

Study of the Gospel of Mark

Chapter 11 (Part 1)

Background

With this chapter we enter the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry. This week is called "Holy Week" and covers the events of Palm Sunday through the events of Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday seven days later. Over one third of Mark's Gospel is dedicated to recording the events of this one week in the life of Jesus! It begins with the events of "Palm" Sunday (see John 12:13 for the reason for the title, "Palm" Sunday)....

1. Read the following verses: Mark 7:32-36; 8:27-30; 9:29; Luke 5:12-14; 8:49-56. What does Jesus command His hearers not to do in each of these instances? Why?

2. Remember that Jesus had gone into hiding in the previous chapters, and even traveled outside of Galilee to Tyre and Sidon and Caesarea Philippi to get away from the publicity in His homeland. He has repeatedly told those whom He has healed not to say anything to others and has commanded His disciples not to reveal His identity as the Christ. How does that change with the events of Palm Sunday (Compare Luke 19:37-40)? What is important about this drastic change?

3. What Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled by Jesus on this day (compare Matt. 21:4-5)?

4. What were the people confessing about Jesus both by their words and actions on this day?

5. Mark tells us that Jesus did not stay overnight in Jerusalem but went to Bethany which was nearby (v. 11, 19). Why do you suppose they did this at the end of every day?

6. Mark tells us that Jesus, on His way back to Jerusalem on Monday becomes hungry (v.12). What does this reveal to us about Jesus? Find other instances where the true humanity of Jesus is described.

7. The cursing of the barren fig tree on the way into Jerusalem is not a burst of anger from Jesus. It is a lesson in hypocrisy and faith (Jesus will explain the connection to faith in v.20-26). Jesus has regularly spoken out against hypocrisy during His ministry (Matthew 6:2, 5,16; Mark 7:6), but His condemnation of hypocrisy would escalate in the coming days (Matthew 22:18; 23:13-15, 23,25,27,29). How does the cursing of the fig tree relate to Jesus' condemnation of hypocrisy?

8. Many Jews and proselytes journeyed from their homelands to Jerusalem for the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the celebration of the Passover every year. Since there was only one temple and the Jewish people were scattered over a large area, many were only able to come to the temple a few times a year. When they came, they wanted to be able to worship freely. The temple complex was divided into different courts where only certain people were able to enter. Gentile converts were only permitted to enter the outer court of the temple complex. But this area had been converted into a marketplace, thus preventing Gentile believers to worship. Jesus had condemned this early on in His ministry (John 2:13-22) but sadly, nothing had been corrected. Mark tells us that Jesus cast them out of the temple and began to teach the people. What lesson can we learn from the words and actions of Jesus in these verses? How does this apply in the work of the church today?

