



The MBPC Texter

... get into scripture - an ancient form of text messaging

Issue 12

Lectionary Year C

Wednesday, March 20, 2019



Sunday, March 24, 2019

3rd Sunday in Lent

<p>☆</p> <p>Old Testament Reading Isaiah 55:1-9 <i>An Invitation to Abundant Life</i></p>	<p>✝</p> <p>Gospel Reading Luke 13: 31-35 <i>The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree</i></p>
---	---

Read more....

- Isaiah: the 200-Year-Old Prophet
- Parables in Luke



☆ Isaiah 55:1-9 ☆

55:1 Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

55:2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

55:3 Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

55:4 See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.

55:5 See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

55:6 Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;

55:7 let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

55:8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

✠ Luke 13: 1-9 ✠

13:1 At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

13:2 He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?"

13:3 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.

13:4 Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them--do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem?"

13:5 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

13:6 Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none.

13:7 So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?'

13:8 He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it.

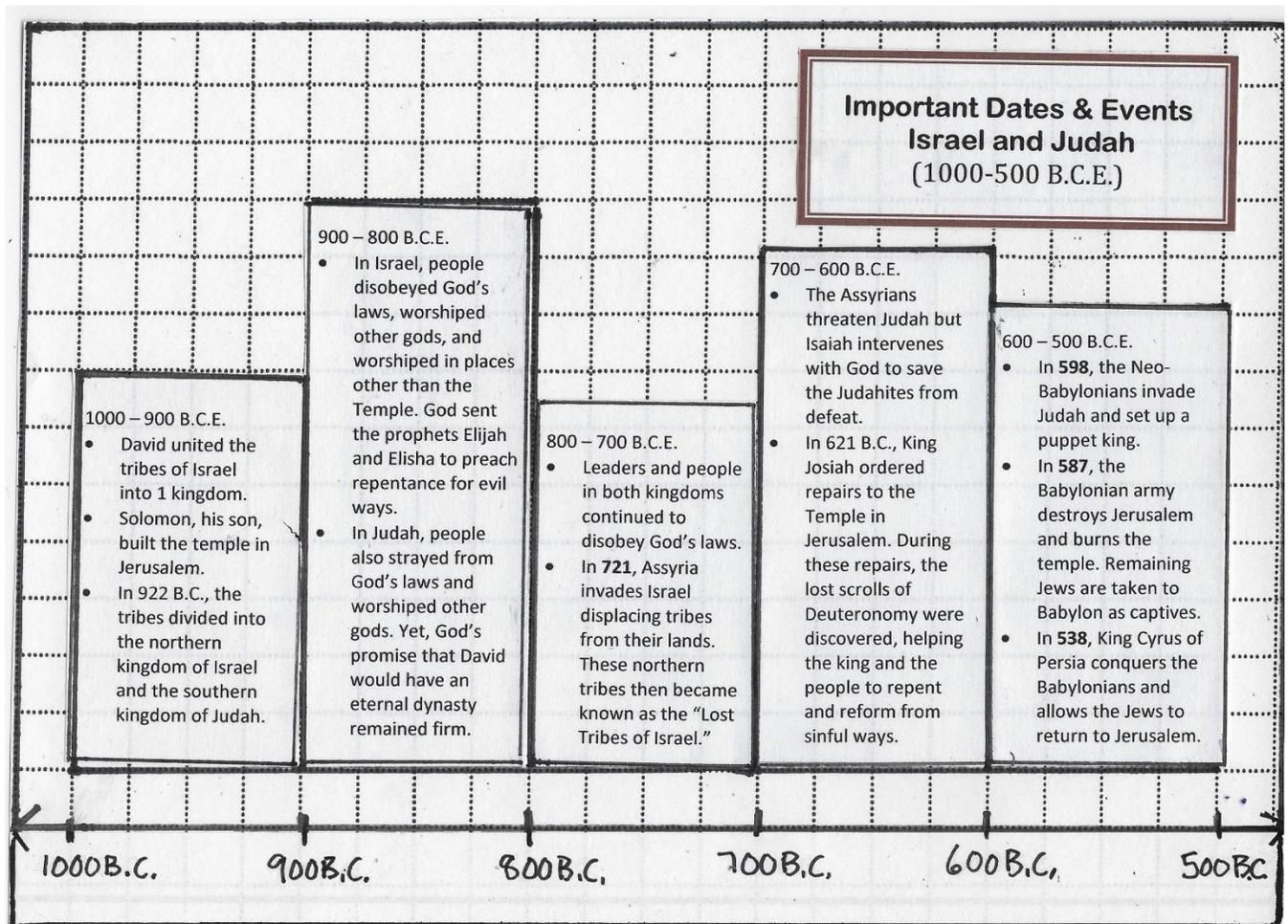
13:9 If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"



Isaiah: A 200-Year-Old Prophet?

The Bible, particularly in Genesis and Exodus, reports ages of patriarchs and prophets in the hundreds and way above. Genesis 5:27 reports Methuselah, a descendant of Adam and the grandfather of Noah, to have lived to be 969 years old. In making sense

of this and talking about it with children, we might suggest that years did not consist of the same number of days in those ancient times as how we measure them today. But let's move forward to the times of the prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem (740 – 690 B.C) hundreds of years after Abraham and Moses. Because of the historical context of Isaiah's sermons and oracles, scholars have reasoned that the first half of the book (Chapters 1-39) was written 200 years before the second half (Chapters 40-66). So, if we update our reasoning and conclude that Isaiah was not a prophet more than 200 years old, then we agree with scholars that the two halves of Isaiah were written by different people, perhaps more than two. Additionally, to unlock deeper meanings from Isaiah's passages, it helps to have an overview about what was happening with the Israelites from 1000 – 500 B.C.



The tenth century before the year 922 B.C. marked glory years for Israel. King David united the tribes into one nation of Israelites and established its capital in Jerusalem. For the many centuries that followed, Jews remembered David and being humble and righteous. His son, Solomon, was remembered for his wisdom and for building the magnificent temple on top of Mt. Zion. The years 900- 500 B.C. were not glorious. David's the tribes, which were united under David's leadership, split into a northern kingdom of Israel, ruled by King Jeroboam, and the southern kingdom of Judah, ruled by King Rehoboam. According to 1st and 2nd Kings both kingdoms had many wicked kings, and the people turned away from God. In 721, disaster struck the northern

kingdom when they were conquered by the warlike Assyrians from Mesopotamia. Then, mayhem befell the southern kingdom of Judah when they were conquered by the Neo-Babylonians and taken into exile in Babylon.

The first prophet of Isaiah was preaching in Jerusalem at this time. Sermons in this first half of Isaiah frequently admonished the people for not living by God’s commandments and warned that the same thing would happen in the southern kingdom of Judah if they did not repent. Additionally, other passages in these first 39 chapters reflect Isaiah’s “Zionist Vision” described on page 913 of the HarperCollins Study Bible, which contains these three aspects:

- God is the great king of heaven and earth.
- Jerusalem’s temple (atop Mt. Zion) is God’s royal dwelling place.
- Kings of the Davidic line will become God’s anointed vice-regents on earth.

Glimpses of this vision appear again and again throughout the book of Isaiah, as well as in many psalms.

Sunday’s Isaiah passage (Chapter 55:1-9) was probably written at a time when the Judahites who were exiled in Babylon were about to be released by the Persian ruler Cyrus (c. 540 B.C.). The prophet’s messages are no longer threats of judgment or warnings of doom but are filled with promises of deliverance and hope. Verses 3-5 suggest the Zionist Vision -- nations led by a Davidic king – still to be present in the minds of the returning exiles.

Palestine from 500 B.C. to 0 A.D.

Many Jews never returned to Jerusalem from the exile in Babylon. Those who did rebuilt the Temple of Solomon but were surrounded by difficult circumstances, including economic oppression and a resurgence of paganism. Even so, over a 100-year period following the return to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, the Old Testament books were being compiled, edited and organized. In 333 B.C. Alexander the Great of Macedonia conquered Egypt, Palestine and extended his empire eastward into Persia. After Alexander’s death, his successors attempted to force Palestine’s residents to worship and live like Greeks. This led to a revolt and a period of relative independence for Judah that lasted until Rome gained control the century before Jesus’ birth. After the Roman Rule began, Palestine and its neighbors on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea became increasingly multicultural. Even so, the Jews living there retained Isaiah’s Zionist vision. Furthermore, we can imagine today how some Jews of Jesus’ time expected their anointed Messiah to be more of political figure reminiscent of King David, whereas others may have expected a spiritual leader more like Jesus – God in human form who would fulfill the messianic promise for all people.





Parables in Luke

For Sunday March 24, the sermon text contains the parable of the barren fig tree, and its story is told on page 351 in *The Children's Bible in 365 Stories*. Parables are short stories with double meanings. There are parables in the Old Testament, such as the vineyard song (Isaiah 5:1-2) and Nathan's story told to David about the man's prized lamb (1Samuel 12:1-4). However, it is with the sayings of Jesus that the Biblical parable achieves its most widespread use. Parables of Jesus were life examples or stories with double meaning that teach lessons. Some parables are brief statements like this one:

*The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls;
on finding one pearl of great value,
he went and sold all he had and bought it (Matthew 13:45-46).*

Other parables are longer narratives, like the well-known story, "The Prodigal Son." The parables of Jesus were frequently puzzling to his ancient listeners and are also difficult for us to interpret as we study the Bible today. Parables can be found in the 3 synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The Gospel of John is not generally known for having parables. Here is a list of parables that appear only in Luke

1. Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35)
2. Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9)
3. Tower Builder (Luke 14:28-30)
4. King at War (Luke 14: 31-32)
5. Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-9)
6. Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)
7. Unjust Steward (Luke 16: 1-8)
8. Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:9-31)
9. Unjust Judge (Luke 18:2-5)
10. Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-13)