

Mark Chapter 11: v. 1-26.**Title: Jesus the rescuer & the judge.**

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; ² and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring *it*. ³ And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here." ⁴ So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. ⁵ But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" ⁶ And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. ⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread *them* on the road. ⁹ Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna!

'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the LORD!'^[c]

¹⁰ Blessed *is* the kingdom of our father David

That comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest!"

¹¹ And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve. ¹² Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. ¹³ And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard *it*. ¹⁵ So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. ¹⁶ And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. ¹⁷ Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" ¹⁸ And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. ¹⁹ When evening had come, He went out of the city. ²⁰ Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. ²¹ And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." ²² So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. ²³ For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. ²⁴ Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*. ²⁵ "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. ²⁶ But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

Introduction**TODAY WE BEGIN OUR EASTER SERIES.**

This year we will learn about the Easter story from Mark's Gospel.

It will be a good way to finish our Mark's Gospel series which we began over 1 year ago.

Mark does not give us as much detail as the other gospel writers, but it is enough for our purposes this year.

Two weeks ago we learnt about the third conversation that Jesus had with his disciples concerning His death.

During this last conversation Jesus made it clear to His disciples about the purpose of His death.

Jesus said that He was about to give His life as a ransom for many people.

The death of Jesus was the **price that had to be paid so that sinners could be released from the slave market of sin.**

You and I are all born with a sinful nature.

Many people try to deny that statement.

If you don't believe that statement, then try obeying God's 10 commandments, both in your heart and your head and in the practice of your life.

You will find God's 10 rules in the Bible in the book of Exodus Chapter 20 v. 1-17.

You will find that if you are honest, you will have already broken at least one of God's rules.

The 10 commandments are like a mirror that show us that in God's eyes we are sinful.

We are all **guilty and deserve the punishment of death**, eternally, with punishment in Hell.

However, **Jesus our rescuer and judge** was about to die and to take the punishment for our sin, so that we could be released from death, punishment and live with a holy nature in Heaven when we die.

As we start our Easter series we must be sure that we understand not only the **purpose** of the death and resurrection of Jesus, but how it **affects us personally**, now and in the future.

To miss this point, is to miss the whole purpose of our Easter celebration.

In Mark chapter 11: v. 1-25 there are three important things before us.

1. The dramatic entry of Jesus into Jerusalem – v. 1-11.
2. The judgement of the Temple – v. 12-21
3. The offer of Forgiveness. – v. 22-26.

1. The dramatic entry of Jesus into Jerusalem – v. 1-11.

The text tells us that Jesus has arrived at a small settlement on the Mount of Olives.

If you ever go to Jerusalem, you must go to the 'Mount of Olives' and look down on to the old city of Jerusalem.

It is a wonderful view of the old city.

It is a similar view to what Jesus saw 2,000 years ago.

Today you can't see the Temple, because it has been destroyed, but you can see the area that the Temple covered.

I promise to bring you back a picture after the OIC trip to Jerusalem.

It was on the Mount of Olives that Jesus instructed one of His disciples to go and borrow a young donkey that nobody had ridden on.

It is described as a "colt" which is a young donkey. You might ask the question why did Jesus do this?

Well there are 3 main reasons.

1. Jesus had to arrive in Jerusalem for the last time on a donkey because it was a fulfillment of prophecy. Turn with me please to the book of Zechariah Chapter 9: v. 9 -13.

⁹ "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Behold, your King is coming to you;

He *is* just and having salvation,

Lowly and riding on a donkey,

A colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim

And the horse from Jerusalem;

The battle bow shall be cut off.

He shall speak peace to the nations;

His dominion *shall be* 'from sea to sea,

And from the River to the ends of the earth.'

¹¹ "As for you also,

Because of the blood of your covenant,

I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

¹² Return to the stronghold,

You prisoners of hope.

Even today I declare

That I will restore double to you.

¹³ For I have bent Judah, My *bow*,

Fitted the bow with Ephraim,

And raised up your sons, O Zion,
Against your sons, O Greece,
And made you like the sword of a mighty man.”

In the context of the book of Zechariah this prophecy comes in a chapter that talks about Israel defending itself against their enemies.

The context was about saving God’s people.

It would be very strange for a King to ride on a donkey coming into battle to defend Israel.

It was remarkable that Zechariah even wrote down this verse. It was totally against what would normally happen.

When the prophets in the Old Testament made prophecies about the future, they seemed very difficult to understand, and yet they were fulfilled.

So Jesus had to ride on a colt, a young donkey, in order to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah.

Let this be a lesson to us about prophecies concerning the second coming of Jesus. They may seem impossible, but they will happen one day.

2. **The second reason** that Jesus had to ride on a donkey was because a donkey was never ridden to fight physical battles. **It was considered to be an animal of peace.**

It was an agricultural work animal. **The horse was a symbol of war but the donkey was a symbol of peace.** Jesus was riding into Jerusalem as the **“Prince of Peace” and not the King of war.**

Jesus was about to fight a **spiritual battle for the hearts of men and women and not a physical one.**

3. The third reason that Jesus rode on a donkey into Jerusalem was not only to declare publicly that he was the Jewish Messiah but to do it in an act of humility. **Riding on a donkey was an act of humility.**

Philippians 2: v. 5-8 (N.K.J.)

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

This set of circumstances demonstrated that Jesus was fully in control of the situation.

Jesus would enter Jerusalem on **his terms** and in **total control** of all events that would happen over the coming days.

This is important because of what we will discover later in the Easter story.

In v. 8-10 we are told that the crowd was very enthusiastic as Jesus approached Jerusalem.

The route was down-hill from the Mount of Olives, and up a little hill into Jerusalem.

Today they have filled in the valley, but it is still quite a walk from the Mount of Olives to the Old City of Jerusalem.

The emphasis of the crowd, pressed home the point, that the Messiah King had arrived to begin his reign.

They were making lots of noise, praising Jesus as the Jewish Messiah.

Jesus is recognised by the crowd as bringing in the kingdom of the **Jewish King David.**

No doubt the Jewish people thought that they were going to be set free from the Roman Empire and have a New King in the form of their Messiah Jesus.

They were partially right, but it was going to be a spiritual kingdom and not a physical one, well at least not just yet.

That physical kingdom was reserved for the **New Heaven and the New earth.**

Application

So what application for our lives today can we draw out from the entry into Jerusalem contained in Mark’s gospel?

There are a number of applications here, but I feel that the one that should concern us today is about **fighting a spiritual war**.

The people of that time thought that Jesus was coming to be their Messiah King, and that he would fight a **physical battle to gain victory over the Roman Rule**.

The people soon turned against Jesus when that didn't happen.

Today we are involved in a **spiritual battle**.

The weapons of our warfare are not physical, they are spiritual.

2 Corinthians 10: v. 3-5 in the N.L.T.

³We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. ⁴We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. ⁵We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

Recently at the men's meeting we saw a DVD entitled "War Room".

It is a wonderful film that encourages Christians to fight the spiritual war for the souls of men and women.

We all need to be fighting in prayer for spiritual victory.

Every victory in prayer strengthens your soul and encourages you to fight again.

2. The Judgement of the Temple - v. 12-21.

It is important that we understand the context and teaching in these verses.

Mark structures his material like a "sando-ichi" (sandwich)

This is typical of Mark's writing style.

The material in the middle of the sandwich, in this case, the cleansing of the temple, (v. 15-19) interprets and is interpreted by the material which surrounds it.

In this case it is the cursing of the fig tree. (v. 12-14, and 20-21)

Trying to interpret the cursing of the fig tree in isolation without the cleansing of the temple would result in a wrong understanding.

Jesus is not upset because he hasn't had his "McDonalds Breakfast".

Jesus is using the fig tree to illustrate the spiritual state of the Jewish Nation.

Turn with me to one Old Testament verse.

Hosea 9: v. 10

¹⁰ "I found Israel

Like grapes in the wilderness;

I saw your fathers

As the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season.

But they went to Baal Peor,

And separated themselves *to that* shame;

They became an abomination like the thing they loved.

The fig tree represents the nation of Israel

In the book of Hosea, God was looking for early fruit in the lives of His chosen people.

When no fruit was found, God pronounces judgement on His people.

The cursing of the fig tree is known as a prophetic "sign-act".

This would have been familiar to the readers of the Old Testament.

This is where an action by a prophet demonstrates his message in a symbolic way.

Ezekiel, and Jeremiah did this often in their ministry.

It is also important that we understand something about fig trees.

I had a fig tree growing in my back garden in the U.K.

It was a present from a Church member.

Until I saw the fig tree grow each year and the way in which it behaved, I didn't really understand this passage.

The green figs on my tree appeared first before the leaves, this was in the early spring.

Then the leaves followed after that.

This is different from normal fruit trees.

With normal fruit trees, the blossom comes first, then the leaves, and then the fruit, just like Apple Trees or any other fruit trees.

Jesus saw that there were leaves but no fruit.

Then we are told that **it wasn't the season for figs.**

The reason was, the figs should have come first, before the leaves and they were not there.

The leaves of the fig tree meant that the fruit should have **already come** and be dried up on the tree.

Yes, it might not have been the season for the figs **but there was no evidence that there had been any fruit.**

In the context of Mark, Jesus clearly hadn't had his breakfast, there were no McDonalds on the road, so he thought that he would pick a fig from the roadside fig tree to keep him going. (although it may have been a dried up one)

Jesus found nothing but leaves.

So Jesus decided to curse the fig tree, saying to it that nobody would ever eat fruit from it again.

Mark is clear to inform us that his disciples heard Jesus clearly talking to the fig tree.

Jesus is trying to teach his disciples something, that later would be very visual.

The leaves on the fig tree were deceptive.

They gave the appearance that there was fruit, but on examination, Jesus found none!!!

The people of the day gave the appearance of dedicating themselves to God, but they fell far short of doing God's will.

The cleansing of the Temple is deliberately sandwiched between the fig tree narrative to demonstrate that what happens to the fig tree, points forward to what will also happen to the **Temple and to the old religion of Israel.**

Jesus comes to Jerusalem, not just as the "Saviour" but also as the "Judge".

Jesus would judge the religious leaders for their failure to recognise their own sin and the work that Jesus would achieve when He dies on the cross.

Application

The application for us is very clear. Jesus hates "Religion" and will one day judge all religions.

There is no religion that will ever save you from the consequences of your sin.

Religion is man's attempt to gain God's approval.

It is always man made, man inspired and appears to the carnal sinful nature of men and women.

It started back in Genesis Chapter 4 with the story of Cain and Abel.

Gen. 4; v. 1-15. In the N.L.T.

Now Adam had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With the LORD's help, I have produced a man!"² Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel. When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground.³ When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD.⁴ Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift,⁵ but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.⁶ "Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected?"⁷ You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."⁸ One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.⁹ Afterward the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?" "I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?"¹⁰ But

the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! ¹¹ Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother's blood. ¹² No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth." ¹³ Cain replied to the LORD, "My punishment^[d] is too great for me to bear!¹⁴ You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!" ¹⁵ The LORD replied, "No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him.

God accepted Abel's sacrificial offering of an animal, but rejected Cain's offer of fruit from the ground. God's word, the Bible makes it clear that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. (Hebrews 9: v. 22)

In the old Testament, the only way that man could approach God, and have his sins forgiven was by presenting a male lamb without defect.

The lamb died in the place of the person.

The sin of the person was transferred to the animal.

In the New Testament, Jesus is described as the **"Lamb of God" who takes away the sin of the world.** (John 1: v. 29)

Therefore, Jesus was right to **judge religion and the temple because He was about to become God's sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.**

That is your sin and mine.

3. **The Offer of Forgiveness - v. 22-26.**

Sadly, these verses are sometimes taken out of their context to teach a particular view of prayer that is not correct.

Some people teach that if you have enough faith then you can make amazing miraculous things happen.

Then these teachers say that if you pray for them and they don't happen then either you **don't have enough faith or there is unforgiven sin in your life.**

This type of teaching leads to **despairing and disillusioned Christians.**

It also causes big problems for Pastors who try and counsel people who have believed **"false teachers"**. So to be fully clear, this passage is NOT some teaching about the nature of prayer.

In its context it must be to do with deliverance from **the judgement** which Jesus has just proclaimed on the unbelieving Jewish leaders and people.

Please note the response by Jesus to Peter in v. 22.

Peter pointed out to Jesus that the fig tree that he had cursed, had withered away.

Remember the fig tree represented Israel.

Jesus's response was **"Have faith in God"**. Why did Jesus say this?

Jesus said this because to have **"faith in God"** was the way to **avoid judgement.**

Having no faith in Jesus, is the way to be kept out of God's kingdom.

The illustration that Jesus uses about the mountain being cast into the sea is about **Salvation and NOT spectacular miracles.**

Jesus is saying here that left to ourselves, our own ideas, our religion, whatever it might be, it is **impossible to enter the kingdom of God.**

However, if we have **"faith in God"** it is possible for the **impossible to happen.**

And the way to be rescued and enter God's kingdom is **impossible unless we ask Jesus in prayer for that to happen.**

I hope that you understand this teaching.

The greatest miracle is to be born again by God's Holy Spirit, and this happened when you asked Jesus Christ in prayer and in faith to be your Saviour and Lord.

Jesus is encouraging Peter to have faith in God in order to avoid the judgement.

Finally, in v. 24-26 we do have some clear teaching on prayer by Jesus that is separate from the teaching that precedes it.

Jesus says two important things about prayer.

The first is that when we pray for something that the Bible clearly teaches is right for us to have, then we **must believe that one day we will receive it.**

It may happen immediately or it may happen at a late date.

The second important thing about prayer is that we **must not have any un-forgiveness towards anybody.**

God does not want us to harbour bitterness or un-forgiveness in our heart towards other people.

We may not agree with their behaviour or particularly like what they have done to us, but we must let God judge their behaviour and let God deal with the situation in His own way.

Hebrews 10: v. 30 in N.K.J.

³⁰ For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people."

Our job is to follow peace with all people, not to judge them.

Of course forgiving people is a hard thing, but in working through this issue we must remember that our forgiveness is **based upon the punishment that Jesus received for us.**

Jesus was not guilty, but He took our punishment.

When Jesus was teaching on prayer in Matthew Chapter 6: v. 9-13, the one thing that he added afterwards was **the need to forgive people.**

In fact, we are wasting our time praying if we can't forgive someone for their hurt towards us.

Application

The application here is very clear and we must stop and have 2 minutes of silent prayer, asking that the Holy Spirit might bring to our mind anybody that we have not forgiven in our hearts.

I will start the prayer and then close the prayer after 2 minutes.

Father, the teaching of your word is very clear. We can't pray and be effective if we are unforgiving to anybody in our lives. Please bring to our mind anybody or any situation in our lives where there is still un-forgiveness.

Silence for 2 minutes.

Closing prayer.

Father if you have spoken clearly about an unforgiving spirit or incident in our lives, please give us the grace and love to forgive that person, personally, or in writing, or if they are no longer contactable, we can just pray to you, you know our hearts.

Amen.