

JESUS FORCES THE HAND OF HIS ENEMIES & THE CURSING OF THE FIG TREE

These events form a countdown to the redemptive purpose of Christ's life on earth. In this chapter we see the last miracle (apart from the resurrection itself) that Jesus performs in Mark's gospel. The mood of the whole gospel account begins to change. This is a new chapter in the history of the world.

1) **JESUS GOES PUBLIC AND FORCES THE HAND OF HIS ENEMIES - MARK 11:1-20**

"Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples [2] and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. [3] If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" [4] And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. [5] And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" [6] And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. [7] And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. [8] And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. [9] And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! [10] Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" [11] And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. [12] On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. [13] And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs." [14] "And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it. [15] And they came to Jerusalem. 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. [16] And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. [17] And he was teaching them and saying to them, "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." [18] And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. [19] And when evening came they went out of the city. [20] As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots."

While the church has traditionally called this Jesus' *triumphal entry*, there is clearly both *triumph* and *tragedy*. The adoring crowds are excited, grasping the outer edges of some very important truths, but are also sadly in the dark about the *timing and nature* of the kingdom Jesus is ushering in. Let's put some of the pieces together:

A) **JESUS KNOWS HE IS FULFILLING THE SCRIPTURES THIS DAY**

He seems so picky about all of the details. He deliberately organizes His entry around the stipulations of Zechariah 9:9 - "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."

B) **WHILE JESUS KNEW THE NATURE OF THIS FULFILLMENT, THE CROWD, AND EVEN THE DISCIPLES, DID NOT.**

See John 12:16 - "His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him." The crowd was at an excited peak. They shouted "***Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David***" (11:10). Probably they were thinking about the final establishment of the Messiah over all of their enemies. And what better place than the center of Jerusalem for this to be accomplished?

Remember, John tells us that this entry follows right on the heels of Jesus **raising Lazarus from the dead (John 12:17-19)**. These people were desperate to make Jesus their king. This was the same response from the crowd when they saw Jesus feed the five thousand (**John 6:14-15**). Soon this same crowd won't be shouting "Hosanna" - they'll be screaming "Crucify Him!"

C) **WHILE THE CROWD REJOICED, JESUS WEPT - LUKE 19:39-44**

“And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” [40] He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” [41] And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, [42] saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. [43] For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side [44] and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

Jesus was not taken in by the shallow enthusiasm of the crowd. Luke sets Jesus' tears right in the middle of their rejoicing. They were interested in Jesus - **but only on their terms**. They saw Him as the quick fix to their problems. They took some of the prophecies concerning Christ's coming, and ignored other very clear and important ones dealing with the element of **His suffering** and **their sin (Isaiah 53)**.

They were going to be judged because **they could have known more than they did**. Theirs' was not just **ignorance** but **rejection**. Jesus took such deliberate pains to fulfill the prophecies of Zechariah just so people could catch a glimpse of who He really was. But they willfully closed their eyes and minds to the spiritual rulership of Jesus in their lives.

D) **THE PUBLIC NATURE OF THIS EVENT IS IMPORTANT.**

Jesus was dividing all of mankind around Himself. Even though the crowd was off the mark, the religious leaders felt the threat of Christ's mass appeal. While they wanted to kill Jesus, they couldn't find a chance because of His popularity (**John 12:19 - “So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”**). They had to wait for God's timing.

The timing of this entry is important. It was the Passover celebration. The city would swell to twice its normal size. Jesus deliberately makes the preparation for the cross the most visible event of His time. Again, this would give more people a chance to see prophetic fulfillment and enter Christ's spiritual kingdom and receive His grace - **or** - demonstrate a fuller justice in their judgement for refusing as visible and public a testimony as was possible because of their refusal of the true nature of Christ's kingdom.

2) **THE CURSING OF THE FIG TREE – MARK 11:12-14**

“On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. [13] And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. [14] And he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.”

Why would Jesus curse a barren fig tree when it wasn't even the season for figs (13)? What could be the purpose of such a violent miracle? Why was Jesus so harsh? Though it wasn't the season for ripe figs, the appearance of leaves (which usually followed the first young figs) indicated that at least some, less ripened figs would have been present. Because Jesus was hungry, they would do. But the real point of this account isn't figs or fig trees. Jesus only **uses** the incident to form an **acted parable about judgment**. This is not without Old Testament precedent (**Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 24:1-8**).

There was a basic hypocrisy in those who professed a desire to worship God but wouldn't accept Jesus Christ. Notice the irony of those who would be in the Temple (which Jesus would soon cleanse) selling

sacrifices for the altar, while at the same time, planning the death of the Lamb of God who wanted to take away their sins! This is the Jerusalem Jesus came into that weekend - ***bustling with religious activity, but rejecting Jesus***. Oh, how easy it is to be big on religious performance, but poor on deep understanding of the ways of Christ and commitment to His cause when it becomes costly and difficult. This is the reason for Mark's portrayal of the ***angriest Jesus in the Gospels***.

The ***cursing of the fig tree*** and the ***driving out the money changers*** are part of the same message. The last miracle Jesus performed was one of judgment. Just as the last word He will declare when He comes in power is a word of judgment on those who rejected His mercy and truth and grace.

Proverbs 29:1 - "He who is often reprov'd, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing."