

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.**
(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)*

#04-1079

Graftage

August 1, 2010

By now, you should know I believe that God's plan to achieve His purpose is based on what I have called **graftage**, in contrast to **dualism** and **reversionism**. If you have not read issues #04-1075 through #04-1078, I encourage you to do so.

The noun *graftage* is defined as "the state of being grafted." The noun *graft* is defined as "a shoot or bud of one plant or tree inserted or to be inserted into the stem or trunk of another, where it continues to grow, becoming a permanent part; the act or process of inserting such a bud or shoot." The same process can occur with skin, bone, or living tissue transplanted from one body to another body or from one part of a body to another part of the same body, where it grows and becomes a permanent part. Another way of stating this is that "being grafted" refers to the process of inserting, let's say, object B into object A so that object B becomes a permanent part of object A.

Graftage is a two-way process involving cutting or removing a part from one object and inserting or grafting it into another object. Obviously, if something can be grafted in, it only follows that it can also be cut out or pruned if it fails to root properly or bear fruit. The fact of the matter is that, in order to bring forth the fruit of His Kingdom, God both prunes out of (cuts out dead material and trims living material) and grafts into (inserts living material) His tree. This is the job of a vinedresser.

The Word of God uses many agricultural or horticultural metaphors, most notably, those involving trees and vines that, in the natural world, are grafted. The most recognizable one is Jesus as the true vine and the Father as the vinedresser (John 15:1-6). But one that is not as recognized is the good and the bad fig trees of Judah. To understand this, a little history is in order.

At the end of Jacob-Israel's life, he blessed his son Judah with the scepter [the King] (Genesis 49:10), Joseph with fruitfulness [the Kingdom] (Genesis 49:22-26), and the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, with the birthright (Genesis 48; 1 Chronicles 5:1), who were also blessed with his name Israel: "**And may my name live on in them**" (Genesis 48:16). Following Solomon's death, the united kingdom of Israel was divided into two nations (1 Kings 11:9-11; 2 Chronicles 10:15-11:4), the house of Judah, consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and most of the Levites, and the house of Israel, consisting of the remaining ten tribes. The name of Judah and the scepter remained in Jerusalem and formed the southern nation. The name of Israel and the birthright took root in Samaria and formed the northern nation. Later, the nation of Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity and dispersed northward. They ceased being a nation and lost their national identity. They became the lost [i.e., no national identity] sheep of the house of Israel and remain so to this very day. The birthright remains a treasure hidden in the field [world] (Matthew 13:44). Modern Israel is not this house; it has unlawfully usurped the name. The nation of Judah was also taken into captivity, but by the Babylonians. Later, a remnant returned to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem and, with it, the hope of the scepter.

This is a very condensed history, but the point is: When Jesus came the first time, the house or nation of Judah, not Israel, resided in Jerusalem. Jesus came the first time as the antitype of Judah to take the scepter as the King of Judah. When He comes the second time, He will come as the antitype of Joseph to establish His Kingdom through the birthright and, spiritually speaking, reunite Judah and Israel.

Now, the nation of Judah was symbolized by the fig tree, but in the days of Jesus, there were two fig trees present in Judea, a good fig tree and a bad fig tree. Jeremiah, a prophet of Judah, was given revelation of two baskets of figs set before the temple of the Lord.

(2) One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, and the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten due to rottenness. (3) Then the LORD said to me, "What do

you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad figs, very bad, which cannot be eaten due to rottenness.” (Jeremiah 24:2-3 NASB)

Then, the Lord went on to explain what would happen to the good figs and the bad figs.

(6) “For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not overthrow them, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. (7) I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.” (Jeremiah 24:6-7 NASB)

(8) ‘But like the bad figs which cannot be eaten due to rottenness ... so I will abandon ... the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land (10) ‘I will send the sword, the famine and the pestilence upon them until they are destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their forefathers.’” (Jeremiah 24:8, 10 NASB)

Drawing upon the word He gave to Jeremiah about 600 years earlier, Jesus clearly made the point that the good figs could only come from a good fig tree and the bad figs from a bad fig tree.

(17) “So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. (18) A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. (19) Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (20) So then, you will know them by their fruits.” (Matthew 7:17-20 NASB)

In other words, the nation of Judah was made up of two trees, a good one and a bad one, one that had a heart for the Lord and one that did not. The good fig tree believed that Jesus was the Messiah and the King of Judah and followed Him, even after His death on the cross and resurrection. They recognized Him and loved Him. The bad fig tree refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah and King of Judah and rejected Him to the point of demanding His death on a cross. They too recognized Him, for the parables tell us so, but they hated Him to the point of becoming murderers (Matthew 21:38-39).

Because of this, Jesus declared to them: **The kingdom of God will be taken from you** [bad fig tree], **and it will be given to a nation** [good fig tree] **producing the fruits of it** (Matthew 21:43 LITV).

The bad fig tree would not inherit the Kingdom of God but instead be cast out because of its rotten fruit. Just as Jeremiah had prophesied, so did Jesus: **“But the king** [God the Father] **was enraged, and he sent his** [God’s Roman] **armies and destroyed those murderers** [bad figs] **and set their city** [Jerusalem] **on fire”** (Matthew 22:7 NASB). In 70 AD, God sent His Roman army to destroy the great city Jerusalem and the temple, bringing a final blow to Judaism and the Old Covenant.

We need to realize that the good fig tree that followed Jesus lived on, and this tree was made up of believing Judahites or Jews. To those who argue that the ecclesia of Christ is a Jewish ecclesia; there is some truth to this. The early ecclesia was mostly of Judahites who followed the King of Judah. After all, Paul declared: **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”** (Romans 1:16 NASB). Then he asked: **“What advantage has the Jew?”**; to which he answered: **“Great in every respect”** (Romans 3:1, 2). However, the advantage is of no value if a Jew remains one outwardly, manifested through the flesh, and is not one inwardly, manifested through faith and a circumcised heart.

As the King and Lion from the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5), Jesus is the trunk or, if you will, the entire good fig tree, made up of many branches, called to bear the fruit of the Kingdom. The genealogical Judahites that were good figs met Paul’s definition of a true Jew, for they were ones inwardly with a circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit (Romans 2:29).

Here is where graftage enters in. All who have believed on Jesus but are not genealogical Judahites have been grafted into the good fig tree of Judah as spiritual Judahites. All are true Jews, for they have united themselves with the King of Judah. There is only one line upon which God is working today, and the good fig tree of Judah is one type of this line that has remained unbroken since its inception. Another type is the olive tree, but this is another topic. Good news; we who believe have been grafted!