

Mark 11:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

Analysis

And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots (πρω̄ι παραπορευόμενοι εἰδον τὴν συκῆν ἐξηραμμένην ἐκ ριζῶν)—this is Tuesday morning of Passion Week. The disciples discover that Jesus' curse (v. 14) has taken full effect. The perfect passive participle *exērammenēn* (ἐξηραμμένην, "dried up") indicates completed action with ongoing results: the tree is thoroughly dead. The phrase **from the roots** (ek rhizōn, ἐκ ριζῶν) emphasizes the totality of judgment—not merely withered leaves but dead to the core. No possibility of recovery exists; the tree is utterly finished.

This detail heightens the miracle's impact: a full-grown fig tree completely withered overnight, something botanically impossible by natural means. Jesus' word carried creative and destructive power (Hebrews 1:3). The withered tree visually demonstrates the judgment pronounced on Israel's fruitless religion, particularly the temple establishment Jesus cleansed (vv. 15-17). As the tree died from the roots, so Israel's temple system would be destroyed to its foundations (fulfilled AD 70). The image also anticipates Jesus' teaching in John 15:1-6 about branches severed from the vine withering and being burned—fruitlessness results in judgment.

Historical Context

The fig tree miracle is one of Jesus' few 'negative' miracles (along with the Gadarene swine, Matthew 8:28-34). Unlike healings and exorcisms that restore

and bless, this miracle judges and destroys. The disciples' amazement (v. 21) is understandable—they had never seen Jesus use miracle power destructively. Yet this sign-act was necessary to dramatize God's judgment on fruitless religion. Old Testament prophets similarly performed shocking symbolic acts: Hosea married a prostitute (Hosea 1:2), Isaiah walked naked (Isaiah 20:2-4), Ezekiel lay on his side for 430 days (Ezekiel 4:4-8). These actions viscerally communicated God's message. The withered fig tree remained visible throughout Passion Week as Jesus taught about faith (vv. 22-25), debated religious leaders (11:27-12:40), and prophesied the temple's destruction (13:1-2). Within 40 years, Rome besieged Jerusalem (AD 66-70), starving the city and razing the temple. Not one stone remained on another (Mark 13:2), just as the fig tree dried up from the roots.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does the fig tree's complete death 'from the roots' symbolize about the totality of God's judgment on fruitless religious systems?
2. How does this miracle's 'destructive' nature challenge assumptions that God's power only heals and never judges?
3. In what ways should the withered fig tree prompt self-examination about whether our spiritual lives produce genuine fruit or merely impressive religious appearances?

Interlinear Text

Kαὶ	πρωῒ	παραπορευόμενοι	εἶδον	τὴν	συκῆν
And	in the morning	as they passed by	they saw	G3588	the fig tree
G2532	G4404	G3899	G1492		G4808
ἐξηραμμένην	ἐκ	ῥιζῶν			
dried up	from	the roots			
G3583	G1537	G4491			

Additional Cross-References

Mark 11:14 (Parallel theme): And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

Matthew 15:13 (Parallel theme): But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

John 15:6 (Parallel theme): If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

Matthew 13:6 (Parallel theme): And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.