

Matthew 7:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Analysis

You recognize trees by fruit, prophets by conduct and teaching effects. Grapes don't grow on thornbushes; figs don't grow on thistles. Similarly, false prophets produce bad fruit—destructive teaching, immoral living, divided churches, damaged disciples. True prophets produce good fruit—holiness, love, truth, unity, maturity.

Historical Context

This principle echoes Jesus's teaching that good trees bear good fruit (verses 17-18). James warns that teachers face stricter judgment (James 3:1). Paul commanded Ephesian elders to guard against wolves entering the flock (Acts 20:28-30).

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. What fruit do you see in the lives of teachers you follow and churches you attend?
2. How can you examine your own fruit to ensure you're not deceiving yourself about spiritual health?

Interlinear Text

ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτούς· ἐπιγνώσεσθε αὐτούς· μήτι

by G3588 their fruits them G846 Ye shall know them G3385
G575 G2590 G846 G1921 G846 G3385

συλλέγουσιν ἀπὸ ἀκανθῶν σταφυλὴν, ἥτις ἀπὸ τριβόλων

Do men gather by thorns grapes or by thistles
G4816 G575 G173 G4718 G2228 G575 G5146

σῦκα

figs
G4810

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 12:33 (Parallel theme): Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.

James 3:12 (Parallel theme): Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

Matthew 7:20 (Parallel theme): Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.