

# The Gospel of Mark

## Walking with the Servant Saviour

### Lesson 15

#### Mark 11:1-33

#### Day One: The Triumphal Entry

We now begin to take a close look at the events surrounding the last week of Jesus' life—the critical details that will culminate at the Cross. As if in slow motion, Mark describes these days over the last six chapters of his gospel, indicating the significance of what is about to take place. These are some of the most dramatic moments in all of human history.

#### **Read Mark 11:1-11.**

These verses introduce what is typically referred to as the *passion week*, beginning with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and ending with His resurrection the following Sunday. John's Gospel tells us that Jesus and the disciples had been at Bethany (see John 12:1). From there Jesus sent two of the disciples nearby to Bethphage (both towns were not more than two miles from Jerusalem).

1. What does Jesus instruct the disciples to do? vv. 2–3
  - ❖ What does He tell them to say if anyone asks what they were doing?

Here for the first time in Mark's Gospel we see Jesus refer to Himself as *Lord*.

2. Did the situation unfold as Jesus told the two disciples it would? vv. 4–6

- ❖ Who questioned the disciples? See Luke 19:33.
- ❖ When they brought the colt to Jesus, what did they use in place of a saddle?  
v. 7
- ❖ What did the people spread out on the road? v. 8

This would have been a very short distance and, though Jesus was used to walking, this time He rode.

3. What prophecy did Jesus fulfill by doing this? See Zechariah 9:9.

- ❖ What further insight does Zechariah 9:9 give you about the Messiah?

The crowds grew as Jesus passed by and the people paid homage to Him. The word *Hosanna* literally means, *save now*.

4. What else did the people cry out? vv. 9–10

- ❖ What kind of a king were the people expecting?

5. According to Matthew's account, what was the reaction of the people in Jerusalem to this sight? See Matthew 21:10.

❖ What was the reaction of the Pharisees? See John 12:19. Mark's account focuses the reader's attention not on the reaction of the people or the religious leaders, but rather upon what Jesus does next.

6. Upon arriving in Jerusalem, where does Jesus go and for what purpose? v. 11

The cheering crowds correctly interpreted Jesus' triumphal entry as the fulfillment of prophecy; but they did not understand what kind of king Jesus truly was. They were expecting a ruler who would liberate them immediately, not one who would die on a cross. Once they realized He would not live up to their expectations, many of these same people who praised Him would in a few days be crying out, "*Crucify Him!*"

Selah . . .

What were *you* expecting when you gave your life to Christ? Like the people on the road to Jerusalem, do you perhaps have much to learn about your King Jesus? Have you allowed your own expectations of what the Christian life would be like to cloud your understanding of the Scripture? Take a moment now to think about what Jesus did for you. Meditate on 2 Corinthians 8:9 and record your thoughts below.

Heartbeat . . . (Memory verse) "*Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.*" Mark 11:24

## Day Two: Jesus Cleanses the Temple

What to look for . . .

The previous day when Jesus visited the Temple, He *looked around at everything*. In an earlier Passover visit (see John 2:13–16) He had cleared out the profiteers who were desecrating the Temple, but they had returned. Mark tells his version of this account with that of Jesus cursing the fig tree to illustrate God's judgment on the unbelief of Israel.

1. Leaving Bethany the next day, Jesus was hungry. What did He do? vv. 12–14

The incident in our story occurred sometime in April when it was too early for figs, but the trees would have developed green leaves and edible buds.

- ❖ What did Jesus find when He approached the tree?
  
- ❖ The tree looked promising, but it yielded no fruit whatsoever. What did the disciples hear Jesus say to it?

The fig tree represented the peace and security of the nation of Israel (see Micah 4:4), but the *religion* it produced was unfruitful. Jesus did not *make* the fig tree barren; His pronouncement only sealed the way the tree had always been. His severe words to the tree could be applied to the nation of Israel and its Temple—it was beautiful or fruitful in appearance—but spiritually it was unproductive.

2. When Jesus arrived at the Temple, who did He drive out? vv. 15–16

- ❖ What did He forbid?

3. What had the religious leaders allowed God’s house to become? v. 17

Jesus quoted from Isaiah 56:7, “*Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer . . . for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.*” He used this verse to teach that God welcomed everyone into His house, Israelites and foreigners alike (remember: Mark is writing to a Gentile audience); but that house was to be a house of prayer.

4. How did the people react to His teaching? v. 18

5. What did the scribes and chief priests seek to do to Him? Why? v. 18

Come closer . . .

There is a time and place where righteous indignation is appropriate. However, all too often, Christians can become complacent and indifferent about the details of God's house and yet angry over personal offenses and petty issues. Jesus reserved His anger for the situations that confronted ungodliness. If you are listening carefully to His words, you can't help but be impacted by His passion. Please share your thoughts . . .

- ❖ Where is your anger usually directed?
  
- ❖ What regard do you have for the house of God?

Review this week's memory verse.

## Day Three: Prayer that Changes Things

What to look for . . .

Mark brackets the cleansing of the Temple with the follow up to the parable of the fig tree. The lesson for us here is that the *religiosity* of the day had yielded many leaves but no fruit! The right actions were there: *praying, tithing, fasting*, but there was no real and lasting fulfillment. The system could not satisfy the spiritual hunger of the people any more than the figless tree could satisfy Jesus' appetite. Believers are to fill God's house with genuine prayer and faith if we are to be effective for Christ!

### **Read Mark 11:20-26.**

1. What did the disciples notice the next morning about the fig tree? vv. 20–21

Peter remembered what Jesus said about the tree never bearing fruit, but expressed surprise that it had completely withered by the next day. Continuing to elaborate on the premise that they should not build their faith on human expectations, Jesus teaches a lesson on answered prayer.

2. There are several important conditions to answered prayer put forth in God's Word.

- ❖ What is the first condition stated by Jesus in verse 22?
  - What does Hebrews 11:6 say about the importance of faith?
  - What example does Jesus use to illustrate the importance of believing without doubting? v. 23
- ❖ What other condition is laid out in 1 John 5:14–15?
- ❖ What condition is mentioned in John 14:13–14?

Jesus was not giving His followers a blank check to be filled out and granted; rather He was teaching them that as they faced future difficulties and mounting opposition, they could be expected to ask for anything that would result in the advancement of God's kingdom.

3. What additional condition does Jesus put forth regarding answered prayer? v. 25

- ❖ What happens to the person who is unwilling to forgive others? v. 26

*Selah* . . . Why is forgiving others an important element to answered prayer?

If we are unwilling to forgive others, we become like the fig tree that sprouts green leaves but remains barren. If we are unwilling to forgive, we will be unable to pray God's will.

Review this week's memory verse.

## Day Four: Committed or Uncommitted?

What to look for . . .

For the third morning in a row, Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem and headed straight for the Temple area. This time, though, there would be a confrontation.

### Read Mark 11:27-33.

1. Who comes forward to challenge Jesus' authority? vv. 27–28

"These things" probably refers to what these men had seen Jesus do the day before—enter the city triumphantly and drive out the money changers from the Temple.

2. Jesus answers their question with what question of His own? vv. 29–30

His words, "Answer Me" (v. 29) are in the imperative, meaning they demanded a response. He was forcing them to make a decision one way or the other.

3. His question presents these men with a dilemma . . .

- ❖ If they answered "From heaven," what would happen? v. 31

- ❖ If they answered "From men," who did they fear and why? v. 32

The word for *reasoned* (v. 31) means they discussed Jesus' question for a long time before they answered.

4. In the end, what was the leaders' response to Jesus? v. 33

- ❖ What did their answer reveal about their commitment?

- ❖ How did their response affect the way Jesus answered their question?

The leaders refused to come out with a straight forward answer of one kind or another. Therefore, Jesus refused to answer their question as well. He was not under any obligation to give further proof of His authority to them.

Jesus' triumphal entry was the beginning of the *passion week*, but it was also the beginning of judgment upon those who chose to reject Him. Even during the final days leading up to the Crucifixion, the authority and sovereignty of Jesus was evident to those with the eyes of faith to see it!

5. **Personal:** Have *you* chosen to make Jesus Christ your authority? If you haven't but you'd like to, bow your head in prayer and tell Him you surrender your life to Him now. Ask Him to forgive your sin and to come inside your heart and fill you with His Holy Spirit. (If you've made this commitment to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, let someone in your church leadership or Bible study know about it.)

Review this week's memory verse.

## Day Five: Praying God's Purpose

It's time to do some *prayer walking*—not in the literal, but the *spiritual* sense. The Holy Spirit will lead you today as you consider three points from your lesson, write them in the form of a prayer, and lift them to the Lord. If practicing the presence of God is new to you—be patient—it will come, and you will be blessed!

“ . . . We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.”

Romans 8:26-27 NLT

A prayer for keeping God's sanctuary a house of prayer . . .

Do you have a high regard for God's sanctuary? Are you willing to stand up and speak out to see that God's house is regarded as a *house of prayer*? Tell Him so.

*A prayer for receiving forgiveness and granting it to others . . .*

Have you asked God to forgive you for anything that stands in the way of your relationship with Him? Is there anyone you need to forgive in order that your prayers are not hindered? Don't waste another moment—lift that one to the Lord right now.

*A prayer for realizing God's authority . . .*

Have you challenged the Lord's authority in some area of your life lately? If He's pointed to something that you haven't yet relinquished, give it over to Him today.

Write out this week's verse from memory:

## **Notes**

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