

13. The second, third, and fourth rhetorical questions follow in:

James 3:12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh. (NASB)

1. In rhetorical question number two, James asks if a fig tree can produce the fruit of an olive tree. These two trees have vastly different growing seasons and harvests.

In Palestine and other warm climates the fig yields two crops annually—an earlier one, ripe about June, growing from the “old wood,” i.e. from the midsummer sprouts of the previous year, and a second, more important one, ripe about August, which grows upon the “new wood.”

By December, fig trees in the mountainous regions of Palestine have shed all their leaves, and they remain bare until about the end of March, when they commence putting forth their tender leaf buds, and at the same time, in the leaf axils, appear the tiny figs.¹⁴

2. The olive trees’ growing season is quite different from the figs’:

The olive is in flower about May. The first olives mature as early as September in some places, but, in the mountain districts, the olive harvest is not till November or even December.¹⁵

14. James’s second rhetorical question deploys his second dichotomous illustration of a fig tree producing the fruit of an olive tree. Not only is this impossible to do, but the Jewish citizens of Palestine also knew that the harvesting seasons of fig and olive trees are vastly different.
15. A fig tree’s fruit is harvested in August while that of olive tree’s is harvested as late as November and December. This is a double dichotomy.
16. There is also a nationalistic element contained in the dichotomous question, “Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives?” It is easily discerned in Scripture that the national tree of Israel is the fig because it is the key element in the Lord’s prophecy of Israel’s demise in A.D. 70 and its restoration at the Second Advent.
 1. Observe the Lord’s reference to the fig tree in **Matthew 21:19–21**:

(End JAS3-87.Rev. See JAS3-88.Rev for continuation of study at p. 331.)

¹⁴ Ibid., E. W. G. Masterman, s.vv. “Fig,” “Fig-Tree,” 2:1109

¹⁵ Ibid., “Olive Tree,” s.v. 3:2185.



Matthew 21:19 Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, Jesus came to it and found nothing on it except leaves; and He said to it, “No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you [**Jewish authority to communicate doctrine is removed**]!” And at once the fig tree withered.

2. The fig tree represents Israel and its custodianship of Scripture. This tree was full of leaves, but no figs. The fig tree produces the fruit first. The leaves emerge later which indicates the figs are ready for harvest.
3. The leaves symbolized the absence of divine viewpoint and therefore human viewpoint as taught by the scribes and others from the Talmud, known then as the “oral law.”
4. The leaves therefore symbolized legalism by those who placed spiritual emphasis on works. The absence of fruit revealed their complete rejection of grace.

Matthew 21:20 Seeing this, the disciples were amazed and asked, “How did the fig tree wither all at once?”

v. 21 Jesus answered them, “[*ἀμήν (amēn)*] I am telling you the truth, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, the Mount of Olives, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it will happen [**prophetic of the Second Advent**].” (See Zechariah 14:4)

5. It is by faith that the fruitless fig tree and the Mount of Olives may be cast into the sea at the Second Advent. This event is the subject of the Lord’s commentary in:

Matthew 24:32 Learn this parable from the fig tree: whenever its branch [**a title of Messiah, Jesus Christ**] is about to sprout [**Second Advent**] and put on leaves [**evangelism in the Tribulation**], you know that summer is near [**Second Advent**].

v. 33 So when you see these things, know from the experience of what you have learned that He is near, even at the door.

v. 34 “I am telling you the truth, the Jewish race will not pass away until all these things take place [**Second Advent**].



Matthew 24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.”

6. The withered fig in Matthew 21:19 revealed that the nation Israel was in reversionism. Its duty was to evangelize the lost and teach doctrine to the saved. The Messiah was in town and lived in the region, yet those responsible for evangelism still clung to a fruitless fig tree.
7. The reason all previous client nations have suffered fifth cycles of discipline is because they gradually drifted away from serious study of the immutable Word of God, grow in grace, and stand fast.
8. In addition, the church is to support, maintain, and supply missionaries either to the lost of the client nation or those whose volition might be challenged about Christ in foreign countries.
9. I submit that the loss of thought in the United States is rapidly transforming it into a fruitless fig tree. Doctrine is being taught by many, but positive response diminishes year by year.
10. And about this trend I have this to say: Because of the failure of the church in general, because of the Luciferian strategy in the nation's schools, the prospects for the survival of this client nation are in grave danger.
11. I recently observed my thirty-sixth year as pastor of this church. As we now move through our thirty-seventh year, this congregation should be dominated by adults who were children born during the first 10 to 15 years of this ministry and beyond.
12. What is the reason? I do not cast total aspersions upon them. A person who has been propagandized by the lie from grade school through university is the victim of a corrupt and evil generation.
13. Regardless of the negative social, political, and theological impacts on the souls of this nation's population, the Word of God remains alive and powerful.
14. Presently, the United States is regressing into a state that the Lord described regarding Israel in Matthew 21:19 as a fruitless fig tree.
15. In James 3:12, James asks the question, “Can a fig tree produce olives?” How do olives get into this discussion? Just as Israel is depicted as a fig tree, the Greeks are identified with the olive which was the national tree of that country.
16. Although the olive has historically been a prominent tree in Palestine, it was and remains the same in Greece which is today famous for its olives and olive oil.



17. Whereas the fig is symbolic of Israel, in the first century, the olive was emblematic of Greece. The Jews were the center of the worship of the singular Elohim while the Greeks worshiped at numerous sanctuaries throughout the nation:

Three great centers of Greek religion: Olympia, in Ēlis, as the chief sanctuary of Zeus; Délp̄hī, in Phṓsis, as the oracular seat of Apóllō; and Eleúsis, in Āttica, as the pilgrim-shrine to which all Greeks resorted who would be initiated in the mysteries of Deméter and Cora.¹

18. With this question, James is forcing the Jews to recognize national reversionism. They are the race that is given the challenge of taking the Word of God not only to their family and fellow residents of Jerusalem but also to the world.
19. How can they do this if their personal fig tree is empty of doctrine? Their inventory of truth is barren. Can a barren fig tree produce olives?
20. Then, “Consider this,” he implies, “Can Jewish parents produce Greek children? No, of course not. But Jews are able to produce children who do not know the Lord.
21. The third dichotomy which follows in verse 12 reads, “(can a) vine produce figs?” The word “vine” is the noun, ἄμπελος (*ámpelos*) and it primarily refers to grapes whose harvest is considered a sign of prosperity.
22. The topography of Palestine is conducive to the construction of vineyards:

The mountain regions of Jüdaéa and Samária, often little suited to cereals, have always proved highly adapted to vine culture. The stones must first be gathered out and utilized for the construction of a protecting wall or of terraces or as the bases of towers (Isaiah 5:2; Matthew 21:33). As a rule the vine-stocks lie along the ground, many of the fruit-bearing branches falling over the terraces (cf., Genesis 49:22).

¹ William Arthur Heidel, “Greece,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 2:1297.



The cultivation of the vine requires constant care or the fruit will very soon degenerate. After the rains the loosely made walls require to have breaches repaired; in the early spring the plants must be pruned by cutting off dead and fruitless branches which are gathered and burned. As the grapes ripen they must be watched to keep off jackals and foxes.

Figurative: Every man “under his vine and under his fig-tree” was a sign of national peace and prosperity.² To plant vineyards and eat the fruit thereof implied long and settled habitation; to plant and not eat the fruit was a misfortune and might be a sign of God’s displeasure. A successful and prolonged vintage showed God’s blessing.³

The Prophecy Related to the Vine and Fig Tree

1. In the devil’s world, personal property is always vulnerable to numerous challenges both human and environmental. Possessions of worth or value are subject to theft by unscrupulous predators or thieves or by nature itself.
2. Businesses and homes have locks and alarms and presently defended by arms borne by its owners under the authority of the Constitution’s Amendment II.
3. Peace and prosperity are aggrandized when the principles of private property are protected by various levels of government and those who violate the resultant tranquility are vulnerable to prosecution.
4. Such is not a concern in the environment of the Lord’s perfect millennial kingdom. This dispensation’s status of “peace and prosperity” is illustrated by the phrase “to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.”
5. This condition and prophecy are found three times in the Old Testament:

1 Kings 4:25 So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.

² This quoted phrase has millennial implications of the peace and prosperity typical of the dispensation as the following excerpts demonstrate.

³ E. W. G. Masterman, “Vine: Its Cultivation,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 4:3050-51.



Micah 4:4 Each one of them will sit under his vine and under his fig tree, with no one to make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

Zechariah 3:10 ‘In that day’ [**the Millennium**], declares the Lord of hosts, ‘every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.’”

6. The arrogance of those in authority who impose evil upon the people while feathering their own nest will have their ill-gotten gains removed. On this subject, Amos waxes prophetic on twenty-first century America:

Amos 5:11 Because you make the poor pay taxes on their crops and exact a grain tax from them, you will not live in the houses you built with chiseled stone, nor will you drink the wine from the fine vineyards you planted .

v. 12 Certainly I am aware of your many rebellious acts and your numerous sins. You torment the innocent, you take bribes, and you deny justice to the needy at the city gate.

v. 13 For this reason whoever is smart keeps quiet in such a time, for it is an evil time. (NET)

7. On the contrary, Israel’s prosperous vineyards were a sign of God’s approval of the Jew’s spiritual recovery from a period of national reversionism prophetically stated in:

Hosea 2:12 I will destroy her vines and fig trees, about which she said, “These are my wages for prostitution that my lovers gave to me!” I will turn her cultivated vines and fig trees into an uncultivated thicket, so that wild animals will devour them. (NET)

8. When Israel recovered from its reversionistic period, her restoration was announced by God, illustrated by the recovery of her vineyards in:

Hosea 2:14 However, in the future I will allure her, I will lead her back into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.

v. 15 From there I will give back her vineyards to her, and turn the “Valley of Trouble” into an “Opportunity of Hope.” There she will sing as she did when she was young when she came up from the land of Egypt. (NET)



17. The fourth rhetorical question from James 3:12 reads, “can salt water produce fresh?” No. Salt water itself cannot be made drinkable, but “people have been making seawater drinkable at least as far back as the ancient Greeks.”

“Our planet is drenched in 326 million trillion gallons of water. But it turns out that less than one-half of 1 percent of it is drinkable. Out of the rest, 98 percent is oceanic salt water and 1.5 percent remains locked up in icecaps and glaciers.”⁴

18. With a global population that exceed 7.5 billion people, there is a need to go technical in order to convert seawater into freshwater:

Desalination, or desalting, is the separation of fresh water from salt water. There are two basic types of desalting techniques: thermal processes and membrane processes.

***Thermal processes.* Distillation, a thermal process that includes heating, evaporation, and condensation, is the oldest and most widely used of desalination technologies.**

Modern methods for the distillation of large quantities of salt water rely on the fact that the boiling temperature of water is lowered as air pressure drops, significantly reducing the amount of energy needed to vaporize the water. Systems that utilize this principle include multistage flash distillation, multiple effect distillation, and vapour compression distillation.

***Membrane processes.* Two commercially important membrane processes used for desalination are electrodialysis and reverse osmosis. They are used mainly to desalt brackish or highly mineralized water supplies rather than much saltier seawater.⁵**

19. Seawater for centuries has been desalinated, but there are no natural processes that do so. Saltwater is undrinkable and if consumed it has a violent effect on the one that partakes.
20. James’s four rhetorical veils in verses 11 and 12 make clear that the reversionist lives in a spiritual state that no matter what he says and no matter what he attempts to do cannot produce a righteous result.

⁴ <https://adventure.howstuffworks.com/survival/wilderness/convert-salt-water.htm>

⁵ “Public Works: Environmental Works: Water Treatment: Desalination,” in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010), 26:385.



21. The overriding reason for this situation is that his stream of consciousness is filled with human viewpoint, human good, and evil; his volition responds to that inventory of ideas by directing his tongue to verbalize his cosmic concepts toward others causing great discord among the brethren.

James 3:11 Does a spring supply to a fountain both fresh [γλυκός (*glukús*): “sweet” (KJV) i.e., “potable”] and bitter water?

v. 12 Is it possible for a fig tree to produce the fruit of an olive tree, my fellow believers, or a grape vine the fruit of a fig tree? Neither can a saltwater spring produce fresh water. (EXT)

v. 13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. (NASB)

1. Verse 13 begins with the phrase, “Who among you is wise.” The word “wisdom,” σοφία (*sophía*), has several applications and meanings.
2. The Greek lexicons provide a number of meanings for the word dependent upon its use and context. When referring to human application it is defined as, “knowing how to do something: clever, skillful, experienced; understanding that results in wise attitudes and conduct. *Wise* in that the wisdom is divine in nature and origin (James 3:13).”⁶
3. A second analysis refers to its meaning in the New Testament and its Hebrew equivalent, *chokmah*, and differs from the classical meaning in two ways:

First of all, the biblical concept of wisdom is theocentric rather than anthropocentric. It denotes a fear of God and an understanding of His ways. It does not necessarily imply brilliance or scholastic training; rather, *sophós* indicates adroitness, the ability to apply with skill what one knows (especially religious truth). The word is used of one who has acquired special information, secret doctrine (*mustérion* [μυστήριον **mystery: Church Age]).⁷**

4. The third emphasizes wisdom whose definition reads:

⁶ Walter Bauer, “σοφός,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 935.

⁷ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., “σοφός,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 1301.

