



Mark 11

An OCF Bible Study

Mark 11

Jesus—the King, long-awaited Messiah, and Savior of world—entered Jerusalem riding on a colt of a donkey (v. 2-7). He deliberately chose a colt—not a stallion, nor a chariot. Why a colt? To fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 written 500 years before: *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

For most of His ministry, Jesus discouraged people from publicly celebrating Him as the Messiah. “Don’t tell anyone” is a familiar command we have heard from Jesus (Mt. 9:30; Mark 1:43-44, 5:43, 7:36). But here, Jesus allows public praise and adoration as the Messiah (v. 9-10). Why did Jesus no longer discourage praise from the people? Because His time had finally come.

Jesus had repeatedly said, “My time is not yet come” (John 2:4, 7:6). Jesus was on a three-year journey to the Cross. He was unable to adjust the time frame as set by God the Father. He was sensitive to the schedule. The time was now right.

The praises were not for His sake; it isn’t that Jesus has a self-esteem problem and needs our affirmation. Jesus wants to be praised because *we need* to praise Him. Praising Him is for *our* benefit. Our hearts need to declare His greatness, recognize/appreciate Him for who He is.

If you described Jesus’ “triumphal entry” to Roman, they would have laughed in your face. For them, a triumphal entry was an honor granted to a Roman general who won a complete and decisive victory and had killed at least 5,000 enemy soldiers. When the general returned to Rome, they had an elaborate parade. First came the treasures captured from the enemy, then the prisoners. His armies marched by unit by unit, and finally the general rode in a golden chariot pulled by magnificent horses. Priests burned incense in his honor, and the crowds shouted his name and praised him. The procession ended at the arena, where some of the prisoners were thrown to wild animals for the entertainment of the crowd. *That* was a triumphal entry, not a Galilean peasant sitting on a saddle made out of a few cloaks and riding on a donkey.

So why do we call this event the “triumphal entry”? The Roman general is looking back and celebrating victory in battle but Jesus is looking ahead. He is on his way to the victory at the Cross—a triumph over Satan (victory over sin). That victory plus the resurrection (victory over death) are the greatest triumphs of all time.

What was the point of the fig tree encounter (v. 13-14)? What was the message Jesus was trying to get across? The religious leaders were impressive on the outside, like the leaves on the tree, but when you looked closely there was no spiritual fruit of righteousness. They were hypocrites. The fig tree paints a picture of hypocrisy which was a prime fault of the leaders of the nation of Israel. The tree looked good and held the promise of fruit but there were no figs. They look good on the outside but there was nothing there. They were empty on the inside.

Essentially, the tree was a picture of “false advertising.” The leaves said, “There are figs here,” but the figs weren’t there. This tree was cursed because it professed to have fruit but did not.

Application: Jesus warned Israel (and us) of God’s displeasure when they have the *appearance* of fruit, but not the fruit itself. When we look good, act good, but have nothing of spiritual substance inside—we are no different than the hypocritical religious leaders Jesus confronted.

Every Jewish male 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 had to buy animals to sacrifice. It all had to be paid in the currency of the temple, and the money exchangers would change their money for the temple money. They performed a valuable function.

So why did Jesus drive them out of the temple (v. 15)? They were profiteers in cooperation with the priests and robbed the pilgrims blind by forcing them to purchase “approved” sacrificial animals and currencies at

outrageously inflated rates. And they did this in the outer courts of the temple, the only area where Gentiles could come and pray. Therefore, this place of prayer was made into a flea market and a dishonest one at that! God intended the temple to be a house of prayer for *all* nations (v. 17).

Peter was impressed with the power of Jesus (v. 21). Jesus goes on to say in essence, “That fig tree incident will pale in comparison to what you are going to be able to do.” Then he starts talking about throwing mountains into the sea.

Nobody is literally throwing mountains into the sea. What is the point Jesus is trying to make in (v. 22-24)? The point was that dependent trust in God can accomplish humanly impossible things through prayer.¹

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 nothing but faith in faith, or faith in feelings.

And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses (v. 25). Why? A lack of faith is one thing that will hinder our prayers (v. 23-24). 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.

The “chief priests,” teachers or “scribes,” and “elders” constituted the three components of the Sanhedrin (v. 27-28). This was a very official inquiry prompted by Jesus’ presence and made necessary by His cleansing of the temple.²

What was their concern with Him (v. 28)? Israel’s official leaders 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. Their questions were legitimate, since the leaders were responsible for supervising Israel’s religious life. Yet their question was a challenge to Jesus’ honor.³

Jesus answers their questions with a question. What was Jesus trying to accomplish (v. 29-30)? 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.

(v. 33) What did their response to His question reveal about them? 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. The critics’ concern for their own position rather than for the truth is 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’s ministry. If John was from God, then he was right about Jesus, that He was the Messiah. If what John said was true, then Jesus had all authority. The other option was for the leaders to say “No,” which would infuriate the crowd and in turn 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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¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2014 Edition* (published by Sonic Light, www.soniclight.com), pp. 154

² *Ibid*, pp. 155

³ *Ibid*, pp. 155