

## The DAILY JESUS NEWS #246

### Passion Week: Monday... Day of Authority in Action

#### Miracle #33: Jesus Takes Authority Over a Fruitless Fig Tree

MK 11.12-14 (Parallel Text: MT 21.18-19)

12 <sup>MT</sup>Early in the morning <sup>M</sup>On the next day as they were leaving Bethany <sup>MT</sup>On his way back to the city, <sup>M</sup>Jesus was hungry. 13 Seeing a fig tree in leaf in the distance <sup>MT</sup>by the road, <sup>M</sup>he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs.

14 Then he said to the tree, *"May no one ever eat fruit from you again."* His disciples heard him say this.

<sup>MT</sup>The tree immediately withered.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = <sup>MT</sup>, Mark = <sup>M</sup>, Luke = <sup>L</sup>, John = <sup>J</sup>, Acts = <sup>A</sup>. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	On the Road into Jerusalem from Bethany
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	B. Monday: Day of Authority in Action
Title	I. Miracle #33: Jesus Takes Authority Over a Fruitless Fig Tree

#### COMMENT:

Today's reading is the first of five that describe the second day of Passion Week: Monday. It was a day filled with demonstrations of Jesus' divine authority as Messiah--the God-man. The cursing of the fig tree started the day with an astounding revelation of Jesus' authority.

There were two important aspects of this miracle. The first was the physical withering of the fig tree, and the crucial lesson Jesus drew from it about faith and prayer. The second aspect was the symbolic and prophetic meaning of the miracle--its message it gave to the Jewish people. We will consider each of these now.

The immediate, physical withering and death of a perfectly healthy fig tree was an example of "authoritative prayer," in which Jesus spoke directly to a person or thing, and commanded something to happen. In every other such case in Jesus' ministry, he issued the command in the Greek imperative form, which is used when a person with superior power issues a binding command to a person or thing in an inferior position, or subordinate. Imperatives express the will of the giver of the command, address the will of a subordinate, in a call to specific action.

Jesus routinely gave commands because he has all the omnipotent authority and power of God. However, his "command" to the fig tree was different. He used the Greek optative form, which was used to express wishes, rather than commands. I translated the statement, *"I wish that no one no would ever eat fruit from you--forever."* This expresses the meaning of the Greek.

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Greek optatives are normally used to express wishes that have virtually no real possibility of happening, such as, "*I wish I would win the lottery.*" That may be a real desire, but it is almost impossible that it will happen to any one individual. The Greek optative is used for circumstantially almost impossible situations like that.

The stunning thing is that because Jesus is SO powerful—he is omnipotent—when HE merely expresses a wish, it immediately happens! The universe awaits not just the commands of its Supreme Ruler and Commander, it also waits upon his wishes. That is how powerful Jesus is. He believed this when he expressed his wish. It immediately killed the fig tree from the roots up.

On Day Three, Tuesday, Jesus will press this lesson about faith and prayer home to his disciples, and us. For now, it is enough to marvel at this spectacular revelation of just how powerful Jesus is.

The symbolic lesson of the withered fig tree is also important. Throughout the Old Testament the fig tree was used as a symbol of the Jewish nation. Jesus was hungry for spiritual fruit. We have seen in his past parables and teachings how the Lord taught that God desires the fruit of love and faithfulness from his people. God hungers for fruit in his people.

Jesus was presenting himself to the nation as the Messiah during Passion Week. However, the nation was going to reject him. He had shed tears over the resulting future destruction that was coming to Jerusalem. Now he used the cursing of this fruitless fig tree to illustrate the destruction that was coming. Just as a fig tree with no fruit served no purpose, the nation of Israel which rejected their Messiah was therefore fruitless, and served no purpose to God. Jerusalem would be destroyed, and the kingdom would be given over to the Gentiles.

Jesus would repeat these themes several times during the coming days of Passion Week. The cursing of the fig tree was a spectacularly powerful way to emphasize his authority over the kingdom, first thing in the morning on a day in which he would go on to take authority over the entire Temple compound.

Monday--Day Two of Passion Week--was all about Jesus' divine authority in action.

### APPLICATION:

Faith in Jesus' limitless power and authority is crucial for the kind of prayer that Jesus taught. He will elaborate on this point on Tuesday--the next day of Passion Week.

*Do you believe that God will grant your requests when you pray? Or, is it merely wishing?*

*What does Jesus' example say to you about praying in faith? How can you put that into practice today?*