THE GOOD NEWS TOLD BY MARK

A Bible teaching commentary
on the Gospel of Mark
in easy-to-read English

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Jesus enters Jerusalem

Mark Unit 9 of 12

Chapters 11:1-12:27

Manna Publications
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Unit 9: Chapter 11:1 to 12:27

Mark Chapter 11

Jesus Enters Jerusalem on a Donkey

The week before His death, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Passover. Christians now call this the start of the Holy Week of Easter.

In Bethany, a village near the Mount of Olives, He sent two disciples ahead of Him into the city. "You will find a young donkey tied…" He told them. "Untie it and bring it here... Say, 'The Lord needs it'".

A donkey was an animal that carried heavy loads. Sometimes poor people rode on donkeys. The mother of Jesus rode on a donkey to Bethlehem with the unborn baby Jesus. Rich important people and kings rode on horses. God said through a prophet that the Messiah would ride humbly on a donkey. This was said hundreds of years before Jesus rode on the donkey to Jerusalem.

So, Jesus rode the donkey into the city. He did not hide from the people when He arrived in Jerusalem. The crowds knew from the Old Testament what that meant. They met Him and waved palm branches, shouting, "Hosanna!" This means "Save now!"

They also shouted, "Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

All that the prophets wrote about Jesus now began to happen. The long years of waiting had ended. The people of Jerusalem could see their Messiah. Jesus did not have any political power. He came to the city as a servant, in a humble, peaceful way. He was not riding on a horse, as a king with soldiers, but on a young donkey. This was a sign of peace.

Jesus went to the Temple, the place in Jerusalem where Jews from many countries came to worship and pray to His Father,

Yahweh, the One True God Almighty. He looked around the Temple, but did not say anything. It was getting late.

Many times, Jesus had been to the Temple in Jerusalem. He was often angry because market traders were inside God's house of prayer. It was nearly time for Him to stand up against what was wrong in the Temple of His Father.

Unfruitful Religion

Jesus and the disciples stayed with Mary and Martha in a village near Jerusalem.

Next morning, Jesus saw a fig tree at the side of the path. He was hungry. Jesus did not find any fruit, only leaves, so He cursed the tree. "May no-one ever eat fruit from you again!"

Jesus went into the Temple. What He saw in the Temple made Him angry again. In its courtyard, men sold cattle, sheep and doves for temple sacrifices. Others sat at tables changing Roman money into special Temple money. The Jewish leaders made much profit from this market.

Jesus chased the market traders out of the Temple and turned over the tables where they were changing money. "It is written in the Scriptures, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.' But you have made it a den for robbers."

Some of the Jewish leaders made a show of worship, but their hearts were empty and cold. They were like the fig tree. They had no fruit, only leaves. There was little in their lives that pleased God.

The Jewish leaders were afraid of Jesus because the crowds heard the truth from God and were amazed at His teaching. But the leaders wanted to kill Him.

Have Faith in God and Forgiveness for Others

The next day the disciples saw the fig tree once again. Its leaves were dead. The disciples were surprised. Peter said to Jesus, "Teacher, look! The fig tree You cursed has dried up."

"Have faith in God," Jesus said. Faith is a strong power that can move mountains. Anything that stands in the way of God's work can be told to go. Otherwise we will become as fig trees without fruit in our lives.

It was now only a few days before Jesus died on the cross. We must understand what Jesus taught His disciples at this time. He showed them how much faith they could have. He said, "You must not doubt in your heart. You must believe that what you say will happen. Then it will be done for you." Many Christians have seen miracles take place after faithful prayer.

Therefore, we must pray and believe in order to receive. Also, "When you pray, forgive anyone you have anything against. Then your Father in Heaven will forgive your sins." Forgive in order to receive.

The Jewish Leaders Question Jesus

When Jesus began to teach the people in the Temple courtyards, the chief priests and elders were angry. They did not want Him in their Temple. Jesus had thrown out the traders but He did not stop the children who had followed Him there from shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David".

The priests asked what authority He had to do these things. Instead of answering, Jesus asked them a question: "Was John's baptism from Heaven, or did it come from men?" The religious leaders did not understand what the Old Testament said about John and about Jesus. They thought it was a trick question.

Today, we still find that there are people who do not understand the truth or do not want to believe. The truth is written in the Bible for all to read and understand. Many people do not read the Bible and do not have faith in God for His plan of salvation though the sacrifice of Jesus. They do not understand that Jesus died so that their sins could be forgiven. They live and die without knowing the 'mystery of Christ' and God's love for us in sacrificing His Son

as punishment for our sin. This means they do not go to Heaven, nor have eternal life.

The Jewish leaders were afraid of the people and afraid of giving the wrong answer. So they said, "We do not know."

Jesus said, "Then I will not tell you by what authority I am doing these things".

We must always help people to understand God's truth before it is too late. Jesus promised us that the Holy Spirit will help us to understand and to tell others the truth, if they are willing to listen.

Mark Chapter 12

The Parable of the Farmers

Jesus began His last three days of teaching before His death on the cross. Jesus told a story, or parable, of the owner of a vineyard. Owners of farms sometimes rented their land out to other farmers.

The vineyard owner put a wall around it to keep out the animals and he made a wine press. This was the place where they trod the ripe grapes to press the juice out to make wine. He also made a watch-tower, where a guard stood and watched for thieves. He found farmers to work in his vineyard and then he went away.

At harvest time the owner sent his servants to get some of the fruit and grape juice. The farmers beat the servants and sent them away with nothing. The farmers even killed some of them.

The owner had only one person left to send, his son whom he loved. "They will respect my son," he said.

When the farmers saw the son they said, "This is the owner's son. Let us kill him, and then everything will be ours." So, they took him and killed him.

Jesus said the owner of the vineyard would kill the wicked farmers and give the vineyard to others to care for.

Jesus told this parable especially for the leaders in Israel, as some were going to kill Him. He said this to warn them. God sent His servants, the prophets, to speak to the Jewish leaders, but they would not listen. He sent other prophets and they treated them badly. He sent John the Baptiser and he was killed. Then God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, and they killed Him too.

This parable is a picture-story of how Jesus would die. He would be killed by people who would not accept Jesus as God's Son and Israel's Messiah. And they did not accept those whom God sent before Jesus, to prepare the way for Him. Jesus warned them with more words from the Old Testament.

The Jewish leaders knew that Jesus had spoken this parable against some of them. They had rejected God's most important building stone. This parable shows how those who disobeyed God rejected His wonderful Son and Saviour.

Jesus spoke these things to the chief priests and other religious leaders. They did not like His parable, nor the way He taught them from their own books written by Moses and the prophets. (Jesus quoted over 50 verses from the Old Testament in Mark's Gospel.)

The Religious Leaders Ask Jesus a Trick Question

Soon after this, they made their plans to arrest Him and kill Him. They did not believe that Jesus had authority to say these things. They did not know or believe that God had given Jesus authority.

Some Pharisees tried to trap Jesus by His words and answers. They knew that the people did not like the taxes they had to pay to the Romans, so they asked Jesus what He thought about the tax.

Jesus knew they wanted to trap Him. If He said "Yes, pay the tax" the people would be angry. If He said "Do not pay the tax," these leaders would report Him to King Herod. So He said to them, "Why are you trying to trap [test] Me? Bring Me a coin".

Jesus talks about paying taxes to the Emperor Caesar

They gave Him a silver coin. Roman coins had an image of the face of the Roman Emperor Caesar on them.

"Whose picture is this?" He asked. "Caesar's," they replied.

Then He said to them, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God". By this, Jesus showed that there are many ways in which we can obey our leaders and government without going against God's laws. They were amazed at His answer. Even hypocrites can believe that Jesus teaches the truth from God. We too must never ignore the ungodly nor the self-righteous, as God wants to save them too.

Some Religious Leaders Do Not Know God's Truth

Next the Sadducees came to Jesus. They did not believe there was life after death. They tried to trick or trap Jesus with a law from the Old Testament: "Suppose a woman's husband died and she

married again. If she had seven husbands, which husband will be hers in the resurrection?" they asked.

Jesus showed them their mistake. "You do not know the Scriptures… The dead will rise, but they will be like angels," Jesus said. Angels do not marry.

Then He asked, "Have you not read? God said to Moses, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living". These men must still be alive spiritually if God claims to be their God. Their own books written by Moses and the prophets taught them that there is life after death. Jesus told them, "You do not know the Scriptures. Nor do you know the power of God".

These religious leaders did not fully understand their own teachings through Moses and the prophets of God. We must not be like them. We must know our Bibles well and also seek God's understanding day by day.

Today, people say wrong things against Jesus. It is the evil in their hearts that make them do this. They show that they do not know or want to understand God or His Bible.

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