

Matthew 24:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

Analysis

Now learn a parable of the fig tree—The Greek parabole (παραβολή) means comparison, and Jesus shifts from apocalyptic vision to agricultural observation. **When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves** (hapalos, ἀπαλός = tender/soft), you recognize the pattern of seasons. The fig tree (sykē, συκῆ) was a common Palestinian symbol, leafing out in late spring, signaling summer's approach.

This isn't identifying Israel as 'the fig tree' (though figs symbolize Israel in Jeremiah 24, Hosea 9:10), but teaching discernment of signs. Just as farmers read nature's signals, disciples must recognize prophetic fulfillment—temple destruction, tribulation, cosmic signs—as harbingers of the final harvest. Jesus moves from 'when' questions to 'watchfulness' imperatives.

Historical Context

Fig trees were ubiquitous in first-century Judea, making this an accessible illustration. The agricultural calendar governed Jewish feast days and daily life. Jesus spoke this parable on the Mount of Olives (24:3) in sight of the temple, perhaps with fig trees visible. Three days earlier, He had cursed a barren fig tree (21:18-22), symbolizing Israel's fruitlessness—now He uses figs to teach discernment.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What 'signs of the times' in current events do you discern as evidence of prophetic fulfillment or spiritual seasons?
2. How can you cultivate the spiritual discernment to read the times without falling into date-setting speculation?
3. What is the difference between healthy watchfulness for Christ's return and unhealthy obsession with prophecy charts?

Interlinear Text

Ἄπο	δὲ	τῆς	συκῆς	μάθετε	τὴν	παραβολήν·	ὅταν	ἢδη
of	Now	G3588	the fig tree	learn	G3588	a parable	When	yet
G575	G1161		G4808	G3129		G3850	G3752	G2235
ο	κλάδος	αὐτῆς	γένηται	ἀπαλὸς	καὶ	τὰ	φύλλα	
G3588	branch	his	is	tender	and	G3588	leaves	
	G2798	G846	G1096	G527	G2532		G5444	
ἐκφύῃ	γινώσκετε	ὅτι	ἐγγὺς	τὸ	θέρος·			
putteth forth	ye know	that	is nigh	G3588	summer			
G1631	G1097	G3754	G1451		G2330			