

The King and His Temple

Read Mark 11.1-25

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS & SETTING THE CONTEXT

1/ **Programming note:** for those of you who may be following this survey/summary series of lessons through Mark, there have been two other lessons between the last one and this one: I was unable to prepare the notes for one, and another teacher filled in for me for the other. So, although there have been those other two lessons, I'm going to keep the numbering consecutively.

2/ This chapter of Mark will be the beginning of a larger narrative section extending through **ch 13.37**. All of these events and Jesus' messages are connected and transpired during the same occasion, which was the beginning of the last week of Jesus' life and ministry leading up to the narrative of His arrest, trials, crucifixion, and resurrection. That narrative takes up with the beginning of **ch 14 to the end of the Gospel**.

3/ This lesson will tell the story of three events: [1] Jesus' royal entry into Jerusalem announcing the arrival of the King and His Kingdom; [2] the 'cursing' of the fig tree which will serve as an 'action parable' and commentary for the other event...; [3] what we call the 'cleansing' of the temple.

4/ I am titling this lesson "***The King and His Temple***" because that title will succinctly summarize how these three events are all connected. And that is the first lesson we must see and learn: all three of these events are intertwined, connected, and confluent with one another.

5/ Just one more introductory note of connection: this entry and arrival in Jerusalem ***to die at the hands of His enemies*** is precisely what Jesus has been impressing on His disciples – and which they still did not understand or accept – is what He has been intently preparing them for in at least three separate and distinct teaching sessions He's had with them – **ch 8.31-32a / ch 9.30-32 / ch 10.32-34**.

- This teaching is what we have been calling the '*Messianic Secret*.' Not because His mission had been kept 'secret' in the Old Testament – it had been prolifically prophesied – but because the Jewish populace and even His disciples had not read those same Messianic promises comprehensively.
- They had read very well and often those prophecies that promised the coming of a King from the house, lineage, and dynasty of David. But they were expecting Him to come as a political, militaristic Messiah who would destroy their enemies, deliver them from all their oppressors, restore Israel to be the 'head' of the nations once again rather than the 'tail,' and bring in His sovereign, universal, and invincible rule of power, peace, and prosperity – by a political revolution and overthrow of the then-ruling Gentile overlords, if necessary.
- They had ignored those other Messianic prophecies that told of His coming as Yahweh's Suffering Servant who would establish His Kingdom by redeeming them from their sins by the substitutionary sacrifice of Himself. **See, for example, Isaiah 53.**

6/ He has now arrived to fulfill those prophetic purposes as God's Christ/Messiah, King, and as our Redeemer. **That is His Kingdom He has come to announce, establish, and rule over!** And, as we shall see, He will also present Himself as our 'True Temple' – the 'Author and Finisher of our faith,' the Subject and Object of our true worship.

7/ That is what these events and this lesson is all about...

I / vv 1-11 / "Behold, your King is coming to you...!" [Zechariah 9.9]

1/ v 1 / 'Now when they drew near to Jerusalem...' this little marker is so filled with prophetic and Messianic significance. [1] **From the time of His beginning to teach them the full disclosure of His 'Messianic Secret,' He had been telling them they were going to Jerusalem where all these things would happen to Him;** [2] **When Moses and Elijah appeared with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, they 'spoke with Him of His departure [exodus] which He would accomplish at Jerusalem' / Luke 9.31;** [3] **From that time just a few weeks before, "When the days drew near for Him to be taken up, He set His face to go to Jerusalem" / Luke 9.51;** [4] **Mark updates us in ch 10.32**

“**And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem...**” Jesus knows full well what Jerusalem will mean for Him – the disciples are still clueless, though they can sense from His demeanor and spirit that something is impending, and maybe even ominous.

2/ “**Now when they drew near to Jerusalem...**” They had just come through Jericho, about 17 miles away [ch 10.46]. Keep in mind that this is Passover season, and so the roads are filled with traveling caravans making their way also to Jerusalem to keep the feast. All of their clusters and caravans of pilgrims will be excitedly chattering and conversing about the latest reports they have been hearing about Jesus – most recently, His raising of Lazarus from death. See **John 11.55-57**.

3/ As they draw near to Jerusalem, Jesus stops off in Bethphage and Bethany to rest and fellowship with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, who live in Bethany and often hosted Jesus when He was in Jerusalem.

4/ vv 2-6 / When the day came for Jesus to actually enter Jerusalem, He sent His disciples to fetch the young, unbroken, unriden donkey colt. He told them where they would find it and what they would say to those who would ask them why they are taking it. This practice was called *angaria*, a Roman custom and law that permitted any royal official to commandeer the use of any public means of transportation or supplies that was needed to fulfill their mission [see, for example, **Matthew 5.41**]. The disciples obey and bring the colt to Jesus.

5/ vv 7-8 / Jesus is doing this to fulfill **Zechariah 9.9**. Everyone takes it as a signal that Jesus is fulfilling, not only His prophesied Messianic mission, but also their interpretations and expectations of it. NOTE: this is the only time Jesus ever accepted and complied with any public expressions of their misinterpreted and misunderstood Messianic expectations. He does so on this occasion because He knows He will fulfill His Divine Messianic mission as He was prophesied and sent to do.

6/ vv 9-10 / Their celebratory shouts are a compilation of several Old Testament Scriptures:

- **Hosanna:** this is from **Psalm 118.25-26**. The Hebrew/Aramaic chant was a common one meaning, **Save us, we pray!**
- **Blessed is the one who comes in the Name of the LORD!** Again, from **Psalm 118.25-26**.
- **Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our father David! / Hosanna to the Son of David** [**Matthew 21.9**] This is from **2 Samuel 7.9-13, 16** and the many Old Testament references promising that their Messianic King would come from David’s lineage and dynasty – or that David himself would come in the Person of their coming Messiah.
- **Hosanna in the Highest! and Peace in Heaven and Glory in the Highest!** [**Luke 19.38**]. From **Psalm 148.1**. Surely also by this time, it was well-known what the angels had promised and announced to Mary, Joseph, Zechariah, and the shepherds at His birth.

7/ v 11 / **And He entered Jerusalem and went into the temple.** His royal entrance and announcement cannot be separated from the temple. God has always ruled from His temple. He has indwelt the temple with His Shekinah Presence. He has commanded and received His worthy praise, worship, sacrifices, and service from His people in the temple. Jesus has come to ‘purify’ all of their abominable perversions of the worship that belongs to Him only; to restore the temple to its true Scriptural purposes; and more – to declare Himself to BE the True Temple of God!

8/ Yet another prominent and long-expected Scripture is being fulfilled: **Malachi 3.1-4**. Again, it won’t be fulfilled as they are expecting it to be fulfilled – but Jesus Christ is here to fulfill it according to the Divine Covenant plan and promises!

9/ We really need to interject **Luke 19.41-44** here – Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because He knows what all is going on there, what they will do to Him before the week is over, and the soon-coming destruction that is coming down on them as the certain judgments of God...

10/ After surveying what all was going on in HIS temple, and knowing what He was going to do on the morrow, Jesus departed for the night to retire once again in the Bethany home of His gracious hosts Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

II / vv 12-14, 20-21 / “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!”

1/ We know this event as ‘the cursing of the fig tree,’ and so it was! What we need to see is that this rejection and cursing of the fig tree is an ‘action parable,’ and it is emblematic of God’s rejection of their religious activities that were being conducted in the name of ‘worship’ in His temple.

2/ The fig tree [along with the grape vine/vineyard] are used all throughout the Old Testament as emblems of Yahweh’s ownership of Israel and His covenant promises to bless them as they obeyed and served Him and ‘brought forth fruit’ of love, obedience, worship, service, and witness to His Glory. **See, for example, Isaiah 5.1-7 & Jeremiah 24 – along with many others too numerous to reference.**

3/ As they are returning to Jerusalem the next morning, with the full day’s traumatic events He must fulfill, and knowing what those events will signify and portend for the temple and Jerusalem, Jesus approaches this fig tree. ‘...**He was hungry...**’ not just His human, physical hunger, but He was also ‘hungry’ to receive His worthy praise and worship from the temple and His people. But they were not ‘yielding and bearing the fruit’ they had been commanded to give Him. **When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. NO FRUIT!** Although, for all the centuries and generations leading up to this day, *it had been the season for bearing fruit for the nation of Israel.* The fruitless fig tree served as a glaring illustration of the abominable rebellion that had been conducted in His temple during all this time – and was still being practiced in the name of ‘worship’ according to their traditions. EXCEPT that, what they had done was taken over the temple and the services for themselves; used HIS temple as the platform for their own use to advance their power, their influence, and even their monetary profits.

4/ **And He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.”** What He meant by this is that God was going to destroy their temple, city, and their perverted systems of religion. All of this was fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed it and them all. **See again Luke 19.41-44 & Mark 13.1-2.**

5/ Another significant interpretation we should take from this cursing of the fig tree is that Jesus’ intention was to take away from Israel the Divine commission to represent Him and His Gospel and give it to the New Testament churches. You will find this interpretive insight in **Mark 12.1-11 & Matthew 21.41: They said to Him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give Him the fruits in their seasons.”**

**III / vv 15-19 / “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’?
But you have made it a den of robbers.”**

1/ **And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. And He would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple.**

2/ We call this event ‘the cleansing of the temple.’ And a ‘cleaning’ it was! Again, we return to...

- **Malachi 3.1-4: “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.**

3/ So, we may ask: How was the temple defiled and rendered unclean? And the answer is: by all the abuses the leaders of their religion had instituted in God’s ordained and prescribed center of worship. As we have said before, the religious leaders who should have been teaching and leading the worshipers to give and yield to God His due and deserved worship and service ... had instead hijacked the temple, instituted their own influence, traditions, and personages to aggrandize and peddle their own influence, power, and even their monetary profit.

- **“Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’?”** This is a quotation from **Isaiah 56.6-8.** In that passage, Yahweh is prescribing and describing the worship

that is pleasing to Him and that He will accept. His temple was to be used as a proclamation center of His own saving grace and mercy – even to Gentiles who would believe on Him and be converted to people of faith and worship of Him. ‘Prayer’ is offered here to include all of our professions of faith in Him, our prayers and offerings of worship and praise, and all the sacrifices of service of our lives and resources that we give Him as an expression of our gratitude and devotion to Him. NOTE: that it is not just Jews and Israelites who are to be welcomed, but ‘all the nations.’

- **But you have made it a den of robbers.** Again, this is an echo of **Jeremiah 7.11**. What Yahweh had condemned in Jeremiah’s day, they were still perpetrating it in Jesus’ day – right then and there, before His very Face. They were **a den of robbers** in at least three ways: [1] Their religious leaders were robbing the worshipers spiritually by withholding from them the purity of God’s true worship and substituting their own traditions; [2] they were robbing the people physically and financially by charging exorbitant prices to exchange their currency and purchase the needed offerings for the Passover services; [3] they were robbing especially the Gentiles because they had moved their selling kiosks and bazaars from other areas of the temple compound into what had previously been designated ‘the court of the Gentiles’ where the uncircumcised Gentiles could gather to worship and make offerings. In effect, they had displaced the Gentiles after God had specifically commanded them to welcome them into His house.

IV / vv 20-25 / “Have faith in God!”

1/ Jesus made this pronouncement in response to Peter’s amazement the next day – after Jesus had cursed the fruitless fig tree and also performed the accompanying ‘cleansing’ or ‘purifying’ of the temple. Both of these events portray the same thing: God’s rejection of their perverted systems of man-centered ‘worship’ and the coming destruction of their temple, city, and religion by the Romans in 70 AD.

2/ This ‘**Have faith in God**’ is so much more than just a generic command and promise for those who will believe God will give them what they ask for if they have a ‘strong enough’ faith. It does include that, of course, but Jesus is restoring true worship in the Temple HE IS! **See the final Kingdom fulfillment in Revelation 21.22**. This is what Jesus is proclaiming and what He is restoring in Himself!

3/ This truth is reinforced also in many other New Testament references such as **Ephesians 2.19-22; 1 Peter 2.4-5; and others. The New Testament churches are the Temple of God**. We are founded and grounded on Him and our faith in Him as the True Cornerstone. We worship Him! We obey Him! We serve Him! We do everything we do in His Name!

4/ vv 23-24 / The ‘this mountain’ that must be removed is anything and everything that stands in the way of Jesus receiving all our worship, praise, and service. We remove those mountains of hindrances that stand in the way of our obedience to Him by committing all our **faith in God** to Jesus Christ. We must **ask in prayer** and **stand praying**, not only in faith in God but also with forgiveness in our hearts toward anyone who has trespassed against us or aggrieved us in any way. **Our sin was the ‘mountain’ that stood in the way of our salvation through the forgiveness of our sins that is in the death and blood of Jesus Christ, ‘... by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross’ [Colossians 2.14]**. What we have so freely received from our King of Grace, we must just as freely preach and extend to others as we preach, live, and practice ‘**the Gospel of the Kingdom of God**’!

5/ This same Christ-centered and Grace-filled **prayer** is how we must conduct all our lifestyle, worship, and Kingdom advancement as Christ’s churches: **My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations!**

And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations – and then the end will come! [Matthew 24.14]