

# Mark 11:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

## Analysis

**And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves** (ιδὼν συκῆν ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔχουσαν φύλλα)—fig trees in Palestine typically produced early figs before full foliage, so a leafy tree promised fruit. Jesus' approach to investigate is natural and purposeful. The phrase "afar off" indicates the tree's impressive appearance from a distance—lush foliage suggesting abundant fruit.

**He came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves** (ἦλθεν εἰ ἄρα τι εὕρησει ἐν αὐτῇ, καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐπ' αὐτὴν οὐδὲν εὔρεν εἰ μὴ φύλλα)—the tree was all show, no substance. **For the time of figs was not yet** (ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς οὐκ ἦν σύκων)—this detail puzzles readers: why curse a tree for not having fruit out of season? The answer lies in understanding Palestinian fig cultivation: fig trees produce small early figs (paggim) before leaves; these mature alongside full foliage. A tree with full leaves should have had paggim, even if main harvest wasn't ready. The tree's leafy appearance promised fruit but delivered none—exactly like Israel's temple religion: impressive externally but spiritually barren. The tree becomes a prophetic symbol of judgment on fruitless religion.

## Historical Context

Fig trees held deep significance in Jewish culture: symbols of peace and prosperity (1 Kings 4:25; Micah 4:4), often used in prophetic imagery for Israel (Jeremiah

8:13; 24:1-10; Hosea 9:10; Joel 1:7). Jesus frequently used fig trees in parables (Luke 13:6-9). The cursing wasn't arbitrary cruelty but a prophetic sign-act—like Old Testament prophets who performed symbolic actions to visualize God's message (Jeremiah 13:1-11; Ezekiel 4:1-17). The fig tree represented Israel, particularly the temple establishment: outwardly impressive (magnificent buildings, elaborate rituals, learned scholars) but producing no spiritual fruit (justice, mercy, faithfulness, love for God). Jesus had just inspected the temple (v. 11), observing its corruption. The next day He would cleanse it (vv. 15-17), condemning its transformation from "house of prayer" to "den of thieves." The withered fig tree (vv. 20-21) visually dramatized the judgment coming on Jerusalem and the temple—fulfilled in AD 70 when Rome destroyed the temple, which has never been rebuilt.

## **Related Passages**

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**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## **Study Questions**

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1. How does the fig tree's outward show (leaves) without substance (fruit) symbolize religious hypocrisy and empty ritualism?
2. What does this incident teach about God's judgment on fruitless religion that maintains impressive appearances without genuine spiritual fruit?
3. In what ways might contemporary Christianity risk being 'all leaves and no fruit'—outward religiosity without transformed hearts and lives?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ ἰδὼν συκῆν μακρόθεν ἔχουσιν φύλλα· ἐλθὼν εἰ  
**And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves he came if**  
G2532 G1492 G4808 G3113 G2192 G5444 G2064 G1487

ἄρα εὑρεν τι ἐν αὐτὴν καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐπ' αὐτὴν  
**haply he found any thing thereon it And he came to it**  
G686 G2147 G5100 G1722 G846 G2532 G2064 G1909 G846

οὐδὲν εὑρεν εἰ μὴ φύλλα· οὐ γὰρ ἦν καιρὸς  
**nothing he found if G3361 leaves not for was the time**  
G3762 G2147 G1487 G5444 G3756 G1063 G2258 G2540

σύκων  
**of figs**  
G4810

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 21:19** (Parallel theme): And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

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