

Mark 11-12 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

As we come to ch. 11, we come to the last week of Jesus' mission.

I. JESUS IN GALILEE CHS. 1-9

II. JESUS IN JUDEA CHS. 10-16

G. The Last Week Chs. 11-16

1. Sunday: The Triumphal Entry 11:1-11

1Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; **2** He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. **3**And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here."

[Map of road from Jericho to Jerusalem]

The Mt. of Olives lies on the east side of Jerusalem, just across the little Kidron Valley.

It's called the Mt. of Olives because there were numerous olive groves and presses on it. [Picture]

Just east of the summit of the Mt. were the little villages of Bethany & Bethphage. Bethany was the home of Jesus' friends, Lazarus and his 2 sisters, Mary & Martha.

As the last week unfolds, we see Jesus returning from Jerusalem each day to stay in Bethany, probably at their house.

And that's likely where they are here — in Bethany.

Jesus tells 2 of the disciples to go over to Bethphage which was just a short distance along the road toward Jerusalem where they will find a young donkey tied to a post. They're to loose it & bring it to Him.

If anyone questions them, they're to just say the Lord needs it.

4So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" **6**And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go.

Since Jesus had spent considerable time in Bethany previously, it's

possible He'd made arrangements with the owners of the colt to borrow it, using the password He told the disciples to say.

Then again, it might be that when the disciples said the "Lord" needed it, the people standing there were moved by the Spirit to it go.

In Zechariah 9:9 the prophet said,

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.

While today the donkey is considered something of a joke, in the Israel of Jesus' day, the donkey was a noble beast.

When a king went to war he rode on a horse, when he visited His

kingdom in peace he rode on a donkey. ^[1]

If people wanted to know how the king was coming, with flaming wrath or with the intent to bring blessing, all they had to do was look at his mount — that said it all.

As we've already seen, the Jews of Jesus' day expected the Messiah to come as a conquering Warrior.

Yet the prophet said He would come riding a donkey and instead of coming with vengeance and wrath, He would be lowly.

7Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. 8And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' °Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

This was the season of the Passover & Jews from all over the world had come to celebrate the most important feast on the calendar.

The crowds that swept into the City were far too great to be housed inside the city walls.

One of the favorite camping places for the Passover pilgrims was the Mt. of Olives.

From the villages of Bethany & Bethphage all the way to Jerusalem the hillside was covered with the tents of

pilgrims.

John tells us in his gospel that the crowds were all abuzz with the news of Jesus of Nazareth.

The word that was being circulated was that He was coming to the feast and would there proclaim Himself publicly as the Messiah.

So as He now mounts the donkey, the crowds of pilgrims who line the path to Jerusalem begin to take up the chant — heralding Him as the heir of David to whom the throne of Israel belongs.

They quoted from Psalm 118, a song that is clearly Messianic.

They line the path with their outer garments & the branches of trees because this is what people did when a king was visiting their town — they covered the road with flowers and branches to beautify it.

This is the origin of “rolling out the red carpet.”

It was a sign of welcome and honor.

It’s interesting to me that the people called out “Hosanna!” which means “save now.” It was a word which was both a request & an affirmation of praise.

When you said “Hosanna!” you were saying — “God you are great! Let Your greatness be manifest to all.”

Of course, the people who shouted it out that day were thinking in terms of liberation from the military & political tyranny of Rome. Jesus did come to save — but from a far more damaging form of tyranny - that of sin, death, & the devil.

11 And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had

looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

What a disappointment this must have been for the crowds and the disciples.

Jesus didn’t do what they were expecting.

He entered Jerusalem, even going to the temple, the heart of the capital.

But all He did was look around. Why this?

Mark is brilliant in the way he structures his story — the answer is in what he writes next...

2. Monday 11:12-19

a. a fig tree cursed vs. 12-14

12 the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. 13 seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it.

As Jesus & the disciples were headed back toward Jerusalem, He spied a fig tree up ahead.

Many figs were grown in this area along with the olives.

Bethphage means "House of figs."

Because the tree had leaves on it, it ought to have had some of the pre-figs that normally grow just prior to the budding of the leaves.

But there wasn't any fruit, so Jesus pronounced a curse on it.

Now, Jesus isn't throwing a tantrum here & misusing His power.

This is an acted parable meant to teach the disciples an important lesson.

In Joel 1:7, the nation of Israel is figuratively referred to as God's fig tree.

In many, many passages of the OT, a fruit-filled fig tree is a picture of Israel enjoying her covenant with God while the barren fig tree means the nation has strayed from Him.

On Sunday, after the triumphal entry, Jesus had gone to the temple & inspected it.

God had returned to His house to see if the worship being offered there was genuine.

It wasn't — it was all a religious show, a sham.

There was no genuine fruit of righteousness, no heart for the covenant on the part of the national and religious leaders.

And Jesus used this barren fig tree as an object lesson for the disciples.

Just as there was no fruit on the fig tree, there was no spiritual fruit in the temple which was the root & trunk of Israel's worship.

And just as Jesus cursed the fig-tree, so the fake worship in the temple would soon know God's judgment.

b. Jesus clears the temple (again) vs. 15-19

15 they came to Jerusalem.

Don't miss the subtlety of Mark's record — "SO they came," with the example of the cursed fig-tree & an angry Jesus fresh in their minds.

Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 16And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple.

Three years before, Jesus had begun His mission with a clearing of the temple of all this graft & crass merchandising of the things of God.

But the priests had allowed the merchants & money-changers to come back.

They did so because they got a kick back from this trade.

17Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

Jesus was careful to make sure everyone understood what He was doing was based on the Word of God.

This wasn't just a fit of rage. What the priests were allowing & the merchants were doing was so badly mis-representing God action HAD TO BE TAKEN.

And Jesus had a right to do this — after all, the temple was HIS HOUSE!

Jesus quoted from Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 here.

In Isaiah 56:6-7 God said that the temple was to be a place where all people, regardless of ethnicity, could come and worship Him.

In Jeremiah 7 — God decried the fact that the temple had degenerated into nothing more than a place where sinners gathered to plan even more sin - a "den of thieves" he called it.

What's sad is that the religious leaders of Jesus' day looked with loathing on their predecessors whom God had denounced.

But what they were doing was far worse than those Jeremiah called thieves.

For those of you who are new to Bible study, let me briefly explain what was going on in the temple and why Jesus was so upset.

[Explain]

Jesus was deeply upset over the way God was being misrepresented by the very ones who were supposed to be His official representatives.

The application to us today ought to be obvious.

As Christians, we claim to be the people of God.

We ought to be the greatest advertisement to His love, grace, truth, & holiness there is.

But listening to many people today, the main reason they hesitate at responding to the gospel is because of the poor example Christians have been to them.

Are there some merchants' tables in us that need to be overturned?

Are there some money-changers that need to be sent packing from our hearts?

18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching.

What did they fear? They feared His influence & growing popularity.

Because what He taught was so contrary to what they'd been teaching, they saw their position & influence with the people threatened.

There was only one way to deal with the situation — get rid of Jesus.

There was no discussion of whether or not what Jesus was teaching was true. To their minds, that wasn't the issue.

The only thing that mattered was that He was threatening their lifestyle.

19 When evening had come, He went out of the city.

Back to Bethany.

3. Tuesday 11:20-13:37

a. the withered fig tree 11:20-24

20 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away."

That the fig tree had died so quickly was a miracle.

It hadn't just been blasted by the hot sun so the leaves were a bit scorched.

The tree had died in the roots first, & the whole thing had already begun to dry out.

Peter got excited & pointed it out to Jesus as they passed by.

22 Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God.

What had the lesson of the fig tree been meant to teach the disciples?

That where there is genuine faith in God, there will be spiritual fruit.

Jesus is telling them that as His disciples, they must bear fruit.

Faith in God will result in a changed life, one lived in obedience to Him.

23 For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.

24 Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Peter had expressed his surprise that the fig tree had dried up so quickly at the word of Jesus.

Jesus now tells them that faith in God, when it’s real, will witness all kinds of things that seem impossible to the natural mind.

Even mountains can be moved at the Word of one who believes God.

Question: Is Jesus giving Carte Blanche to anyone to demand anything — as long as they believe it enough?

Some would see it this way. There are those who take Jesus’ words here & make faith the only issue.

They see faith as a spiritual force one develops like a muscle, & once it’s strong enough, whatever you speak forth will happen.

This is the basis of what’s known as Religious Science & the metaphysical cults.

But notice the context Jesus spoke in.

Who’s He talking to? — The disciples; not the crowds.

In v. 21, Peter had called Jesus what? -- “Rabbi.”

What’s the goal of a disciple? -- To be “just like the rabbi.”

When Jesus speaks of faith, what does He mean? --

He means belief, trust, reliance on God, as God has revealed Himself in His Word!

When Jesus said, “Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe

that you receive them, and you will have them, “He was speaking not about a faith which conjures up things out of one’s imagination or desires.

The whole context here means us to understand “whatever things” as whatever God has spoken regarding us.

Let me prove this —

Where were they the moment Jesus said this? Standing by the withered fig tree.

Where was that? On the Mt. of Olives, to the east of Jerusalem.

And what did Jesus say in v. 23, “For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.”

Did Jesus say this could be spoken to ANY mountain or to a specific mountain? He said, “THIS” mountain.

Zech. 14:4 prophecies that when the Messiah comes again, in glory to Jerusalem, His foot will touch down on the Mt. of Olives & it will split in 2, one side moving north, the other south.

V. 8 says that a massive spring will flow through the valley made by this rift carrying water down into the Jordan Valley, greatly enlarging the Dead Sea.

As the water flows through this valley, it will pick up & carry the boulders of the Mt. of Olives westward into the sea.

Jesus knew this prophecy & the future that awaits Him when He comes again. It is of that moment when He speaks & the mountain is cloven in 2 that He is referring to here.

Because He knows it is the Father’s will to do, He has all confidence that it will come to pass & will live in the light of it.

His point is that we need to have our hearts & minds charged with the Word & promises of God then live boldly in light of them, no matter what the circumstances may say.

But there was a crucial condition Jesus added to this...

b. the imperative of forgiveness 11:25-26

25 whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Faith & forgiveness go hand in hand.

I taught on the imperative of forgiveness one Sunday not long ago so won't go into a lot of depth on this subject tonight.

Other than to say how I've come to realize just how devastating & ruinous unforgiveness is.

Over the last year I've seen bitterness & unforgiveness tear apart marriages, friendships, & lives.

At the same time, I've seen hurting relationships turned completely around when forgiveness is bestowed.

If it seems that the heavens are closed to you & that your prayers reach no higher than the ceiling — I would urge you to search your heart & see if maybe, just maybe a root of bitterness grows there.

Your prayer life may be getting choked off by unforgiveness.

A lack of spiritual growth & fruit could be a sign that you're holding on to something the Lord wants you to release.

c. Jesus' authority questioned 11:27-33

27Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. 28And they said to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?"

Here's that old question again — where did Jesus get His s'mikah - His authority?

He'd not followed the typical route to being a rabbi & hadn't been officially commissioned through their traditional schools.

So where'd He get the right to go around acting like a rabbi & doing such bold things as clearing the merchants out of the temple?

To put this in modern terms they were asking, "Who do you think You are anyway? What are Your credentials? Where did you get your degree? What authorizes You to do & say what You're doing & saying?"

29But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things:

These men had been relentless in their challenging of Jesus' authority.

They'd queried Him time & again & He'd always given them an

answer that they then failed to deal with honestly.
If they had, they would have dropped all further challenges & would have responded by coming to Him in faith.
Jesus replies to this question by saying that it's time for them to answer a question. If they can answer it, then He'll answer theirs. He asked them.

30 The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.” 31 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ 32 if we say, ‘From men’ “—they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. they answered and said to Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus answered and said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

This was awesome!

Jesus did to them what they had always tried to do to Him; ask a question that no matter how He answered it, it would get Him in trouble with someone.

These guys believed John the Baptist was just a religious nut and not sent by God at all, while the common people believed he was a prophet in the line of the prophets of Old like Isaiah, Jeremiah, & Elijah.

If they admitted what they believed, that John was no prophet, they would lose standing with the common people.

If they said John was a true prophet, then Jesus could ask them why they'd not publicly endorsed & supported his ministry.

So they responded dishonestly — saying they didn't know.

Jesus then said — “Okay then, since you won't tell me, I won't tell you.”

Actually, the answer to their question about where Jesus got His authority was plainly evident for them to see.

Everything Jesus did and said was utterly consistent with the Word of God and the testimony of the prophets.

His life was a literal fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies.

If they had been seeking the truth, they would have known this and known where His authority came from — The Father.

d. Jesus confronts the leaders 12:1-12

1 Then He began to speak to them in parables: “A man

planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.

This was a really nice vineyard.

It had a fence around it, a place to process the grapes, & a comfortable place for the workers to stay while they tended it. Once it was all prepared, the owner leased it out & went on a journey.

2Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. 3 they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

The price of leasing a vineyard was some of the produce it produced.

When the owner sent his agent to collect what was due, the renters beat him up & sent him back without the agreed upon payment.

4Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated.

The owner tried again, but this time the renters treated his agent even more cruelly.

5And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. 6Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, 'They will respect my son.' those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 8So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others.

As the parable unfolded, it became clearer & clearer to the religious leaders that Jesus was speaking about them — they were the evil tenants who'd beaten and killed the prophets.

And now that God's own Son had come to them, they were treating Him as they'd treated the prophets.

This parable was drawn from what had happened earlier that week when Jesus had inspected the temple and found that it was bearing no fruit which was due to God.

Indeed, the priests' plans to destroy Jesus were the kind of anti-

fruit Jesus was speaking of in this parable.

Just how did they think God would take their abuse of His Son?

10Have you not even read this Scripture: ‘The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’S doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

Jesus quotes from Psalm 118, the same Psalm the crowds had been chanting just 2 days before.

The Psalmist foretold that while the common people would welcome Him as Messiah, the religious leaders would reject Him.

Here they were fulfilling prophecy as they opposed Him!

12And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.

These guys were driven by purely political motivations.

They wanted to seize Jesus, but saw it as not politically expedient. Even though they were wrong in their judgments about Jesus, if they had been men of principle instead of politics, they would have arrested Him.

As we move into the November elections, let’s keep this in mind as we go to the polls.

What we need are leaders who are people of principle rather than politicians who chose their positions by sticking a wet finger in the air to see which way the wind of public opinion is blowing.

e. a trick question from the Pharisees 12:13-17

13 Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words.

What a great line Mark uses here; These guys thought they were going to trip up The Word in His words.

They thought they were going to pose a question that would have the embodiment of all wisdom & reason stumped.

This is like one of us thinking we’re going to show Tiger Woods how to swing a golf club, or Jeff Gordon how to drive a car, or Kurt Warner how to throw a pass.

14When they had come, they said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in

truth.

Beware flattery! It is nothing but a veneer to cover over deceit.

Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? 15 Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?"

This is why the Pharisees had brought along some Herodians.

The Herodians were Jewish supporters of Herod. As such they were collaborators with Rome & would be concerned about anyone who said anything negative about the Romans.

Any negative talk could be grounds for a charge of sedition.

The Pharisees & Herodians despised each other — but their hatred of Jesus united them.

They asked a question they thought Jesus couldn't answer without getting into trouble.

If He said to pay taxes, He'd lose standing with the common folk who HATED Rome with a passion.

If He said to not pay taxes, the Herodians could pounce and have Him arrested as trying to foment a rebellion.

But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it." 16 So they brought it. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." 17 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at Him.

How could they not go away from this with a profound respect and admiration for Jesus that would turn them from opponents into believers?

f. a trick question from the Sadducees 12:18-27

18 Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying:

The Sadducees were the other main sect in Judaism at this time.

Many of the priests and the entire family of the high priest were Sadducees.

While the Pharisees were mostly a religious group, the Sadducees were far more interested in politics.

Still—they had some interesting beliefs.

The Sadducees had been heavily influenced by Greek philosophy & had come to deny the spiritual realm almost completely.

They didn't believe in angels or the afterlife. Since Jesus talked much about eternal life, they thought they could make Him look like a fool by asking a question they thought showed the absurdity of the afterlife.

19"Teacher Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.

Moses had made this provision to ensure that the family inheritance of land would remain in the family.

20 there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. 21 the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. 22 the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. 23Therefore in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife."

They pose their question, then snicker because they think it shows the foolishness of thinking there's an afterlife.

If there was, then how could this conundrum be settled?

24Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? 25 when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Jesus' answer is simple — there's no marriage in heaven!

Jesus adds, "Oh — & BTW — regarding angels — they're real!" Friends - there is no marriage in heaven.

One of the most important concepts in Mormonism is celestial marriage.

When I have shared this passage with them, they respond by saying that yes, there are no WEDDINGS in heaven, those take place here, but that Mormons are indeed in married relationships in heaven.

This is why Mormons must be sealed in marriage here on Earth, because those bonds are carried over into heaven.

But Jesus makes it quite clear here — the whole relationship of marriage between men & women is not going to carry over in the

afterlife.

This woman was not married to anyone in heaven!

Jesus knew that the answer to their question did not really go far enough to correct their ideas about the afterlife, so He added.

26 But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken."

God did not say that he WAS or HAD BEEN the God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob, but that HE IS their God.

God spoke to Moses from the burning bush some 4-600 years after their deaths.

The only way He could make that declaration is if they were alive, which they were, 0 dwelling in Paradise, awaiting the redemption Jesus would soon bring.

g. a sincere question from a Torah teacher 12:28-34

28 one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?"

This man, one of the torah-teachers, had been observing what was going on between Jesus & his opponents & when he heard the wisdom with which the Lord spoke, he realized this was someone of great insight.

There was a question over which he'd spent much time meditating & thought Jesus might hold the answer, so he posed it.

29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. 33 And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the

strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

This is my text for Sunday, so we'll leave it till then.

But after that no one dared question Him.

Jesus' handling of all the difficult questions had been so deft, no one dared query Him further.

But that doesn't stop Him. To put the nail in the coffin of the leader's opposition, He poses them a question.

h. Jesus poses them a question 12:35-37

35Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, "How is it that the scribes say that the Christ [Messiah] is the Son of David? 36 David himself said by the Holy Spirit: 'The LORD [Yahweh — God's name] said to my Lord [Adonia, master], "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"' 37Therefore David himself calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?" And the common people heard Him gladly.

The problem here is that in the Jewish way of thinking, the father is always greater than his descendants.

So how can the Messiah, Who is David's descendants, be so great that David would refer to Him as his master?

Of course, we know the answer to that — Jesus, as the Messiah is both the Son of David, & God incarnate.

This was something Jesus had been implying from the very beginning of His mission 3 years before but the religious leaders had rejected it.

i. "Beware of sham piety" 12:38-40

38Then He said to them in His teaching, "Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, 40who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

There it is — the real motivation behind the torah-teachers' opposition to Him.

They were driven by the desire for the praise of man & to be thought of as deep men of great learning.

When Jesus showed up, in the light of His wisdom and holiness, the emptiness of their own, which had so long fooled people, was revealed for what it was.

They were intensely envious of Jesus & challenged Him with no more motive than to reclaim their popularity.

True spirituality is never something put on parade. The piety that please God isn't showy.

The pageantry & spectacle that attends so many religious functions is the kind of thing Jesus here decries.

Those who put on airs of being holy & too good for others, that isn't the spirit or nature of Christ.

He is holy — utterly pure & righteous — but sinners weren't put off by Him.

On the contrary, they dug hanging out with Him.

Without compromising His commitment to holiness, He showed what true joy & satisfaction were all about.

The people who were the most uncomfortable around Jesus weren't those who admitted they weren't perfect but the ones who claimed they were & who wanted everyone else to think so too.

j. giving is a heart issue 12:41 -44

41 Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. 42 one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. ' So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."

Inside the Court of the Women in the temple there were 13 collecting boxes for collecting offerings in support of the daily sacrifices and expenses of the temple.

The boxes were called "The Trumpets," because their lids were funnels shaped like the opening of a trumpet.

As people walked through the Court of the Women, they would drop in their offerings. Many threw in hefty contributions.

After His confrontations with the Pharisees & Sadducees, Jesus took the disciples deeper into the temple court & sat down opposite where the trumpets were & watched.

They saw many come & drop in their offerings, some dumping handfuls of coins out of fat purses.

Then came a widow. She dropped in two mites.

The coin was called a lepton, meaning “a thin one.” [coin]

It was the smallest of all coins & was worth about a penny.

2 lepta might buy her a small bun of day-old barley bread.

Jesus knew that this offering was all poor lady had, & that giving it she knew she might go hungry that day.

I’m confident the Father rewarded her well & took care of her needs — but Jesus used her offering to teach the disciples an important lesson.

Her tiny contribution was greater than all the others, for the others had thrown in what they could spare & still have plenty left, while she had given everything she had.

The heart behind our giving is far more important to the Lord than the amount we give.

In numerous studies that have been done on giving it’s been discovered that it’s not the wealthy who form the core of those who support the local church.

Actually, in most local churches, the wealthy make up per capita far less in giving than those who are lower middle class & those who live right at the poverty level.

Of course, there are always exceptions, but generally, the committed givers, and those who give the biggest portion of their income are those who can “least afford” to do so — at least by the world’s reckoning.

But these people have come to understand the economics of their lives in something other than worldly terms.

They know that their lives and their finances are in God’s hands and they keep them that way by giving to the Lord what they’ve prayerfully determined He wants them to give.

Like this woman, they know that the best investment is in the bank of heaven.

[1]

The Gospel of Mark. 2000, ci 975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.