



Mark 11:1-33

Personal Preparation Day 1

Last week we saw Jesus again try to make his disciples understand what he's come to do: to suffer and die on a cross (10:33-34). And again, it's a message that just isn't getting through. But as this week's passage opens it is a glorious moment for Jesus, as he rides into Jerusalem to the cheers of the people.

Read Mark 11:1-11. In this glorious moment for Jesus, it seems strange that he would ride on a young colt – surely something more impressive is appropriate for the king. Why do you think Jesus chose a colt? See Zechariah 9:9.

The people really get into the spirit of the occasion (v.7-8) laying down cloaks and branches so that even the colt doesn't have to walk through the dirt and mud! Picture yourself in that scene: how must it have felt to have been in the crowd going along with Jesus?

"Hosanna" (v.9) literally means "save!" but could have been used as a general word of praise. Read v.9-10 again. The people certainly thought Jesus was someone special, and rightly so!

Is praising Jesus as king something that you find easy to do? Is it something you do often? Spend some time praising your king.

Personal Preparation Day 2

Read Mark 11:12-14. Do you ever find some of the things Jesus says a bit strange? If you do, you're not alone: the disciples often felt this way! (See Mark 9:32)

But there's more to this incident. **Read Mark 11:20-24.** Is there anything in this passage you find strange or hard to understand? (Perhaps v.24!) (Hopefully we might be able to start to clear this up in this week's study.)

There's one thing here that's easy to understand though. **Read v.25.** Jesus makes a link between being forgiven, and forgiving others. Is there anyone you need to work things out with?

What can you do about it this week?

Mark 11:1-33 Discussion Questions

In the Personal Preparation we saw that this week's passage opens with a glorious moment for Jesus, although still marked by humility – he rode on a donkey colt. The lesson that Jesus has come to humbly serve and give his life for many (Mark 10:45) is one the disciples are finding hard to accept, as we saw last week. But this week Jesus is concerned to teach them something else about what his coming death means, for the nation of Israel, and for the disciples.

Read Mark 11:1-11

The crowds are aware of the importance of Jesus coming to Jerusalem, and they mark the event by shouting with praise, and also by throwing down their cloaks and leafy branches.

1. How do you think the greetings of the crowd would have been interpreted (a) by the Jewish rulers in Jerusalem, and (b) by the Roman rulers in Jerusalem?

In some ways the crowds have got it so right about Jesus and who he was. But in other ways, like how his kingdom was to be brought in, they had it so wrong!

Read Mark 11:12-25

2. This passage has three parts. Describe in your own words what's happening in each part, just to fix it your mind.

verses 12-14

verses 15-19

verses 20-25

It's important to notice that incident in the temple is 'sandwiched' between two parts of what he does with the fig tree. The point seems to be - the fig tree and temple incidents are related.

Read Jeremiah 7:1-2 & 11-15 where Jeremiah is prophesying about the Jewish exile. (Note that Jesus is also quoting from this passage in Mark 11:17.)

3. Where is Jeremiah to stand when he tells the Jews these things? (v.2)

4. What is God going to do to those who have made this place a "den of robbers"? (v.14-15)

The first Jewish temple was destroyed when the Jews went into exile in 586BC. This was God's punishment because the Jews had made it into a "den of robbers". Jesus says in Mark 11:17 that the Jews again have fallen into the same sin. Could it be that the same punishment is coming?

Read Isaiah 56:3-7 where Isaiah is speaking of a future time, after the Jewish exile. (Note that Jesus is also quoting from this passage in Mark 11:17.)

5. What is God's attitude going to be to those who aren't Jews but still turn to God in the time he's talking about? (v.3, 6-7)

6. What will God do for them and where will he do it? (v.7)

The fact that Jesus quotes these two passages suggests he's doing something more significant in the temple (Mark 11:15-19) than just getting rid of commercialism. It seems he's pointing to a time when there will be judgment for those who have made the temple into a place where injustice rules, a time when even non-Jews will be welcome at the temple to pray and worship God. And it seems that time has arrived!

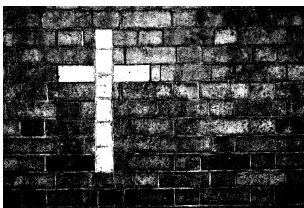
It's also important to realize that Israel is sometimes spoken of in the Old Testament as a fig tree. In the time of the prophet Micah (just before the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel) the fig tree had stopped producing the fruit of righteousness that God wanted – there were no “early figs” (Micah 7:1) As a result the northern kingdom went into exile in 722BC. Jesus also finds no early figs in Jerusalem in Mark 11:13.

So when Jesus curses the fig tree he seems to making a similar point to the one he made in the temple (v.17). With his coming to Jerusalem, the days for the temple are numbered. A great judgment is coming, and what Jesus has come to do (to die on the cross) seems to be the event that is the beginning of the end for the temple and those who rule it.

7. Given that Jesus in this passage has been talking about a great judgment on Israel, focused on the temple, is Jesus talking about just any mountain in v.23? (Hint: The temple was built on Mt Zion.)

8. How might that help us understand his words on prayer that follow? (v.22-24)

The nation of Israel was judged, and the temple was destroyed by the Romans marched in AD 70.



Christ, the Cross & You

a) The Jews were facing a judgment in Jesus' day, but we will all face God's judgment one day. In light of the coming judgment how does Jesus say we should be particularly careful to relate to others? (v.25)

b) The Jews in Jesus' day had confidence in their great temple. Yet Jesus says it will soon be destroyed. Instead of putting their faith in the temple, he says they should “Have faith in God” (v.22). Is there anything in your life you're putting your faith in, instead of God?