

Jeremiah 24:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad.

Analysis

One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe—the Hebrew *tovot me'od* (תּוֹתָם מְאֹד, very good) emphasizes exceptional quality. *Bikkurot* (בְּקָרֹות, first ripe) refers to early figs, considered the choicest fruit, eagerly anticipated and highly prized (Isaiah 28:4, Hosea 9:10, Micah 7:1). First fruits belonged to God (Exodus 23:19), making this imagery particularly significant—these represent people consecrated to divine purposes.

The other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad—“naughty” (*ra'ot*, רָעִית) means evil, bad, or worthless. The repetition emphasizes absolute corruption: “could not be eaten, they were so bad.” The contrast is stark and absolute—no middle category exists. This binary division anticipates Jesus’ teachings on fruit-bearing (Matthew 7:17-20) and final separation (Matthew 25:31-46). The vision forces recognition that covenant community membership doesn’t guarantee spiritual vitality; God discerns true condition beneath external appearances.

Historical Context

First-ripe figs appeared in June, before the main August harvest, and were considered delicacies. They were so valued that their arrival marked a season of celebration. Conversely, rotten figs were not merely unripe or mediocre but completely spoiled—worthless and disgusting. Jeremiah’s audience would

immediately grasp the shocking nature of this vision: the exiles whom Jerusalem's residents despised as cursed were actually God's choice first fruits, while those confident in their Jerusalem residency were rotten and destined for disposal. This reversed all conventional wisdom. The temple's presence in Jerusalem, their possession of the land, and their escape from exile seemed like divine favor. Yet God saw hearts: the exiles' humiliation had broken their pride and opened them to repentance, while Jerusalem's residents hardened in self-righteousness.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Why might suffering and humiliation (exile) produce "good figs" while apparent blessing (remaining in Jerusalem) produce "bad figs"?
2. How does this vision challenge the tendency to judge spiritual condition by external circumstances or religious privilege?
3. What does the impossibility of eating the bad figs teach about the finality of persistent rebellion against God's correction?

Interlinear Text

אָכְדָּמָה	תְּאַנְּים	טוֹבָה	מָאָד	תְּאַנְּים
basket	One	even like the figs	good	had very
H1731	H259	H8384	H2896	H3966

אֲשֶׁר מֵאָדָם הַבָּקָר וְתַּאֲנִים	אָדָם וְפֶדַע	בָּקָר וְתַּאֲנִים	בָּקָר וְתַּאֲנִים	מֵאָדָם	הַבָּקָר וְתַּאֲנִים	הַבָּקָר וְתַּאֲנִים
that are first ripe	basket	One	even like the figs	naughty	had very	H834

לֹא	תִּאֵכְלָה	מְרֻעָה
H3808	which could not be eaten	they were so bad

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 5:7 (Parallel theme): For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

Isaiah 5:4 (Parallel theme): What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

Micah 7:1 (Parallel theme): Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit.

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