

DO YOU WANT THE BRAMBLE KING?

Written by admin

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"For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes". Luke 6:44

"The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"

And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?"

Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"

Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon." (Judges 9:8-15)

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A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. This simple and clear definition holds good even today, and scholars may embellish it, as is their right, but it has never been surpassed; neither in terms of its cogency nor in terms of its sweeping application.

There are three aspects to a Biblical parable, just like there are three that make up the Holy Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three that pertain to earth; fire, water and blood, and three that pertain to nature; solids, liquids and gases. The three aspects to a Biblical parable are the divine, the spiritual and the moral, and as we shall see these three are powerfully exemplified in this beautiful Old Testament parable. Now follow this parable carefully for it has it all; drama, great story telling, a fascinating plot, subterfuge, spiritual and moral lessons and so much more.

Gideon was a great judge and he judged Israel forty years and then died. He had seventy sons by his wives, but he had an additional son called Abimelech by a concubine, and clearly this Abimelech was low life, extremely perverse and greedy. As soon as Gideon died Abimelech hatched a plot and murdered all his seventy half brothers except one that got away, his name was Jotham.

Jotham came to the people of Shechem, who had joined themselves to Abimelech and made him their ruler, and delivered this parable as recorded above (Judges 9:8-15).

Gideon was a great leader who delivered Israel from the Midianites, and the thankful Israelites turned to him and asked him to be their king. Gideon knew well the history of Israel and their waywardness and he refused to be their king, reply, "And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you." (Judges 8:23)

During Gideon's times as judge, Israel lived in peace and prosperity but as soon as he died Israel returned to her evil ways and idolatry. They now wanted someone to lead them in that ungodly lifestyle, turned to the low-life scoundrel Abimelech and hence Gideon's legitimate son, Jotham, confronted them and told them this parable.

In this parable trees represent the people of Israel, the Olive Tree was Gideon, the Fig Tree was Gideon's sons, and the Vine was his grandsons. The bramble was Abimelech.

Notice in each case that these three trees rejected the offer of rulership and the reasons they gave. Israel was not just asking for a king but a perverse king, someone who would indulge them and lead them astray, for they wanted a king to "come down" and rule them, meaning someone who would shred his principles and godly values and reverent lifestyle and be their leader in wickedness and rebellion.

The Olive Tree's rejection of their offer was firm and unequivocal, "But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" (Judges 9:8).

The Olive Tree represents divine love to God and unfettered Christian service to man. Whenever the olive tree is mentioned in the Bible, it is usually in a positive, pleasing and exemplary way that serves God. David was glad to say, "But I am like a green olive tree in the

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house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever." (Psalm 52:8)

Love and devotion to God out of a pure heart cannot be aligned with wickedness and disobedience and remain intact; and will never be compatible with worldliness. When the Olive Tree said, "Should I leave my fatness" it was declaring a stand for what it held dear and refusing to compromise and was determined to stand fast for the things that pleased God.

The trees now turned to the Fig Tree and made the same offer but again they were rebuffed, "But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?" (Judges 9:11).

The Fig Tree represents moral uprightness, goodness and love for just laws. The Fig Tree knew that its good qualities were fine for wholesomeness and probity but to consent to rule over degenerates would result in a diminution, and even a cessation, of those qualities referred to as "my sweetness, and my good fruit".

Some people, in order to dominate and rule, will abandon every principle, undertake every dirty manoeuvre and machination to get what they want. History is replete with dictators who carried out the most barbarous acts to get power. or to hold on to it. and always with an eye to their unfettered ego.

Even so-called decent men, who have fallen in love with domination and power, do the most awful things in those positions, and sooner or later come unstuck because the Bible is right when it says, "Evil shall slay the wicked..." (Psalm 34:21)

The trees then turned to the Vine and the same offer to be king over them was made, and the Vine refused and said, "Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" (Judges 9:13).

The Vine represents truth, love of truth and the fruit springing from that truth is love towards God and love towards man. The juice of the fruit of the vine, pure, unsullied wine, is a symbol of joy and comfort to both man and God. For God because wine is used in the sacraments and service of thanksgiving and praise, and for man because it can make joyful and provide nourishment for healing the ailing body or flagging spirit.

When the Good Samaritan found the wounded man by the wayside, he acted neighbourly: "And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." (Luke 10:34)

The Vine was not prepared to swap service to God and humanity to serve on the throne of people who displeased God and opposed the values for which it stood. Jesus Christ was not ashamed to call himself after The Vine for he said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5)

Finally the trees turned to the bramble, and as eager as ever to get someone like them,

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someone who would indulge their every depravity, encourage their excesses, and vulgarity, and waywardness said, "Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow" (Judges 9:15).

And they made the bramble king.

The bramble represents self-centred, arrogant, dismissive-of-others leadership. It's about self centred leadership, domineering, and has no place for humility, consultation or teamwork.

This bramble, none other than Abimelech, turned out to be indulgent, depraved, disloyal and deadly. He led them to disaster after disaster until they eventually turned against him and assassinated him in a most gruesome manner.

This parable teaches us a lot about leadership, dominance, the lust for power, the strength of character required to maintain integrity, the refusal to compromise, the nature of Godly leadership, and so much more.

We should read these marvellous parables of the Old Testament more often, learn the lessons taught, and instead of disputing every symbol, arguing about every nuance of meaning, we should rejoice and let the Olive Tree give of its fatness, and the Fig Tree its sweetness and good fruit, and the Vine its spiritual wine; all to the honour, glory and praise of Almighty God.

Have you made the bramble king of your heart? Do you look out for brambles to elect into office? If so disaster will surely follow.

Look out for the olive trees, the fig trees, and the vines.