



Mark 11 **Lesson 17**

Mark chapter 11 signals a marked change in the ministry of our Lord. Verse one takes place on the first day of what is commonly called the Holy Week, or Passion Week. Jerusalem is teeming with devout Jewish pilgrims preparing for the Passover celebration, and from this point on, every snapshot of Christ revolves in and around Jerusalem. With each event the shadow of the cross becomes larger and larger.

Consider the Context:

1. *If you can, find a quiet spot and try to read through this powerful chapter without interruption. What title would you give this chapter that will help you to personally remember it?*
2. What details stand out to you?

Coming of the King: Read Mark 11:1-11

This postcard reveals a very vivid scene of Jesus entering the city of Jerusalem. Before He does, in verses 2 and 3, He gives some very specific instructions to two of His disciples.

3. What was His instruction?
 - a. How well did they follow these commands?
 - b. In what way do you think the faith of these men was affected by their obedience to this odd request?
 - c. From your own experience, peruse through this past month, how well did you follow direct instruction from the Lord?

- d. What can we learn from their example of unquestioning obedience?
4. Up to this point, Jesus seemed to want to keep His presence a secret. Why this change now that He is in Jerusalem?
 5. How would you describe the mood and emotion of this crowd?
 - a. Read Psalm 118. Jewish Pilgrims would recite this as they made their way up to Jerusalem. The crowd would be singing it as Jesus entered Jerusalem.
 - b. How does this psalm enhance your sense of the scene in verses 1–11?
 - c. What is the significance of the word “Hosanna”?
 6. Do you think the crowd understood what they were shouting, or was this a thrust of enthusiasm stirred up by a minority of people?
 - a. Is there a possibility this was building a certain expectation from the crowd about Jesus?

Bringing it into Focus:

Think about your own Christian life. Did you have certain expectations when you gave your life to Christ? Have you come to understand Jesus Christ and all He did for you, or have false expectations skewed your view? Pray over Philippians 2:5–8 and 2 Corinthians 8:9. Allow the Holy Spirit to give you a fresh view of your Servant-Savior.

Cursing and Cleansing: Read Mark 11:12–19

7. After an evening respite in Bethany, the group of disciples and Jesus head back to Jerusalem. Describe verses 12 and 13 in your own words.

8. The tree is cursed because it professed to have fruit but only had leaves. How does this correlate to a true relationship with Jesus Christ versus an outward standing on religion?
- a. Compare this with John 15:1–6 for more detail about the danger of appearance only. What stands out to you in this passage?

9. How might the picture of this fig tree relate to the nation of Israel?

Returning again to the temple, Jesus is outraged at what He saw. In righteous anger He cleanses and clears the rubbish—both physically and spiritually.

10. What was the major cause of Jesus' outrage?
- a. What does a "den of thieves" mean?
- b. How does this contrast to a "house of prayer"?
- c. Do you see any of this dualism in the Church today?
11. What did Jesus do to cleanse the temple?
- a. In a personal sense, has the Lord ever had to overturn the tables on your life? If so, in what way?
- b. Is it ever appropriate, as a believer, to overturn the tables in someone else's life? Please explain.
12. What do you think Jesus' reaction would be if He came into some of the churches in America today? What if He came into your church?

13. This passage is a perfect example of Jesus' righteous indignation. Look up the following verses and make note of how the Lord modeled these Scriptures:

James 1:19–20

Romans 1:18

Ephesians 4:26

This bold action drew more attention than ever. From this point through the rest of the gospel, Mark chronicles five major conflicts with Jewish leaders at the temple.

14. What was the response of the scribes and Pharisees to the temple cleansing?
- a. How does this communicate the spiritual climate of Jerusalem at this time?

Changes through Prayer: Read Mark 11:20–26

Mark frames the cleansing of the temple with the lesson of the fig tree. Again at evening Jesus and the disciples leave the city only to return the following morning and find the fig tree dried up.

15. How would you explain the meaning of the cursed fig tree?
16. Read verses 22–26. What 'prayer principles' do you find in these verses?
- a. What is Jesus saying about the link between effective prayer and forgiveness?
- b. What is the consequence if we fail or refuse to forgive?

He that cannot forgive others, breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass if he would reach heaven: for every one has need to be forgiven.
Thomas Fuller

Challenging Authority: Read Mark 11:27–33

For the third morning in a row, Jesus and His disciples move toward the temple. This time there is an interception, an official Sanhedrin caucus comes to publicly challenge Jesus.

17. Jesus dramatically outmaneuvered the religious leaders. How did He do that?
- a. In what way did this create a dilemma for them?
 - b. Why would answering, “Heaven,” place the religious leaders in a difficult predicament?
 - c. How would answering, “Men,” be just as awkward for these leaders?
 - d. What did they finally acquiesce to?
 - e. How did Jesus respond?

This chapter opened with the powerful entrance of the Servant-King. Celebration, exaltation, and praise filled the air. Closing the chapter we sense tension and turmoil. Passion Week has begun and so has the judgment to those who choose to reject the Messiah.