

OUTLINE - THE GOSPEL OF MARK - PRESENTATION 11

ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM AND CONFLICTS OVER AUTHORITY

I. Entrance into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-11)

A. Jesus approaches Jerusalem from the east, having stayed in Bethany, a town about two miles away. See John 11:18. He approaches through the Mount of Olives, which is to be the site of a great battle between the Lord and the nations who oppress Israel. See Zech 14:4. In addition, according to a prophesy of Ezekiel, the glory of the Lord will return to the Temple from the east. See Ezek. 43:1 ff.

B. It is apparently understood that Jesus is coming to Jerusalem, for when the disciples says simply that "the Lord" needs the mule, the bystanders understand. They probably do not realize the full implications of calling Jesus "Lord."

- According to Zechariah 9:9 the Messianic reign will begin with the king returning to Jerusalem on a mule.

C. The people waive palm branches, a symbol of joy , especially associated with the feasts of Booths and Hanukkah, celebrations of the harvest and the restoration of the Temple. See Lev. 23:29-43; 1 Macc. 13:51, 2 Macc. 10:7. The paving of the street for Jesus with palm branches and garments was likely a populist way of giving the red carpet treatment. See 2 Kings 9:13.

D. The term Hosanna, which means "Save us" or "Praise" is used only once in the Old Testament, in Psalm 118. That Psalm, which celebrates God's triumph over the enemies of His People also contains the phrase, "Blessed in he who comes in the name of the Lord."

E. The people thus seem to understand that Jesus is bringing the kingdom back, although they completely misunderstand how He is doing so.

F. Jesus first goes to the Temple, which was the natural thing for a religious Jew to do. He seems to ignore the political authorities.

G. This event begins a seven day series in the Gospel of Mark, which ends with the

Resurrection.

II. The Cursing of the Fig Tree and Cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11:12-25)

A. Mark describes these two events together. The fig tree is symbolic of the fruitless worship occurring in Israel. It is especially fruitless because it is drawing no one else closer to God.

B. The fig tree was not in season at the time, but Jesus nevertheless expects it to have fruit. It is an image of the obligation to bear fruit for God "in season and out of season." See 2 Timothy 4:2.

- Ezekiel had prophesied of a tree of medicine that bore fruit in all seasons as a sign of the Messianic era. Ez. 47:10-12; see also Rev. 22:2. Fruitfulness and unfruitfulness were often signs of fidelity or infidelity. See, e.g., Ps. 128:2-4, 144:2; Hosea 14:8; Matt 7:16; Luke 3:8; Jer. 8:13, Micah 7:1; Is 1:30.

C. In the Temple, people could sacrifice only unblemished animals, and they had to use the Temple coin to pay for them and pay the temple tax. The only animals guaranteed to be unblemished and the coins needed for the payments were sold in the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple, often for excessive prices.

- Jesus is indicating that that court should have been an invitation for all nations to worship God, but was instead being used for unjust profits. See Isaiah 56:1-3, 7-8; Jer. 7:11. Rather than inviting the nations to honor God, they were imitating the greed of the nations.

D. Jesus returns the next day, and the tree has withered. Jesus then uses a nature analogy to indicate positively the power of prayer. Part of the idea is that even the most entrenched sin can be removed. See Isaiah 40:4.

III. Controversies over Authority (Mark 11:27-12:17)

A. There are then disputes over Jesus' authority and the authority of the secular powers that surround Jesus' condemnation of the religious authorities' use of their offices.

B. The chief priests, scribes, and elders do not condemn Jesus' action in cleansing the Temple itself, but rather His authority to do so.

1. The first two groups were mentioned in the earlier prediction of the passion. The elders are added here. They are the heads of family clans who served as representatives and judges for the towns. See Duet. 19:12, 21:3, 22:15, 25:8; 1 Sam. 8:4; 2 Sam. 2:4. Scribes were officials who kept records and gave advice. Baruch and Ezra had been scribes.

2. These groups will be presented as those who were chiefly conspiring against Jesus.

3. Jesus insists that they take a stand, either resisting the crowds by denying the divine authority of John the Baptist or admit their error in ignoring him. Their refusal cuts off the dialogue.

C. Jesus then condemns the leadership of Israel in the parable of the talents.

1. The parable is partially based upon a similar parable in Isaiah 5:1-7, but in that case Israel is compared to a vineyard. See also Ps. 80:9. By implication, the tenants who are supposed to farm the land would be the leaders. However, the people have also been unfaithful.

2. The tenants seem to think at first that the landlord is too far away to care. Then they believe that they can produce enough chaos by killing the son to gain the land. It is an analogy to effective atheism

3. It would not be completely obvious to the people who the beloved son is, for the Baptism and the Transfiguration where Jesus is identified as such occurred largely privately. See Mark 1:11, 9:7. However, the leaders, knowing that they

intend to kill Jesus get the message.

4. The final quote is also from Psalm 118, and indicates that this religious leadership is a foreign power oppressing God's people.

D. The account then turns to the authority of the Roman government to tax.

1. The Roman government imposed three general types of tax, a tax on agricultural products, a tax on income, and a poll tax, the last of which was one denarius. Jesus focuses most on the last one.

2. The Pharisees and Herodians, the latter of whom cooperated with the government, would have despised each other. But at the behest of the chief priests, scribes, and elders they together conspire against Jesus. They were trying to force Him either to disappoint the people by supporting the authority of the Romans or to take on the Romans and thus incur their wrath.

3. Jesus' response indicates that, because the economy is supported by the Romans, they have the right to tax. In fact, foreign domination was at times willed by God as a discipline for the people. See, e.g., Jer 27-28. However, the government itself is obliged to abide by the law of God.