

Luke 13:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

Analysis

And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down—

The vinedresser's intercession has limits. The conditional structure (κἄν μὲν ποιήσῃ καρπόν... εἰ δὲ μή γε, ἐκκόψεις αὐτήν, kan men poiēsē karpon... ei de mē ge, ekkopseis autēn) presents two stark outcomes: fruitfulness or destruction. There is no third option.

This conclusion demolishes presumption upon God's patience. The 'cutting down' (ἐκκόπτω, ekkoptō) means complete removal and judgment—the same verb used by John the Baptist: 'Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down' (Matthew 3:10). For Israel, this judgment fell in AD 70 when Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. For individual souls, it comes at death or Christ's return. The parable ends without revealing the tree's response, leaving each hearer to provide the ending through their own life. Will we bear fruit or face the axe?

Historical Context

The destruction of barren fruit trees was standard agricultural practice—sentimentality didn't outweigh economic reality. Firewood from fruit trees was valuable, so even a cut-down tree had use, but only after it failed its primary purpose. Jesus spoke this parable around AD 30; within 40 years (a biblical generation), the Roman legions under Titus besieged Jerusalem, slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Jews, destroyed the temple, and ended the sacrificial

system. This national catastrophe fulfilled Jesus' prophecy that fruitless Israel would be 'cut down.'

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the finality of 'cut it down' challenge modern assumptions about unlimited second chances?
2. What fruit has God's patient cultivation produced in your life this past year that wouldn't have existed without His intervention?
3. If your life were evaluated today solely by its spiritual fruit, what would the verdict be—'well' or 'cut it down'?

Interlinear Text

καν	μεν	ποιηση	καρπον	ει	δε	μηγε,	εις	το
And if	G3303	it bear	fruit	G1487	G1161	G3361	then after that	G3588
G2579		G4160	G2590				G1519	
μελλον.	εκκόψεις	αυτήν						
G3195	down	it						
	G1581	G846						

Additional Cross-References

John 15:2 (Parallel theme): Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Hebrews 6:8 (Parallel theme): But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

1 Thessalonians 2:15 (Parallel theme): Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

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