

## Mark 11

**How did Jesus prepare for His triumphal entry (vv. 2-7)?** He sent two of His disciples to procure a colt for Him to ride on. He had supernaturally made all the arrangements for a smooth procurement. There were no glitches.

And so....Jesus .....the King, the long-awaited Messiah, the Savior of the world – finally and openly entered Jerusalem riding on a colt of a donkey (vv. 7-10). **He deliberately chose a colt, not a stallion, nor a chariot. Why a colt?** In order to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 written 500 years before: *“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the (unridden) foal of a donkey.”* The colt also indicated that He entered as a servant ruler, not as a political conqueror. When Israel's rulers wanted to present themselves as servants of the people, they rode donkeys (Judges 10:4; 12:14). When they entered as military leaders, they rode horses. Normally pilgrims to Jerusalem entered the city on foot.<sup>1</sup>

**What was different about this “Triumphal Entry?”** The typical triumphal entry was a celebration honoring a great military leader and looking *back* at his recent victory in battle. In this triumphal entry, Jesus was looking *ahead*. He was on his way to the victory of the Cross.... a triumph over Satan (victory over sin). That victory, plus the resurrection (victory over death), are the two greatest triumphs of all time!

**How did the masses react to Jesus’ entry (vv. 7-10)?** This was a time of great celebration....anticipated for many years. In their minds, Jesus was about to overthrow the Roman oppression and set up His earthly kingdom. This was similar to today’s ticker tape parade.

**The next day, what was the point of the fig tree encounter? What was the message Jesus was trying to get across (vv. 12-14)?** It was a parable of impending judgment on Israel not an angry reaction because Jesus was hungry and found no food. Like the leaves on the fig tree, the religious leaders were impressive on the outside, but when you looked closely there was no spiritual fruit of righteousness; they were empty on the inside. They were hypocrites. The tree looked good and held the promise of fruit but there were no figs.

Like the fig tree, Israel flourished with the “leaves” of ritual religion but lacked the “fruit” of righteousness God demanded. His action signified God’s impending judgment on Israel for religious hypocrisy.<sup>2</sup>

Fig trees in Bible lands produced an early edible fruit. This early green “fruit” was common food for local peasants. It was a promise of the regular crop, here described as the “season for figs.” Thus, it was reasonable for Jesus to expect to find something edible on that fig tree even though it was not the season for figs. In the same way, Jesus was hungry for fruit from the nation of Israel. Because there was no early fruit, He knew that there would be no later fruit from that unbelieving people, and so He cursed the fig tree.<sup>3</sup>

Application: Jesus warned Israel of God’s displeasure when they had the *appearance* of fruit, but not the fruit itself. When we look good and act good, but have nothing of spiritual substance inside – we are *religious* people just like the hypocritical Jewish leaders that Jesus confronted.

Although the primary interpretation of this passage relates to the nation of Israel, it has application to people of all ages who combine high talk and low walk.<sup>4</sup>

Background for vv. 15-16: Every Jewish male, which included pilgrims from foreign countries, had to come to Jerusalem for three Pilgrimage Festivals every year. They had to pay a yearly temple tax - an amount equaling about two days’ pay. They also had to buy animals to sacrifice. This all had to be paid in the currency of the temple, so the money changers would exchange the worshippers’ money for the temple money. They performed a valuable function – or so it appeared.

**If that was the case, why did Jesus drive them out of the temple (v. 15)?** The money changers were actually profiteers in cooperation with the priests and were robbing the pilgrims blind by forcing them to purchase “approved” sacrificial animals and exchange currencies at outrageous conversion rates. And furthermore, they did this in the outer courts of the temple, the only area where Gentiles could come and pray. This was especially relevant to Mark’s Gentile readers in Rome. This place of prayer had been turned into a flea market and a dishonest one at that! God intended the temple to be a house of prayer for *all* nations including the Gentiles (v. 17).

Application: If the Lord Jesus were to show up at our house of worship, what changes would He make?"

**How did the Jewish religious leaders respond to Jesus' actions (vv. 18-19)?** They plotted to kill Him (3:6). Jesus' action and words had threatened their reputation and standing. His teaching was having an impact on the multitudes that gathered from all over the ancient world for Passover. Jesus was acting like Israel's King and High Priest.<sup>5</sup> Mark alone recorded that they "feared" Jesus.

**When he saw the withered fig tree, Peter was impressed with the power of Jesus (v. 21). How did Jesus respond to Peter?** By saying essentially, "If you think that was a big deal, that fig tree incident will pale in comparison to what you are going to be able to do." **What might some of those things include?** Sharing the Gospel. Introducing people to Christ, e.g. The greatest of all miracles is "Christ in us" .... The creation of a transformed heart and mind. A person is taken from death to life. **Is there any greater miracle?!?!**

**Nobody was literally throwing mountains into the sea. What was the point Jesus was trying to make (vv. 22-24)?** He was using hyperbole to make a point. The point was that depending on God and trusting in God can accomplish humanly impossible things through prayer.<sup>6</sup> One is to be absolutely confident in God's readiness to respond to faith. Such faith contrasted with Israel's lack of faith. "Moving a mountain" is a universal symbol of doing something that appears to be impossible (Zechariah 4:7).

We should not interpret Mark 11:24 to mean, 'If you pray hard enough and really believe and don't doubt.....God will give you whatever you want. That kind of faith is not faith in God; rather it is faith in faith, or faith in feelings. Obviously, our requests at the same time must be in harmony with God's will (cf. 14:36; 1 John 5:14-15).

**"Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him" (v. 25). Why?** A lack of faith is one thing that will hinder our prayers (vv. 23-24). But, a spirit of unforgiveness and bitterness can likewise hinder our prayers (v. 25). If we expect to receive God's forgiveness, we need to first forgive those who have wronged us. Romans 12:18: *If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*

**What was the concern of Israel's official leaders with Jesus (vv. 27-28)?** They wanted to know about Jesus' credentials and who gave Him the right to say and do what He did. They questioned the nature and source of His authority. On paper, their questions were legitimate, since the leaders were responsible for supervising Israel's religious life. However, their question was a challenge to Jesus' honor.<sup>7</sup>

**Jesus answered their questions with a question (vv. 29-30). What was Jesus trying to accomplish?** The Lord's question was not a trap. It was not designed to humiliate; it was yet another opportunity for them to realize and confess their blindness and ask for sight. He was trying to open their eyes to their foolish thinking.

**What did their response to His question reveal about them (v. 33)?** Their response exposed the fact that these men were not sincere seekers of truth. They cared mostly about scoring rhetorical points in debate and in pleasing the crowds. They cared little about knowing the truth which was obvious in their refusal to answer Jesus. Clearly, they rejected both John and Jesus as God's authorized prophets.

Essentially, Jesus asked these leaders if they believed God was behind John the Baptist's ministry. If John was from God, then he was right about Jesus, that He was the Messiah. If what John said was true, they had to admit that Jesus had all authority. The other option was for the leaders to say "No" which would infuriate the crowd, because they admired John and thought he was a prophet. That would pose a threat to their prestige, status and power/control over the people. They were between a rock and a hard place.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Mark, 2020 Edition, (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 232

<sup>2</sup> John D. Grassmick, "Mark," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 157.

<sup>3</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1350.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Mark, 2020 Edition, (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 239

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 240

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 243