

Mark 11:1 ¶ And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,
Mark 11:2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring *him*.
Mark 11:3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.
Mark 11:4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.
Mark 11:5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?
Mark 11:6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

Continuing the narrative from the last chapter...

The NIV Commentary notes, "The Roman military road from Jericho to Jerusalem was about seventeen miles long and climbed three thousand feet." As we continue to read, it will become clear that this is a record of the events that we celebrate on Palm Sunday.

When Jesus and all those with Him neared Jerusalem and had gotten in the area of Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives (on the southeast side), He sent two of His disciples ahead to the next town on an errand. He told them that as soon as they entered the town, they would see a colt ("a young ass" from the Greek) that had never been ridden tied to something; there were to untie it and bring it to Him. If, by chance, anyone asked them what they were doing, they were to say that the LORD had need of it; and they would immediately send them on their way with the colt. The disciples headed out and everything happened just as Jesus had foretold.

Matthew again tells us a bit more. He points out that this was done in fulfillment of prophecy as recorded by Zechariah.

Matthew 21:4–5 "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

Zechariah 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

I can hear some people eager to point out that Jesus was deliberately staging the fulfillment of prophecy to make it appear that He was the Messiah. Yes, I believe that is true; His ministry was full of acts done purposely in fulfillment of prophecy to identify Him as the Messiah. There were also, however, many things concerning Him that fulfilled prophecy over which He had no control—the place of His birth, His treatment at the hands of the religious leaders, the amount of money for which Judas betrayed Him, the time and manner of His

death, the fact that not one of His bones was broken, and many more.

Mark 11:7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.

Mark 11:8 And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed *them* in the way.

Mark 11:9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

Mark 11:10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

When they brought the colt to Jesus, they put their robes on it for Jesus to sit on. Others spread out their robes before Him, while others cut branches off of trees and lined the path before Him to honor Him. The people led the way before Jesus saying, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the LORD: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the LORD."

It seems obvious that most of these people believed that Jesus was actually going to reveal Himself as the Messiah and deliver them from the Romans and take His place on the throne of David.

John tells us that even people from inside the city came out to honor Jesus as He rode into the city.

John 12:12–13 "On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and **went forth to meet him**, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Luke tells us even more.

Luke 19:39–44 "And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Some of the Pharisees that were among the people told Jesus to rebuke His disciples for what they were saying. Jesus declared that if the people refused to shout out the truth, the very stones would cry out. As He got near the city, Jesus began to weep because His people did not recognize the day of His coming as so specifically prophesied by the prophet Daniel.

Daniel 9:24–25 "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for

iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks...."

Notes from my journal in Daniel: From the time of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem and the coming of Messiah will be 69 weeks or 483 years—seven weeks ($7 \times 7 = 49$ years) + 62 weeks ($3 \times 20 = 60 + 2 = 62 \times 7 = 434$ years) ($49 + 434 = 483$ years or 173,880 days). Nehemiah 2:1-8 describes the decree signed by Artaxerxes authorizing the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, including the walls. Jon Courson notes that this was on March 14, 445 BC. Based on calculations using a 30-day month, it has been determined that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey presenting Himself publicly as their King on the date exactly 483 years to the day after the decree referenced in this verse (April 6, 32 AD). I am obviously relying on the calculations of others; but this calculation is confirmed through many sources.

Because the Jewish people as a whole did not accept Jesus as their Messiah, the truth was now to be hidden from them. Because they did not recognize "the time of their visitation," the Romans would lay siege to the city and eventually destroy it stone by stone. From the historical record, we know that this occurred in 70 AD.

Mark 11:11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

Jesus rode on into the city and then went to the temple. After observing all that was going on there, He went back to Bethany with the twelve since it was evening. We know that their good friends Lazarus, Mary and Martha lived in Bethany. Matthew tells us that they lodged there, so it is quite likely that they stayed with them.

Mark 11:12 ¶ And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

Mark 11:13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

Mark 11:14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

On the next day, as they headed back to Jerusalem from Bethany, Mark notes that Jesus was hungry. He saw a fig tree in the distance that had leaves and decided to check it out and see if there were any figs on it even though it wasn't yet time for the fruit to be there. When He could find no figs on the tree, Jesus cursed the tree and declared that no one would eat of its fruit ever after. Point is made the disciples heard Jesus curse the tree.

Mark 11:15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and

began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

Mark 11:16 And would not suffer that any man should carry *any* vessel through the temple.

Mark 11:17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Mark 11:18 And the scribes and chief priests heard *it*, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus immediately headed to the temple and proceeded to take action based on what He had seen the day before. He began to throw out those that were buying and selling in the temple; He turned upside down the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those that sold doves. He did not allow any man to carry any type of goods through the temple.

“moneychangers” = Those that profited by changing Greek and Roman coins into temple coins, the required coinage for paying the temple tax.

Then Jesus taught the people explaining why He had done as He had. He reminded them of the words of Isaiah the prophet.

*Isaiah 56:6–7 “Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; **for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.**”*

Jesus was furious that the temple of God had been turned into a place of business in which the rich and powerful took advantage of those who were coming to worship and prepare for taking part in the Passover feast. The scribes and chief priests heard what He said and got together to plot how they might kill Him because they feared Him. They weren’t afraid of what He might do to them physically; they were afraid that He would diminish their authority before the people and cost them a lot of money in the process. They knew that they had to be careful in how they went about it because the people were amazed at and paying close attention to His teaching as affirmed by Luke.

*Luke 19:47–48 “And **he taught daily** in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, And could not find what they might do: for all the people were **very attentive** to hear him.”*

Luke also points out that Jesus continued to teach daily in the temple until His arrest.

The New Bible Commentary offers this insight: “When Jesus entered the temple, he probably came into the Court of the Gentiles, the only place in the whole complex where non-Jews were allowed to enter and worship. But worship had

become impossible; the court had been turned into a typical bazaar area....”

Mark 11:19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

Mark 11:20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

Mark 11:21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

Mark 11:22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

Mark 11:23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Mark 11:24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

When evening came, they head back out of the city to their lodging. The next morning as they headed back to the city, they passed by the fig tree and saw that it had completely dried up. Peter drew Jesus’ attention to that fact. MacArthur’s commentary notes: “A diseased tree might take many weeks or months to die, and even one that had been salted, either by accident or from maliciousness, would take several days to die. For the fig tree to wither overnight was to do so virtually at once.”

Jesus responded by explaining that it was a matter of faith in God; Jesus had cursed the tree with complete faith that the LORD would honor that curse. He explained that one could cast a mountain into the sea if He asked God to let Him do so with absolutely no doubt in his heart. Jesus emphasized that if we prayed for what we wanted with absolute faith that God would provide it, He would.

As I have noted many times throughout my journals, these are some of the hardest promises for me to grasp. Jesus is certainly not giving us a “magic formula” for getting what we want. As with all the promises in scripture, you have to take into account the whole. There are many similar promises in scripture that provide further understanding. Jesus is telling the disciples that they are capable of great and even miraculous things. However, the fundamental prerequisite for answered prayer is asking in the name of Jesus in accordance with the Father’s will to the glory of God.

John 14:13–14 “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”

1 John 5:14 “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:”

James 4:2–3 “Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”

Mark 11:25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any:

that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. Mark 11:26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Jesus went on to say that when we pray, you should be sure to forgive anyone that you are holding something against. This is a prerequisite to receiving personal forgiveness from the Father in heaven.

Some commentators note that some manuscripts do not include verse 26. It really doesn't matter because it is truth from the mouth of Jesus as recorded elsewhere in scripture. Matthew records it as part of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:14–15 "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Mark 11:27 ¶ And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, Mark 11:28 And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

Mark 11:29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

Mark 11:30 The baptism of John, was *it* from heaven, or of men? answer me.

Mark 11:31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?

Mark 11:32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all *men* counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

Mark 11:33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

After arriving in Jerusalem, they once again headed to the temple where Jesus was confronted by a delegation of chief priests, scribes and elders waiting to accost Him. They asked Him by what authority He had done these things—wreaking havoc to stop the transacting of business at the temple.

Once again Jesus answered their question with a question. He said that He would answer their question if they would first answer His. The NIV Commentary notes that this was an accepted form of debate among rabbis. The question (my paraphrase): "Was the baptism of John an action directed by God or of his own doing?"

The religious leaders got together to consider their options. If they declared that John was a prophet of God, He would ask them why they did not believe him. If they said that he was just a man, they feared the people because all the people believed John to have been a prophet of God. They decided that the best answer was to refuse to answer. The response of the religious leaders proved that they

were not really seeking the truth; their motives were strictly selfish and aimed at trying to get Jesus to say something they could use against Him.

When they refused to answer Him, Jesus refused to answer them.

I think Jesus provides a great example for us to follow. I am reminded that elsewhere in scripture we are told not to cast our pearls before swine.

Matthew 7:6 "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

In other words, we shouldn't waste our time debating with those that are not really seeking the truth. We should be discerning. There are those who would rather take every opportunity to use or twist what we say to their own purposes for evil.