

The Gospel of Mark

Chapters 11-12

Reminder of Key Themes

1. The big question for the book of Mark: Who is Jesus?
2. Second Exodus theme

11:1-11 Triumph on a Colt

Discussion:

Read Psalm 118:25-26, Isaiah 9:1-7, and Zechariah 9:9. How do these passages illuminate what is happening in Mark 11:1-11? (Note the Hebrew word “hosannah” is translated as “save us we pray” in Psalm 118)

11:12-25 A Fig Sandwich

The first course of business for Israel's king is to judge the fig tree. The fig tree symbolizes the hypocrisy of the nation of Israel, much like the portrayal of the nation as a fig tree did in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 24:5; Hosea 9:10). As Rikki Watts notes, “Flourishing in appearance but lacking even a single bud... it [the fig tree] symbolizes both the hollow reality behind the imposing religious structure and, as in the prophets, to the extent that the temple represents unrepentant Israel, the nation itself.” By cursing the fig tree and forbidding it to yield fruit, Jesus is, in effect, claiming that the nation of Israel has come under God's wrath. Using his “sandwich” technique, Mark splits the cursing of the fig tree (Mk 11:11-14, 19-21) with the temple judgment (Mk 11:15-19), urging his readers to connect the two events. The cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple are intertwined. Jesus curses the nation of Israel because they have idolized the temple and prevented the nations from worshipping there (11:17; Is 56:7; Jer 7:11).

–Benjamin J. Gladd, *The Story Retold*, Mark, pp. 92-93

Themes and Connections

Cursing the Tree

Cleansing the Temple

Seeing the Dead Tree

Faith and Prayer

Religious Leaders

Parable of the Tenants

Bible Study Toolbox: Parables

Read 12-12

- List the characters and metaphors.

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Who do the characters represent? What do the metaphors represent?

- What is the main point of the parable?
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- Who is the primary audience of the parable?
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- How does it impact those listening?
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- How should it impact those listening?
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- How does it fit in the overall context of the chapter?
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- How does it impact you?
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11:27-12:37 Questioning Jesus

First Century Israel Religious and Political Factions

- **Chief Priests and elders:** Religious, political, and legal rulers of Israel. Chief Priests and elders were usually Sadducees.
- **Scribes:** Scholars who specialized in Jewish religious law. Theologically, they could be Pharisees or Sadducees. They typically functioned as lawyers or judges in religious matters.
- **Pharisees:** Scholars who specialized in Jewish religious law, but not associated formally with the priesthood. They emphasized ritual purity and tithing and believed in life after death. Much of their influence came through local synagogues throughout Israel.
- **Sadducees:** Influential among the wealthy classes of Jews but had no real following among the masses. Rejected the doctrine of the resurrection and were very connected to temple activities.
- **Herodians:** Political supporters of Herod the Great and the Herodian family who were the Roman appointed rulers of Israel.

Variously cited from the ESV Archeology Study Bible

12:38-44 Scribes and a Widow

Application

What have you learned about God?

What have you learned about yourself?

How does it matter in your life tomorrow?