

Mark 11:1-26 • Responding Correctly to Christ's Coming

Introduction

This study will focus more on the context of what the Jews were doing and why. In other words, how they interpreted – or misinterpreted – God's Word where the Messiah was concerned. It's a vital issue for us today because, just like that generation, we are witnessing the fulfillment of things heralding His return. Just like the Jews then, it's not enough to be an eye witness, but matters much more how everything is viewed through the prism of God's Word by faith. We need to learn the right lesson from their mistakes so as not to repeat them ourselves.

¹As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, ²and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here. ³If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' you say, 'The Lord has need of it'; and immediately he will send it back here."

⁴They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it. ⁵Some of the bystanders were saying to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶They spoke to them just as Jesus had told them, and they gave them permission.

⁷They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it. ⁸And many spread their coats in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. ⁹Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting:

"Hosanna!

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME
OF THE LORD;

¹⁰Blessed is the coming kingdom of our
father David;

Hosanna in the highest!"

¹¹Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

[Read v.1-11]

Observation: The Passover is one of the three pilgrim feasts at which the Jews sing the "Hallel Rabah", Psalms 113-118. The highlight of the Hallel Rabah is:

Hosanna, hosanna,
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
We bless you from the house of the Lord...
Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness endures forever.
Hosanna, hosanna.

The Jews were to sing this on Passover while waving their hands, and to sing it at the Feast of Tabernacles while waving palm branches in their hands.

Q: What is the greater significance of Passover versus the Feast of Tabernacles?

A: Passover, the first feast on the Jewish calendar, is representative of Christ's First Coming and the work of the cross by the Lamb of God whose blood takes away the sins of the world. The Feast of Tabernacles, the last feast on the Jewish calendar, represents Christ's Second Coming, the establishment of His kingdom on earth in what we call the "Millennial Reign".

Q: So what is obviously wrong with what is taking place here?

A: The Jews are not actually celebrating the Passover – Christ's First Coming as the Suffering Servant, but are celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles – Christ's Second Coming as the Conquering King. Their desire is not for the Lamb of God but to jump directly to the Son of David, the King.

Point: They wanted someone to get rid of the Romans the same way the Macabees got rid of the Greeks, for the Messianic Kingdom to be set up immediately. They did not want a Messiah to come as the Passover Lamb to be slain; they wanted a conquering King who would establish the Millennial kingdom.

Observation: In Matthew's and Luke's accounts, it is recorded that well after what we call the "Triumphal Entry", that Jesus made this statement:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

Luke 13:34-35

Although they had already, literally said this upon His “Triumphal Entry”, Jesus is providing the proof that they mistakenly mis-spoke it at His First Coming and therefore, just like all of God’s messengers sent before Him, would treat and kill Him just as they did them because He doesn’t tell them what they want to hear. This is an indictment of the Jews’ rejection of Christ which is still to be rectified at a time to come.

Q: Why do you suppose that even though they witnessed all the signs and fulfillments of His First Coming that so many still actually missed it?

A: They were intent on seeing everything fulfilled according to their own expectations rather than according to God’s Word. Since they were only wanting to see things fulfilled which pertained to His setting up His kingdom at His Second Coming, they ignored God’s Word concerning the work of the Messiah’s First Coming.

Q: How might this relate to the situation we find ourselves in today as we see the signs of His Second Coming unfold?

A: There are many who have rejected the **WHOLE** Word of God, embracing only parts or rejecting what they don’t like. This has resulted in many false doctrines such as Kingdom Now Theology, Dominionism, Replacementism, and a myriad of other false teachings that subvert the literal teachings of Scripture.

Application: What is the lesson here for us concerning how to respond correctly to Christ’s coming? Why is it important to measure events against the fulfillment of **ALL** of God’s Word?

¹²On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry. ¹³Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And His disciples were listening.

[Read v.12-14]

Q: What is the strongest indicator that there is a much greater spiritual meaning behind Jesus’ actions here? What would have been common knowledge about fig trees at this time of year?

A: This wasn’t the time of year when a fig tree would normally bear fruit.

Q: What is the biblical meaning of the fig tree? What is its greater spiritual representation?

A: It represents the nation of Israel, specifically that it was not producing fruit to the glory of God.

*I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness;
I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first season.*

*But they came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame,
And they became as detestable as that which they loved.*

Hosea 9:10

*All your fortifications are fig trees with ripe fruit—
When shaken, they fall into the eater’s mouth.*

Nahum 3:12

¹⁵Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; ¹⁶and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. ¹⁷And He began to teach and say 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 ROBBERS’ DEN.”

¹⁸The chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

¹⁹When evening came, they would go out of the city.

[Read v.15-19]

Q: What is very different about His cleansing the temple at the end of His earthly ministry than when He did it the first time near the beginning of His ministry?

A: Jesus tells them the first time, “Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a place of business.” (John 2:16). Over the course of the next 3-1/2 years, they not only do not heed His warning but cause it to be even worse as noted in His second statement, “But you have made it a robbers’ den!”

Q: What exactly is going on here? Why is anyone selling ANYTHING in the temple to begin with?

A: For the Jews who lived outside Israel and traveled to Jerusalem for such events, it was impossible for them to bring the live sacrifices. So they would come to exchange their foreign currency either for sacrifices or for the temple currency in order to complete their sacrifices. The problem was that not only was the rate of exchange dishonest according to biblical standards and therefore literally cheating people, but it was all taking place in the Court of Gentiles, a place which was supposed to be dedicated to bringing others to God. Instead, it was occupied by those seeking to do their own business instead of God’s business.

Q: What exactly is a “robbers’ den”?

A: It’s the place thieves go to hide when they’ve committed a crime. These people were using the worship of God as a cover for their sins!

Point: *These people represent those today who cling to false doctrines which are actually based on greed, such as the Faith Prosperity Movement and all the other variations put forth by money-preachers.*

Q: Since it was Passover, what should everyone have recognized to be the greater meaning of what Jesus was doing?

A: At Passover, everyone is required to remove all leaven – the biblical representation of sin – from their house. The Son was removing the leaven of sin from His Father’s house.

Observation: *Note Psalm 118:25, the verse in the Hallel Rabah which is normally recited just before that proclaimed at the Triumphal Entry:*

O Lord, do save, we beseech You;
O Lord, we beseech You, do send prosperity!

Again, this is actually associated with His Second Coming, but their incorrect focus at His First Coming, produced a false prosperity gospel.

Application: *What is the lesson here for correctly responding to Christ’s coming? How does material wealth distract not just from the future work of the kingdom, but that currently assigned?*

²⁰As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. ²¹Being reminded, Peter said to Him, “Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.”

²²And Jesus answered saying to them, “Have faith in God. ²³Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. ²⁴Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you. ²⁵Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. ²⁶[But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.]”]

[Read v.20-26]

Q: What might be surprising about Jesus’ actions concerning the tree? How did He use His divine powers?

A: He destroyed it instead of making it fruitful.

Q: What is significant about where the withering first began?

A: It first began “from the roots up”.

Q: How might this relate to some of Jesus’ other teachings?

A: The Parable of the Sower is about how the seed of God’s Word fares in various conditions of the heart. Three of the four conditions spoke of hearts incapable of producing a crop, whereas in the fourth heart...

*“But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in **an honest and good heart**, and **hold it fast**, and **bear fruit with perseverance**.*

Luke 8:15

Point: Christ does not use His divine powers to make something that has rejected Him from the heart spiritual fruitful. His Word is the power to life for those who accept it and judgment to death for those who don’t.

Q: How does Jesus define the greater spiritual issue behind the sign of withering the fig tree?

A: It’s an issue of faith.

Q: How does this sharply contrast with the people at the Triumphal Entry and in the temple?

A: Their faith was misplaced in what they wanted rather than what God wanted. They, too, needed to, “Have faith in God”.

Q: What kind of association might the Jewish mind make between this and an Old Testament event which was quite opposite of this?

A: The Levitical priesthood was first established by the miracle of a dry rod which, in one night, budded and blossomed and brought forth fruit – almonds.

Now on the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony; and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds.

Numbers 17:8

Now the expiration of the priesthood, so to speak, is signaled by a flourishing tree dried up in one night. If Peter and company realized that this symbolized God’s grace turning away from the Jews, their astonishment was not so much at the physical miracle but with the greater, devastating meaning for Israel.

[Continued on the next page.]

Q: If the sign of the fig tree is actually representative of a greater spiritual teaching, how might these examples of faith also be teaching about something greater spiritually?

A: Just like the rest of the Jewish people, the disciples themselves held the wrong belief about Christ's coming. Several times they, and even John the Baptist, asked when Jesus was going to establish His kingdom on earth – the Millennial Reign – instead of fully understanding the need of His First Coming. They were going to need faith in God to complete everything according to **HIS** will and ways while they witnessed all these things fulfill God's Word much differently than they personally anticipated.

Point: *One of the advantages the adherents to false doctrine often have is overwhelming numbers. It can be difficult, but not impossible, to maintain one's faith in God when we find ourselves in the faithful minority. One of the false beliefs of the Jews is that they were exempt and protected just because they **WERE** Jews, and that nothing permanent could happen to their place in God's kingdom. There's no such thing as a license to behave and believe however you wish.*

Application: *What is the lesson here for correctly responding to Christ's coming? What might be the application for the church in the Last Days?*

Overall Application

*The best way to understand and put into the proper context how things will work at Christ's Second Coming is to truly understand how things worked at His First Coming. What happened **then** foreshadows what is happening **now**. As the Preacher says, "There is nothing new under the sun". (Ecc. 1:9) And at that time, every single false doctrine and false theology that existed is with us here today. All these things claim to be "new", but they're just re-labeled versions of what has come before. The difference between the majority who responded incorrectly to His coming, as opposed to the faithful remnant who did, is that the former twisted God's Word to fit their own expectations whereas the remnant clung to what appeared to be a mountainous faith to believe God would work everything according to His Word regardless of appearances.*