

Matthew 21:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

Analysis

When the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!—The Greek ἐθαύμασαν (ethaumasan, 'marveled') shows astonishment at the speed: **How soon** (πῶς παραχρῆμα, pōs parachrēma)—immediately, not gradually. The disciples focused on the miracle's timing, missing Jesus's symbolic judgment on Israel's fruitless religion.

Their amazement prepared them for Jesus's teaching on faith (v.21-22). What stunned them—instantaneous withering—illustrates both faith's power and unbelief's consequence. The fig tree represented Israel's outward religion without righteousness (Luke 13:6-9), now judged in Jesus's prophetic act.

Historical Context

Fig trees symbolized Israel's covenant relationship with God (Jer 8:13, Hos 9:10). A leafy tree promised fruit even out of season—finding none demonstrated barrenness. Jesus cursed it Monday morning; by Tuesday morning it was completely dead, an impossible natural timeframe pointing to divine judgment.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What 'leaves without fruit'—outward religious activity without genuine spiritual life—might Jesus identify in your walk?
2. When you witness God's power, do you marvel at the spectacle or learn the spiritual lesson?

Interlinear Text

καὶ οἱ ιδόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ ἐθαύμασαν λέγοντες Πῶς
And saw when the disciples it they marvelled saying How
G2532 G1492 G3588 G3101 G2296 G3004 G4459

παραχρῆμα ἐξηράνθη ἡ συκῆ
soon withered away is the fig tree
G3916 G3583 G3588 G4808

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