

The Outer Darkness: Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth - Part V

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July 19, 2026

The Outer Darkness and The Fig Tree

Somewhere I read where it was stated that if you read, studied, and digested the book of Genesis, you could understand the whole Bible. When Brother Dave Bodi mentioned the fig tree and its symbolic representation of Israel, I wanted a better understanding of its importance to our topic.

We remember that Adam and Eve were naked in the Garden of Eden, but I did not recall that they covered themselves with fig leaves. *What do you say?*

Genesis 3:7 (NKJV) ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and *they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings*. *Emphasis mine*

The question now is, *"What are fig leaves symbolic of?"*

FIG LEAVES

Symbolic of self-atonement, self-made covering.

Isaiah 64:6 (NKJV) ⁶ But *we are all* like an unclean *thing*, And all our righteousness's *are* like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. *Emphasis mine*

Our study is not a deep dive into the Fig Tree, but we want to get a sense of how it is intertwined throughout the Bible. *The fig tree in Eden has no nationality associated with it. ZERO!* However, what we see glaringly in the face is God's foreknowledge and sovereignty at the forefront of His plan. That is God revealing to us that the Messiah will come from the nation of Israel in a symbolic way.

Plants are more symbolic of regeneration. Fig trees are plants that, symbolically, cannot produce blood for redemption.

Hebrews 9:22 (NKJV) ²² And according to the law, almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

The covering with fig leaves represents man's own works in attempting to cover his sinfulness. Such works are inadequate to cover man's nakedness that he might be justified, and accepted before God.

Romans 3:20 (NKJV) ²⁰ Therefore, by the deeds of the *LAW* no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by *the law is the knowledge of sin*. *Emphasis mine*

God, of course, gave us His answer to the problem with a solution.

Genesis 3:21 (NKJV) ²¹ Also for Adam and his wife, the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

Probably the skins of lambs, sacrificed as substitutes for the sinful Adam and Eve, to satisfy the upcoming Law before it was given. The killing of the lambs by God foreshadowed the substitutionary death of Christ as the Lamb of God. The shedding of His precious blood was for the accomplishment of redemption, and based on this action, we can see what justifies the believing sinners.

John 1:29 (NKJV) ²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

God's clothing of Adam and his wife with coats of skins means that God justified them through their faith, every man begins with a measure of faith.

Romans 3:28 (NKJV) ²⁸ Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

If we are all justified by faith and faith alone, we might conclude that whatever God did for Adam and Eve, we can attribute that to any believer. When we believe the gospel, Christ is put upon us as our covering in righteousness, and

we are put into Christ as ONE Body. However, there are many thousands of years before we can get to that point.

What have we seen so far concerning the plan of God and His fig tree nation?

It appears God wanted us to pay attention to man's attempt at going about to establish their own righteousness, and He hand picked a race of mankind to do it with. God knows us even before we were formed in our mother's womb. Paul said this concerning Israel.

1 Corinthians 10:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹ *Now all these things happened to them (Israel) as examples,* and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. *Emphasis mine*

Whatever major event was happening to Israel, it literally affected the whole world. Joshua gave us an example of this in real time.

Joshua 10:12-14 (HCSB) ¹² On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the LORD in the presence of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." ¹³ And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped until the nation took vengeance on its enemies. Isn't this written in the Book of Jashar? So, the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed its setting by almost a full day. ¹⁴ There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man, because the LORD fought for Israel.

Can you imagine being in darkness for 24 hours on the other side of the world with no explanation? Yeah, I know, some theologians and scientists try to explain it away, whatever.

We cannot dismiss the fact that the gospel of Matthew, an Israelite, had his primary audience among the Israelites, and rightly so. The first Adam covered his nakedness using fig tree leaves, symbolizing he would be covered by the tree that would grow out of the nation of Israel. That seed, Jesus of Nazareth, fell into the ground and died, but once He died, He brought forth much fruit.

What God reveals to Matthew to record in the genealogy of the King of kings is that all are represented.

Matthew 1:1-2 (ESV/JDRV) ¹ The book of the genealogy (*after its own kind*) of Jesus (*Son of Man – Emmanuel, second Adam*) Christ (*Messiah*), the son of David (*Loving – after God's own heart*), the son of Abraham. ² Abraham (*Hebrew*) was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob (*known as Israel only after God changed His name representing his calling and purpose*), and Jacob the father of Judah (*Praise or Celebrated One*) and his brothers, *Emphasis mine*

Matthew 1:3-6 (ESV/JDRV) ³ and Judah (*the Jew designation begins here – the celebrated praise of God*) the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab (*Gentile*), and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth (*Moabitess*), and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David (*Eighth son symbolizing resurrection*) the king. *Emphasis mine*

We can say with confidence that Jesus of Nazareth is speaking to Israel throughout the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus' attention also included the Gentiles, but whatever affected Israel affected the world as well.

Jesus literally tells us what the fig tree leaves are like without the redemption of the Lamb of God when He told the Pharisees what they were.

Matthew 15:7-9 (NKJV) ⁷ *Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ⁸ 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'* "

The disciples' response to Jesus' saying may be the same as that of some of the religious leaders of our day.

Matthew 15:12-14 (NKJV) ¹² Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" ¹³ But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴ Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a ditch." *Emphasis mine*

Matthew's gospel appears to be like a swing. At the height of the swing, Matthew deals with Israel. At the bottom of the swing, he hits the Gentiles, sometimes calling us dogs, and goes back to the top again.

Matthew 15:22-28 (NKJV) ²² And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."

The Gentile woman made the wrong assumption that she could address the Lord as the Son of David. The title Lord implies Christ's divinity, and the title Son of David, His humanity. *It sounded good to me as well.* It was proper for this woman, a Gentile, to address Christ as "Lord." However, she had no right to call Him "Son of David": only the children of Israel were privileged to do so.

Matthew 15:23 (NKJV) ²³ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us."

Impatient disciples, as usual, but it was necessary for it to play out.

Matthew 15:24 (NKJV) ²⁴ But He answered and said, "*I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" *Emphasis mine*

The Lord was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. However, at this time, He came to a Gentile region, thus affording the Gentiles an opportunity to participate in His grace. A dispensational move showing that Christ came to the Jews first and that because of their unbelief, His salvation turned to the Gentiles.

Jesus is always emphatic about this point that salvation is of the Jews, but the time has come, and now is the time when all can worship God in spirit and in truth.

John 4:21-24 (NKJV) ²¹ Jesus said to her, "**Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.** ²² **You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.** ²³ **But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.** ²⁴ **God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**" *Emphasis mine*

We should not discount the fact that these non-Israelites, as women, represent a type of church.

Matthew 15:25-26 (NKJV) ²⁵ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" ²⁶ But He answered and said, "**It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.**"

Not an unclean dog, but a domesticated one, rather than a wild dog like Esau. In the eyes of the Lord, all the heathen are dogs, which are unclean in the eyes of the Law.

Leviticus 11:27 (NKJV) ²⁷ And whatever goes on its paws, among all kinds of animals that go on *all* fours, those *are* unclean to you. Whoever touches any such carcass shall be unclean until evening.

However, she does not stop barking.

Matthew 15:27-28 (NKJV) ²⁷ And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to her, "**O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.**" And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

In one sense, Jesus is revealing Himself as the Bread of Life. In the real, actual sense, the holy land of Israel was the table on which Christ, the heavenly bread,

had come as a portion to the children of Israel. But they threw Him off the table to the ground, in the Gentile land, so that He became broken crumbs as a portion to the Gentiles. The Gentile woman (*church*) appears to realize this at the time. No wonder the heavenly King admired her faith.

Jairus' daughter and the woman with the issue of blood also show a move to heal Israel first, with a Gentile woman getting healed along the way.

ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM

When we want to understand the audience and who Jesus is primarily speaking to, we ask Him. These disciples are the ones that are called, chosen, and faithful in their primary mission. We might as well exclude their faults because Jesus explained why they did what they did. Even Judas, the son of perdition (*destruction*), was faithful in doing what he did. It was just as Jesus said, Judas wished he had not been born for this purpose.

Matthew 20:17-19 (NKJV) ¹⁷ Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, ¹⁸ "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, ¹⁹ and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again."

It is as Jesus is saying, "Listen fellas, from this point on, I want you to pay attention with your eyes, listen well to everything that is about to take place, and the Holy Spirit will bring everything back to your remembrance. Matthew, make sure you get this for Israel."

Their hearts needed tuning before the entry into Jerusalem. Of course, we must remember the contention along the way. God allows the desire to sit in higher positions than the rest. *It is a teaching and learning experience for us.* Naturally, this creates indignation against the sons of thunder. Jesus then explains.

Matthew 20:27-28 (KJV) ²⁷ And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: ²⁸ Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

What happens next is truly the sovereignty of God in its symbolism for the disciples and the nation of Israel.

Matthew 20:30 (NKJV) ³⁰ And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!"

The two blind men are Israelites because they addressed Jesus as the Son of David, implying Him to be the promised Messiah. Two is the number of witnesses and fellowship. The nation of Israel had lost its witness and was about to destroy the last hope of active fellowship with its Messiah.

Why? They were blind. (*Okay, we know it was foretold of them, but it is being lived out at this moment.*)

Matthew 20:34 (NKJV) ³⁴ So *Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes.* And immediately their eyes received sight, and *they followed Him.* *Emphasis mine*

Welcome to the remnant, fellas, these now represent those who wanted to see, and now followed Jesus. Now go and see what the end will be in Jerusalem.

THE FIG - Symbolic of the Fruit of the Israel Nation

Jeremiah has the best overall description of the good and the bad figs.

The Good and Bad Fruit of the Fig Tree

Jeremiah 24:2-7 (NKJV) ² One basket *had* very good figs, like the figs *that are* first ripe; and the other basket *had* very bad figs which could not be eaten, they were so bad. ³ Then the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?"

And I said, "Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad, very bad, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad."

⁴ Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵ "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive from Judah, whom I have sent out of this place for *their own* good, into the land of the Chaldeans. ⁶ For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull *them* down, and I will plant them and not pluck *them* up. ⁷ Then I will give them a 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 to Me with their whole heart.

These things happened to them as examples for us to heed the warnings.

FIG TREE - Symbolic of the National and Political Life of Israel

Jesus received the people's praise and fulfilled the prophecy of His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Jesus then addressed the stubborn chief priests and scribes, who were indignant because the people recognized Him to be the Christ.

Matthew 21:9 (NKJV) ⁹ Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!"

Matthew 21:15-16 (NKJV) ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant ¹⁶ and said to Him, "*Do You hear what these are saying?*" And Jesus said to them, "*Yes. Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise'?*" *Emphasis mine*

In effect, Jesus is leaving the place of the "Fig Tree" because of its lack of righteous fruit. From a symbolic standpoint, Jesus goes to dwell with the mini-church now established in Bethany. He departed to lodge in the place where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and the house of Simon were (John 11:1; Matt. 26:6).

In Jerusalem, He was rejected by the leaders of Judaism, but in Bethany, He was welcomed by people who loved Him. Hello good fruit.

The Parable of the Fruitless Fig Tree

In this parable, Jesus continues His teaching on repentance. It is in the Gospel of Luke that we see that Jesus is the Son of Man. It is there that Jesus tells us that the Son of Man is the planter of the fig tree and that He has spent the last three years trying to get it to bear fruit.

Luke 13:6-9 (HCSB) ⁶ And He told this parable: “A man had a fig tree that was planted in his vineyard. He came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷ He told the vineyard worker, ‘Listen, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it even waste the soil?’ ⁸ “But he replied to him, ‘Sir, leave it this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ Perhaps it will bear fruit next year, but if not, you can cut it down.’”

The parable indicates that God, as the owner, came in the Son to seek fruit from the Jewish people, who were likened to a fig tree. He had been seeking fruit for three years but had not found any. He wanted to cut the Jews down, but God the Son, as the vinedresser per se, prayed for them, asking God the Father to tolerate them until the Son died for them (dug the ground around the fig tree) and gave them fertilizer (threw on manure), at which point, He hoped, they would repent and produce fruit. Otherwise, they would be cut down.

In Luke chapter 11, verses 29-32 and 42-52 unveil the Jewish people as an evil generation of this interpretation. These are Jeremiah’s bad figs.

Matthew and Mark confirmed that when Jesus returned the next day, Jesus was hungry for fruit from the children of Israel so that God might be satisfied.

Matthew 21:18-19 (NKJV) ¹⁸ Now in the morning, as He returned to the city (of Jerusalem), He was hungry. ¹⁹ And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again." Immediately, the fig tree withered away. *Emphasis mine*

Mark 11:12-14 (NKJV) ¹²Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. ¹³And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴In response, Jesus said to it, *"Let no one eat fruit from you ever again."* And *His disciples heard it.* *Emphasis mine*

The fig tree, being a symbol of the nation of Israel, *excluding the true followers, especially the symbolic mini church in Bethany*, was full of leaves but fruitless, symbolizing that at that time the nation of Israel was full of an outward show. It had nothing that could satisfy God.

Therefore, it is no wonder that it has to go through a period of outer darkness. The gnashing of teeth, which is regret and self-blame, is one of the many things they will experience until they cry out, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

Matthew 23:38-39 (NKJV) ³⁸*See! Your house is left to you desolate;* ³⁹*for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'* "

It is now the disciples who come to Jesus on the Mount of Olives and ask about the consummation of the age.

Matthew 24:32-33 (NKJV) ³²*"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors!*

One can imagine what the remnant of Israel, i.e., those who are called, chosen, and faithful, had to endure throughout Israel's history from Egypt up to now. The good times of serving under the chosen King David, the richest King Solomon, and, sparingly, a Hezekiah, thrown in the mix. Then there were the dark days of Judges, wicked priests, wicked kings to the core, and not to mention a Jezebel.

What I learned from Adam by choosing the fig leaves as his covering is proof for me that all religious righteousness or human good as a covering cannot substitute for the redemption required by the chosen Lamb of God. Therefore, the overall Olivet Discourse might be viewed as Paul revealing simple truths, as Jesus said: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

Romans 11:1-5 (NKJV) ¹ I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, *of the tribe of Benjamin.* ² God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ³ *"LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life" ?* ⁴ But what does the divine response say to him? *"I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."* ⁵ Even so, then, at this present time, *there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Emphasis mine*

Of the Gentiles, Paul writes:

Ephesians 3:3-7 (KJV) ³ How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, ⁴ Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) ⁵ Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; ⁶ *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:* ⁷ Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Romans 11:11 (HCSB) ¹¹ I ask, then, have they stumbled in order to fall? Absolutely not! On the contrary, by their stumbling, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous.

To the Replacement of Israel Crowd, Paul writes.

Romans 11:19-27 (HCSB) ¹⁹ Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰ True enough; they were broken off by unbelief,

but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either.

²² Therefore, consider God's kindness and severity: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness toward you – if you remain in His kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off. ²³ And even they, if they do not remain in unbelief, will be grafted in, because God has the power to graft them in again.

²⁴ For if you were cut off from your native wild olive and against nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these – the natural branches – be grafted into their own olive tree?

Paul warns everyone to check themselves concerning Israel.

Romans 11:19-27 (HCSB) ²⁵ So that you will not be conceited, brothers, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery: A partial hardening has come to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Liberator will come from Zion; He will turn away godlessness from Jacob. ²⁷ *And this will be My covenant with them when I take away their sins. Emphasis mine*

CONCLUSION

The Gospel of Matthew, as the book on the kingdom, stresses the matter of righteousness; it is for the kingdom life, one of strict righteousness, which, whether Jew or Gentile, we must seek. Matthew is saying, from beginning to end, for those in the household of Israel to hear and understand their Messiah in preparation for His return. Basically, there is a reward and enjoyment for the good fruit, but the bad rotten fruit will experience the outer darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth. I might add, your fig leaves, the righteousness of the Law, will not cover your nakedness.

The Holy Spirit, through Apostle John and Paul, shows that we are not grafted in the "Fig Tree" at all. As Paul said, we were wild olive branches, *and the True Vine is Christ Jesus.*

John 15:1-2 (HCSB) ¹“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. ²Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit.

John 15:7-8 (HCSB) ⁷If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples.

Jesus did tell us to be watchful of what happens to the nation of Israel, as the fig tree symbolism suggests. Whether the servants are Jews or Gentiles, there is a reward and joy for the good ones, and suffering for the bad ones.

Even so, Come, Lord Jesus.