

Barren Fig Tree

Mark 11:13

“The next day, as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus became hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree covered with leaves, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing except leaves because it wasn't the season for figs. So he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” Now his disciples were listening to this,” Mark 11:12-14.

FF Bruce wrote:

“The other miracle is the cursing of the barren fig tree (Mk. 11:12 ff.), a stumbling block to many. They feel that it is unlike Jesus, and so someone must have misunderstood what actually happened, or turned a spoken parable into an acted miracle, or something like that. Some, on the other hand, welcome the story because it shows that Jesus was human enough to get unreasonably annoyed on occasion. It appears, however, that a closer acquaintance with fig trees would have prevented such misunderstandings. ‘The time of figs was not yet,’ says Mark, for it was just before Passover, about six weeks before the fully formed fig appears. The fact that Mark adds these words shows that he knew what he was talking about. When the fig leaves appear about the end of March they are accompanied by a crop of small knobs, called taqsh by the Arabs, a sort of forerunner of the real figs.



These taqsh are eaten by peasants and others when hungry. They drop off before the real fig is formed. But if the leaves appear unaccompanied by taqsh, there will be no figs that year. So it was evident to our Lord, when He turned aside to see if there were any of these taqsh on the fig tree to assuage His hunger for the time being, that the absence of the taqsh meant that there would be no figs when the time for figs came. For all its fair show of foliage, it was a fruitless and hopeless tree.”

The whole incident was an acted parable. It was theatrical. To Jesus the fig tree, fair but barren, spoke of the city of Jerusalem, where He had found much religious observance, but no response to His message from God. The withering of the tree was thus an omen of the disaster which, as He foresaw and foretold, would shortly fall upon the city.”

But, as Mark records the incident, the withering of the tree had a personal significance for the disciples; it taught them to have faith in God. And this is the moral which the miracle stories have for us today. They are recorded as signs of divine power; and even if we could prove their historicity up to the hilt we should still miss the point of their narration if we failed to see in them tokens of the activity of God in history, culminating in the appearance of Christ on earth.”

Pastor Gary Fuller – <https://gentleshepherdbaptist.blogspot.com/2012/03/failed-fig-tree.html>

“The Giver of the Seasons and the Creator of the fig tree knew well that figs would not be present at this season. The leaves were in evidence, but the figs were not. Why, then, would the all-knowing Lord of the Harvest curse a barren fig tree? Doesn't this episode seem to go against the patient nature of the Lord? Indeed, some would ignorantly mock the Lord, charging Him with displaying a bit of a tantrum. But this is not at all the case.

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Mark's gospel notes: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. 11:13

Was Jesus expecting figs before their time? If so, why would this episode even be included in the narrative?

The answer is simple, especially if one understands fig trees."

"My first date with a fig (pun intended) was in Baja, Mexico. The bush stood in between our sponsoring church's building and the parsonage. I suppose it was my first taste of a fig apart from a Fig Newton cookie. The dense, fleshy, grainy and sweet fruit was both tasty and satisfying to this fig initiate. Since that day, the fig has held a special place in my heart and memory.

Jesus was beginning His week of "passion" (literally, with suffering). His energy would be tapped as at no other time, with the possible exception of His wilderness temptation. The nutrients offered by this plant were much needed, but unavailable.

The explanation: Fig trees first put forth their leaves, then a small knob appears. These little green figs are called taqsh and are full of flavor and sustenance. Peasants and others who are hungry make use of these little knobs to satisfy their need. The taqsh act as indicators of the fruit for that season. Eventually, they fall off the tree and are replaced by the young figs. If, in a season, there are no taqsh, there will be no figs and the tree will serve as useless that year.

Jesus merely disposed of a tree that was cumbering the ground for no purpose. But He did it as a sign for a people who craved signs.

Consider, if you will, that the fig tree represents Israel in type. The One Who came to save His people from their sins is about to be rejected by the fig tree. Therefore, no fruit will be indicated, rather, a curse will be pronounced upon it. "His blood be upon us and on our children." Mt 27:25

In cursing the barren fig tree, Jesus was indicating the barrenness of a nation meant to bear much enriching fruit, but would instead be scattered and persecuted for the next 2000 years. They would be blinded to Christ's gospel and, as a nation, would reject His Messiahship.

Christians are also expected to bring forth fruit. Let's make sure that when He comes seeking fruit, we will have produced better than Israel did. Don't quash your taqsh!"