

Mark 11:1-10, The Triumphal Entry
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A. Overview

1. 1:1-13, Introduction of Jesus Christ (in wilderness of Judaea!)
2. 1:14-8:26, Galilean Ministry (summaries in 1:14-15; 3:7-12)
Two cycles: each begins with call of disciples and includes both public ministry and explicit opposition
 - a) 1:16-3:6 First Galilee Cycle
 - 1) 1:16-20, Call of the Four
 - 2) 1:21-45, Itinerant public ministry
 - 3) 2:1-3:6, Opposition
 - b) 3:13-8:26, Second Galilee Cycle
 - 1) 3:13-19, Call of the Twelve
 - 2) 3:20-35, Challenge from Anti-Disciples
 - 3) 4:1-8:26, Four Trips: teaching, trip out, miracle, trip back, miracle.
3. 8:27-10:52, From Galilee to Jerusalem
Two chiasms:
 - a) 8:27-9:13: the cost of discipleship
 - b) 9:14-10:52: the need for faith and the simplicity of salvation.
4. 11:1-16:20, Judaeian Ministry
Continues the emphasis on the different kinds of soils; we will see all ranges of interest and opposition. Starts in 11:1-10 with enthusiastic public welcome.

B. 1-10, The Triumphal Entry

1. Orientation
Recall that we are trying to read Mark as a stand-alone book, not as a filter for the other gospels. When we read this passage, because we know the other gospels, we bring a lot to it:
 - a) The identity of the colt as a donkey;
 - b) Zechariah's prophecy of the humble king;
 - c) The interruption of the priests.None of this is here. Mark is emphasizing the Lord's power and authority, not his humility.
2. 1-6, The Prophecy
The Lord lays claim to an exalted position.
 - a) Shows detailed knowledge of a situation he has never observed:
 - 1) Location of a colt
 - 2) Its history (never before ridden)
 - 3) A challenge from the locals
 - 4) Retraction of the challenge before the prepared answer

- b) Presumes to dispose of the property of others: "The Lord has need of it." "The Lord" elsewhere in Mark (12x in all) is always God, except 5:19, which is suggestively ambiguous. Jesus is here claiming the creator's prerogative over any of his creations, even those currently in the stewardship of some other creature.
- c) Demonstrates brute power over creation. "Whereon never man sat." Emphatic: "no person *anqrwpos* had ever yet sat on him." So the Lord will ride an unbroken colt, bareback; in addition, Mark's Roman readers will assume this "colt" is a horse, making the feat all the more astounding.

3. 7-10, The Procession

The disciples and the multitude recognize his claim.

a) 7-8, Gifts of garments and boughs:

- 1) A carpet of garments (2 Kings 9:13) is a royal honor. For many peasants, their garments were the most valuable thing they owned, and to have them trodden underfoot, especially by a hooved animal, would be a great loss.
- 2) Boughs: calls to mind the final Mosaic feast, Tabernacles, the 15th day of the 7th month, as Passover (the first feast of the year) is the 15th of the first month (Lev 23:40). Looked not only back to the Exodus (thus the booths), but also forward to the Millennium; cf. Isa. 25:6-8.

b) 9-10, Greetings: from Ps 118:25,26, traditionally sung at both Passover and Tabernacles. Note chiasm with "Hosanna" on the outside and a double blessing on the inside.

- 1) "Hosannah" is a transliteration of 118:15 "Save now, I beseech thee."
- 2) First "blessed" is 118:26.
- 3) The second "blessed" comments on the first. The crowd recognizes the coming one as introducing "the kingdom of our father David."

c) Thus the people's actions and their words both recognize the Lord as the coming Messianic king, though their expectations are no doubt more in line with an overthrow of the Romans than with the actual sequel.

C. 11, Scoping Out the Opposition

The Lord's first stop is the temple.

- 1. Having made his claim to be "the Lord" in his entry, he now sets about fulfilling Mal. 3:1-4: "The Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple ... and he shall purify the sons of Levi." In this initial visit he surveys the work he needs to do over the next few days, the subject of his actions and teaching through ch. 13. Maybe his short appearance here is to give the leaders a chance to clean up their own act before he does it for

them. They must surely remember how he has done it once before, at the beginning of his ministry.

2. One way to divide what follows is the failure of the temple cultus (through ch. 13) and the institution of a new sacrifice and worship outside the temple (14-16).
 - a) 11-12 is centered on the Lord's direct controversy with the chief priests, scribes, and elders (11:27-12:12); on either side are encounters with their ancillary people (sellers of sacrifices, Pharisees and Herodians, Sadducees, a lone scribe).
 - b) Having found all levels of the temple hierarchy wanting, in ch. 13 he pronounces doom over the temple and the city.
 - c) Thus by the time the temple succeeds in rejecting him, in ch. 15, he has already turned away from the temple and instituted a new order of worship in an ordinary house.

D. 12-26, Cleansing of the Temple

Note how the temple cleansing is embedded in the narrative of the cursing of the fig tree. The fruitless fig tree is an image of the fruitlessness of the temple culture; the curse on the tree corresponds to ch. 13.

1. 12-14, The Tree Cursed

a) The circumstances of the cursing:

- 1) The Lord's desire: he hungered, and went "afar off" hoping to find "something" to eat on the fig tree.
- 2) The Lord's expectation: not figs, for it was not yet the season for figs (June at earliest), but the buds appear about the time the leaves do. They're not by any means as good as the figs, but can be eaten.
- 3) The tree's condition: in spite of the leaves, no buds. Nothing at all to eat.
- 4) The Lord's response: a curse on the tree.

b) Parallel with the temple:

- 1) The Lord desires refreshment from his people's worship, and comes from afar to them. God walks with Adam and Eve in the garden; the Lord Jesus condescends to become a man.
- 2) His expectation: not perfect fruit, for the time is not yet. He doesn't expect to find Israel living in millennial glory. But he does hope to find some little tidbit of refreshment, some glimmer of faith.

- 3) The condition of the temple: absolute barrenness. Any piety among the people is in spite of, not because of, the temple hierarchy.
- 4) We are thus led to expect that the Lord will curse the temple, which in effect happens in ch. 13.

c) *Application:*

- 1) The danger of giving an appearance of fruit without fruit itself, "form of godliness but denying the power thereof," 2 Tim. 3:15.
- 2) The Lord's tolerance of our weakness. We should not let lack of perfection keep us from coming to him, like a little child with a bouquet of weeds. He would be satisfied even with our buds. But let us not be empty-handed before him.

2. 15-19, The Temple Cleansed

a) The context (Edersheim)

- 1) Each worshipper had to pay, once a year, the temple tribute in the sum of half a shekel, according to the "shekel of the sanctuary." Derived from Exod 30:11-13, and the phrase "shekel of the sanctuary" appears 25x in the Pentateuch. Foreign \$\$ had to be changed into this form, and a considerable fee (on the order of 10-15%) was charged.
- 2) Sacrifices had to pass inspection by the priests, per OT warning against blemished sacrifices. To avoid complication, worshippers could buy "pre-inspected" sacrifices on the site.
- 3) Have to imagine the hubbub that surrounds an Eastern market. Not a case of clearly posted prices and silent electronic cash registers. Hagglng, arguing, gesticulating.
- 4) The market resulting from these transactions was called "the bazaars of the sons of Annas," the High Priest; evidence that the moneychangers and sellers of animals paid rent or gave a cut to the priesthood for the right to transact their business there.
- 5) Worth noting that the abuses of the market were well known and commented upon in Jewish circles. The common people saw it as shameful and extortive, but were at its mercy.

b) 15-16, His actions

- 1) Drove out buyers and sellers--not only those who held shop, but also those who patronized them.

- 2) Overturned their tables. Not a polite "Would you please step aside?" but a manifestation of judicial wrath.
 - 3) 16, carrying vessels through the temple: apparently people were using the temple precincts as a short-cut from the Mount of Olives to the rest of the city.
- c) 17, His teaching
Based on Isa 56:6,7, which predicts that even Gentiles shall come to worship in the temple. This detail pertains in two ways to the particular offense of the markets:
- 1) Their Occasion. Most necessary for those who came from far, such as gentile converts to Judaism, who would not have the correct coinage, and would find it most difficult to bring the appropriate sacrifices. So Gentile converts felt the abuses most particularly.
 - 2) Their Location. At the time of Christ, unconverted Gentiles could enter only the outermost court, which is the very area that had been defiled by the markets.
- d) 18, The response
- 1) The people: astonished at his teaching. It was "outrageous," not calculated to soothe the hearer or accept the status quo, but to challenge the most obvious convictions. This word occurs 13 times in Matt, Mark, Luke, and Acts, usually of the Lord's doctrine (11x), less often of his mighty deeds (2x: Lk 9:43; Mk 7:37). It was authoritative, straight-forward, powerful.
 - 2) This response of the people is given as the reason for the response of the chief priests and scribes:
 - a> They feared him. He threatened their control over the people, the profitability of their entire enterprise, their standing and perqs.
 - b> They planned to destroy him. Earlier the object of the Pharisees and Herodians (3:6); now the top of the hierarchy gets into the act.
 - c> *Application:* Note how zeal for God's word leads to social institutions, which in turn lead to rejection of the Messiah! Beware the seduction of elaborate human organizations; maintain the simplicity of NT worship, without hierarchy or financial complication.
3. 20-26, The Curse Fulfilled
Two lessons: the potency of the Lord's curse; general conditions for answered prayer.

- a) 20,21, The particular curse on the fig tree
 - 1) "In the morning": Rapid results from the curse.
 - 2) "from the roots": thorough results. Not just beginning to wither, but completely dried up.
 - 3) Put yourself in the place of the disciples. With this demonstration of his power, and having just seen his cleansing of the temple, they must realize that the fate of the Jerusalem hierarchy hangs by a very slim thread.

- b) 22-26, General lessons on prayer

The two points here correspond to those in 1 Tim. 2:8, "without wrath and doubting."

 - 1) 22-24, Faith; cf. "without ... doubting"
 - a> Not general faith, but faith that God will do what it is we ask of him. Prayer of the form "I'd sure like this, but I don't know if it's your will" may help us to cast our burden on him, but is unlikely to bring results.
 - b> But where does this faith come from? Some would have us generate it out of our own strength. "Your prayer wasn't answered because you didn't believe in it strongly enough." Places God at our disposal.
 - c> Biblical sources of faith:
 - 1> The Word of God, Rom. 10:17.
 - 2> The Spirit's work within our heart. 1 Cor 2:10-14. Eph. 1:17,18; John 14:26, 1 Cor 12:8, Col 1:9
 - 3> Summary: preparation for prayer requires spirit-guided meditation on the Word of God to discern the Father's will. If we come with this faith, God promises to answer our prayers.
 - 2) 25, Forgiveness to others; cf. "without wrath." In prayer we are not demanding what we are owed, but are asking God for a favor; it is inconsistent to do this while we are embroiled in bitterness with our fellow creatures.