Matthew 23:24). They were not producing fruit. By contrast, Yeshua says not to doubt, not to be insincere self-important hypocrites, but to have faith, to sincerely believe God, to obey him, and to treat each other with justice and humility. This concept of faith involving sincerity and forgiveness also connects to the idea of receiving what you have asked for in prayer, as we will see in part 2 of this teaching. Now that we have definitions for faith and doubt, let’s look at what the Scriptures say about ‘moving mountains.’

Moving Mountains

Yeshua said that “[if you have faith and do not doubt,](#)” then, “[even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen.](#)” What did he mean by this idea of throwing a mountain into the sea?

First, let’s focus on the second half of this action: casting into the sea. The Scriptures speak of things being cast into the sea in several places, and it is usually referring to removing an obstacle to God’s will. For example, when Pharaoh was pursuing the children of Israel, trying to stop them from escaping Egypt, Exodus says:

Exodus 15:4

[Pharaoh’s chariots and his host he cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea.](#)

When Jonah was trying to sail far away from Nineveh, to escape his God-given duty to preach there, God stopped him, and had a whale bring him back to dry land. Jonah said:

Jonah 2:3

[For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas](#)

When Micah was mourning that God’s people were wicked (Micah 7:2) and dwelling in darkness (Micah 7:8), resisting God’s will for them (Micah 6:8), he said this:

Micah 7:19

[He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.](#)

So, whether the obstacle to God’s will is a malicious king, a rebellious prophet, or sin itself, God depicts his removal of that obstacle as casting it into the sea. So, then, what does it mean to cast a “mountain” into the sea?

Usually, the idea of moving a mountain in Matthew 21 is interpreted as accomplishing something impossible, but when we examine the other scriptures that mention moving mountains, we can see that

there is deeper symbolism attached to this phrase. Moving mountains is usually referring to judgment that results in deliverance for God's people. For example:

Revelation 8:8-9

The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Here, a mountain is being thrown into the sea as an act of God's judgment. This judgment is part of a series of judgments that ultimately results in the reign of God over the earth (Revelation 11:17-18), in a kingdom where "death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore." (Revelation 21:4). So, this judgment is a bad thing for sinners, but a good thing for the righteous. Psalm 46 makes this very point:

Psalm 46:1-7

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The LORD [YHWH] of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Even though God is bringing judgment on the earth—throwing mountains into the sea—God's people do not need to fear. This judgment is being brought on their behalf, to save them from their enemies. Psalm 18 contains the same idea:

Psalm 18:6-7

In my distress I called upon the LORD [YHWH]; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears. Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry. Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him.

Psalm 18:16-17

He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters. He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.

Again, these judgments are performed in order to remove the enemies of God's people. In the book of Zechariah, God told Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, that he would remove mountains from blocking his way when Zerubbabel was trying to build God's temple:

Zechariah 4:6-7

...This is the word of the LORD [YHWH] to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD [YHWH] of hosts. Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'"

Again, God's purposes are accomplished when these mountains are removed. We see this again when Yeshua speaks of moving mountains in reference to casting out demons:

Matthew 17:14-21

And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, said, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.” And Jesus [Yeshua] answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.” And Jesus [Yeshua] rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus [Yeshua] privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”

So, if a person has faith, then he can perform the “impossible” task of removing a demon. Yeshua accomplished this “mountain moving” by *rebuking* the demon. Rebukes were used by Yeshua to accomplish other miracles as well, like when he rebuked and calmed a storm that was threatening to sink the boat he was on (Matthew 8:23-27), and when he rebuked a fever and healed Simon’s mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-41). These rebukes were demonstrations of Yeshua’s authority over these demons, diseases, or storms. They were also pronouncements of judgment; the power of these afflictions was being destroyed. The result in Matthew 17 of rebuking this demon, moving this mountain, was that the boy was healed, and faith in Yeshua was increased. The kingdom of God was advanced.

So, throwing a mountain into the sea is not just referring to *any* ‘impossible’ thing to accomplish, but specifically to the ‘impossible’ act of bringing judgment and removing obstacles that prevent the establishing of God’s kingdom on the earth. This is what the withering of the fig tree points to as well. It is an act of judgment, but it is necessary to advance God’s kingdom. Remember, Yeshua said in his parable about the chief priests and Pharisees:

Matthew 21:43

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.

The reason the unfruitful fig tree had to be removed was so that a fruitful tree could be planted in its place. Similarly, the reason the mountain is removed and cast into the sea is to remove the obstacles that prevent God’s people from serving him as he intended. In the case of Zerubbabel, mountains were removed so that he could finish building the temple; in the case of the disciples, mountains were removed so that they could preach the gospel. The disciples faced many obstacles, many mountains, as they proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom: they were arrested (Acts 4:3), ordered to stop preaching (Acts 4:18), imprisoned (Acts 5:18), slandered and falsely accused (Acts 6:13), and even put to death (Acts 7:58-60). But God removed many of these obstacles from their path: he released them from prison (Acts 5:19), or allowed them to still preach from their prison cell (Philippians 1:12-14); sometimes he delivered them from death so that they could continue preaching (Acts 14:19-21); he had Herod Agrippa, who persecuted them (Acts 12:1-5), struck by disease so that he died (Acts 12:20-24); he even took one of their most fearsome opponents, Paul, and converted him to their own side (Acts 8:3; Acts 9)! God did provide judgment on behalf of his faithful apostles; he moved mountains for their sake.

There is one more topic we need to address, and that is what Yeshua meant by “**whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive.**” We will be addressing that topic in part 2 of this series. We hope to see you there.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverthing.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/119Ministries

WEBSITE: www.TestEverything.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net

TWITTER: www.twitter.com/119Ministries#