



# Minutes With Messiah

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## YO TE QUIERO



John saw Je - sus come to be bap - tized. The hope of the world was re - a - lized. A  
John, Pe - ter, and James on moun - tain steep. They soon be - came tired and went to sleep. Then  
And now one has come to be im - mersed. This one is now saved who once was cursed. A



voice came from hea - ven, and a white bird. And these are the words the peo - ple heard.  
Pe - ter saw Mo - ses, E - lij - ah too. A voice from God told him what to do.  
voice comes from heav - en, un - heard to ear, But these are the words the an - gels hear.



Yo te quie-ro Tu e - res m'hi - jo.\* Well pleas - ing son. So spoke The One.  
Yo te quie-ro Tu e - res m'hi - jo. Oth - ers grow dim. Lis - ten to him.  
Yo te quie-ro Tu e - res m'hi - jo/ja. Spo - ken so mild. Wel - come my child.

\*I love you. You are my son (or son/daughter in the third verse).

This song is based on the words of God at the baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22) and at the transfiguration (Matt 17:5)

It is not arranged for four voices, as is usually the case. One reason is that it is a more personal song, rather than a congregational one. (But it can be sung by a whole congregation if you so desire.)

### CONTENTS

Yo Te Quiero	1
Sweet Figs	2
If This Were Living Only	4

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# SWEET FIGS

Our preacher's granddaughter is a big fan of fruit. When she walks up to the church building, one of the first things she does is point to the fig tree, demanding fruit. For the moment, she is still able to get a fig before Bible class. Being tall, I can reach ripe fruit that has been missed by shorter people, and get a tentative and much coveted thank you.

Jesus was not so lucky one time. He saw a fig tree in leaf, but it was too early in the year to have figs on it. He did what little Margo cannot do; he cursed the fig tree. (Matt 21:18-22; Mk 11:12-24) There has been much debate about why he did this. It clearly wasn't because there were no figs on the tree. He couldn't expect figs out of season. Perhaps it was similar to the time he was asked, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (Jn 9:2) Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should

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be made manifest in him." So it may have been with the fig tree. He cursed it and it withered, not because it had done anything wrong, but that the works of God should be made manifest. For when the disciples marveled that the tree was spoiled, Jesus used the opportunity to teach them the power of faith.

If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. (Matt 21:21-22)

Figs played an important role in the lives of ancient people. That is obvious from the frequency of the mention of figs in the Bible.

## Figs as a sign of fertility

After the Israelites came out of Egypt, they were promised a fertile land, "flowing with milk and honey." (Ex 3:8 *et al*) When the spies went in to look at the land, they brought back grapes, pomegranates, and figs to show how good the land was. (Num 13:23) Nevertheless, most

of the spies complained about the giants in the land and the people went back into the desert. Here they lodged a complaint against Moses.

And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink. (Num 20:5)

The prosperous land had figs; the desert had none. They clearly preferred the fertility of a place with figs.

When the King of Assyria was besieging Jerusalem he compared the barrenness of the siege to the fertility of figs.

Thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern. (2 Kin 18:31)

What the prophet Micah later said was in direct contrast with what the messenger of the King of Assyria had said. The one said that if Jerusalem forsook God they would have figs. Micah said it would only happen if they obeyed God.

But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. (Mic 4:4)

## Shaken figs

One thing is very clear about figs here in the Southwestern United States. Figs fall easily. It doesn't take a very strong wind storm for the ground to be covered in ripe or overripe figs. And they are a mess to clean up. The Bible also speaks about the ease of getting figs to fall from the tree in prophecies about the fall of kingdoms.

All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater. (Nah 3:12)

Figs fall so easily that you can catch them in your mouth as you shake the tree. Just so easily was the city of Nineveh to fall.

In the book of the Revelation, the sixth seal against the Roman Empire said essentially the same thing. "And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." (Rev 6:13)

## Good fig; bad fig

God used figs in a prophecy through Jeremiah. The prophet was shown a basket of figs. Some were very

good, the annual first fruit of the tree. Others were very bad, even inedible. The good figs were those in Jerusalem who obeyed God and surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army. The bad figs were those who continued in disobedience.

And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the LORD, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt: And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. (Jer 24:8-9)

Later, Jeremiah said the same thing about the king and his rebellious people. "I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil." (Jer 29:17)

### Miscellaneous figs

The first mention of fig trees in the Bible is possibly the most famous. Adam and Eve had eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which they were not supposed to do. They were ashamed of their nakedness, and sewed fig leaves to make clothing. I don't know if you have ever seen a real fig leaf, but that would be one of the last leaves I would choose to make clothes out of. They are quite big, to their advantage, but they are also extremely rough on one side. Talk about clothes that chafe.

Some Jewish rabbis claim that the forbidden fruit was a fig. That is why they made clothes of fig leaves; it was the tree under which they were standing. Just as with the theory of the Adam's apple, so there is a problem with the Adam's fig. Man was cast out of the garden to prevent access to certain trees. If the forbidden fruit were a fig, we would no longer have figs, to Margo's displeasure.

Figs, of course, are fruit, and therefore food. One reason figs and grapes were so popular in the ancient world was because the refrigerator had not yet been invented. Grapes can be dried into raisins, which will keep for a long time. Figs have the same quality. When Abigail came to feed David's followers she brought "200 cakes of figs." (1 Sam 25:18) The people of the northern tribes of Israel provided food for King David's coronation. Because of the distance they had to travel, part of their gift was "meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins." (2 Chron 12:40)

Apparently dried figs pressed into cakes were a staple food for armies. When David's armies were pursuing a group of raiders that had taken their families hostage, they found an Egyptian who had been part of the Amalekite army. He had gotten sick and had been left to starve. In order to turn him as a spy for his own army, David and his men took care of him.

And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit

came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. (1 Sam 30:12)

In at least one case figs were medicinal. King Hezekiah was sick. He was going to die, and part of the symptoms of his illness was an inflammation, sometimes translated a boil. When he prayed to God about his illness, God granted him fifteen more years of life. In order to heal him so he could live that long, the prophet Isaiah told them to put a lump of figs on the inflamed spot. Hezekiah recovered. That may not be the best remedy today, but in this one case it was effective.

### The source of figs

Everyone who knows anything about figs knows that they grow on trees. Even a two year old recognizes

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where she gets her figs. She smells the flowers, but looks for figs on a tree.

Jesus used the idea that figs grow on trees to teach a lesson. It may be good to be a trusting person, but it is not always wise.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

It is probably not chance that he chose thorns and thistles to use in this comparison. Both can draw blood, or at least cause great pain. Grapes come from the vine, and figs from the tree. That is how it is supposed to be. A sweet-smelling rose may come from thorns, but these sweet fruits do not. Do not trust those who come in the guise of thorns. By their fruits you shall know them.

There are many other mentions of figs in the Bible. The scriptures may mention them and grapes more than any other fruit. Because of this we can learn a lesson from the fig tree.

# IF THIS WERE LIVING ONLY

Men mighten dreden wel and skillfully/This lif to lese, min owene deere brother,/If this were living only, and noon other. (Men might dread well and skillfully/This life to lose, my own dear brother,/If this were living only, and none other.) (Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*)

Geoffrey Chaucer wrote a variety of stories in *The Canterbury Tales*. Some were bawdy. Most, however, were of a religious bent. Some poked fun at characters based on types from the Catholic Church. Even then, however, he often quoted scripture or presented scriptural ideas. That is true of the above quotation from *The Second Nun's Tale*. Her point has been expressed by others in various ways. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." (Isa 22:13) "If I'm wrong about the afterlife, I lose nothing. If I'm right, I gain everything."

Paul put it more succinctly. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (1 Cor 15:19)

Peggy Lee once sang a song, *Is That All There Is*, that went to number one on the *Billboard* Easy Listening chart in 1969. It tells of the singer's disillusionment about various things. If that's all there is, then why not just get drunk? The final verse says the singer would never commit suicide because they are afraid to be disillusioned again if this life is all there is. That the song hit number one shows the cynicism of many in the later 60s. In another sense, it shows that people agreed with Paul, that there must be something better.

Chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians is Paul's treatise on the resurrection. Paul did not believe that this life is all there is. He was, after all, a Pharisee. He believed in the resurrection, even before his conversion. He believed in it more strongly afterward.

Wherever the gospel was preached, the usual

sticking point was the resurrection. Acts 4:2 says the Sadducees were "grieved" that Peter and John taught the resurrection. When Paul preached on the Areopagus in Athens, he got as far as proclaiming Jesus raised from the dead. "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. (Acts 17:32) When Paul was called before the Sanhedrin, he used the resurrection to his advantage.

But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. (Acts 23:6)

He later tells the Roman governor, Felix, that his only crime before the Jews, the crime for which he was in chains, was that "Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day." (Acts 24:21) He implied that this should not be a crime and he should be set free.

The doctrine of resurrection was controversial in the first century. It continues to be controversial today. Even people who say they believe that Jesus was raised from the dead live like they believe there is no resurrection or judgement.

If there is no resurrection, if this is all there is, then self-interest is the only moral restraint. The only reason that people do not commit more crimes is they "dreden this lif to lese." The threat of capital punishment or its virtual equivalent, life in prison, is all that keeps some people from killing each other. Even honest people would not scruple to commit crimes.

But there is a resurrection. There is a judgement. We who believe in Christ, of all men, are truly the least miserable. We know a better life is coming. It is not pie in the sky. It is the hope of mankind.

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