

Mark Chapter 11 Continued

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."

“The scribes and chief priests”: Here Mark uses this combination for the first time. These men were among those who comprised the principal leadership in the Sanhedrin (see notes on Matt. 2:4; 26:59).

“Sought how they might destroy him” (see note on 3:6). The leaders had continuing discussions on how to kill Jesus.

“Astonished at his doctrine” (see note on 1:22).

The worst fear these scribes and priests had was that the people would follow Jesus and not listen to them anymore. This "destroy", probably even went further than killing Jesus. They wanted to stop this message He was bringing too. They knew if they couldn't stop the message, His disciples would continue on with the message.

This doctrine of Jesus brought them hope. The message the scribes and priests were promoting brought only death. The chief priests were afraid the people would all leave and follow Jesus.

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

“Went out of the city”: Jesus’ practice during the first 3 days of Passion Week was not to leave Jerusalem until sunset, when the crowds dispersed and the city gates were about to be closed.

Jesus left the city at evening and stayed in the country round about. In the daytime, Jesus was in Jerusalem, and probably spent the night in Bethany with friends.

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

“In the morning” was Tuesday of Passion week (see note on verse 12).

“Fig tree dried up from the roots”: The tree blight that prevented fruit (verse 4), had spread upward through the tree and killed it. Matthew described the event in a more compact fashion, but his account still allows the same time frame as Mark’s (see note on Matt. 21:19).

When they walked back by the fig tree that Jesus had cursed, they saw that it was dead from the roots. We remember in the last lesson, that the symbol of the fig tree is the physical house of Israel.

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

“Master”: Meaning Rabbi (see note on 9:5).

This was just another instance where Peter was shown beyond a shadow of doubt that Jesus was truly Son of God.

Verses 22-26: The withered fig tree gives occasion for Jesus to expound concerning faith, prayer, and forgiveness.

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

“Have faith in God”: A gentle rebuke for the disciples’ lack of faith in the power of His word. Such faith believes in God’s revealed truth, His power and seeks to do His will (1 John 5:14; see note on Matt. 21:21).

Jesus was telling Peter and all the others to not doubt the next few days as all the events of the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus took place, but to look beyond the circumstances they saw with their eyes and to 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."

“This mountain . . . into the sea”: This expression was related to a common metaphor of that day, “rooter up of mountains,” which was used in Jewish literature of great rabbis and spiritual leaders who could solve difficult problems and seemingly do the impossible. Obviously, Jesus did not literally uproot mountains; in fact, He refused to do such spectacular miracles for the unbelieving Jewish leaders (see note on Matt. 12:38).

Jesus’ point is that if believers sincerely trust in God and truly realize the unlimited power that is available through such faith in Him, they will see His mighty powers at work (John 14:13-14; see note on Matt. 21:21).

The secret is not to doubt. What we must continually remember is that things that seem impossible to man are not impossible to God. God made the world and everything in it, and everything is subject to God's wishes. The created has to obey the Creator. You might say, "What does that have to do with it obeying me?"

John 14:12-14 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater [works] than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." "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]."

You see, the secret is to ask in Jesus' name. We have power through faith and in the name of Jesus to do all things. When Jesus healed, He said your faith has made you whole.

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]."

“What things soever ye desire”: This places no limits on a believer’s prayers, as long as they are according to God’s will and purpose (see note on Matt. 17:20). This therefore means that man’s faith and prayer are not inconsistent with God’s sovereignty. And it is not the believer’s responsibility to figure out how that can be true, but simply to be faithful and obedient to the clear teaching on prayer, as Jesus gives it in this passage.

God’s will is being unfolded through all of redemptive history, by means of the prayers of His people, as His saving purpose is coming to pass through the faith of those who hear the gospel and repent (James 5:16).

One must keep in mind other portions of Jesus’ teaching that shed further light on this (14:36; see Matthew 6:10; 2 Cor. 12:8).

Just as we have said above, the secret is to ask in the name of Jesus, and then not doubt, but have faith.

Mark 11:25 "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

“Stand praying”: The traditional Jewish prayer posture (1 Sam. 1:26; Matt. 26:39; Acts 7:6).

“Aught against any”: An all-inclusive statement that includes both sins and simple dislikes, which cause the believer to hold something against another person. “Anyone” incorporates believers and unbelievers.

“Forgive”: Jesus states the believer’s ongoing duty is to have a forgiving attitude. Successful prayer requires forgiveness as well as faith (see notes on Eph. 4:32).

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

This is a very important condition. Forgiveness of others will cause God to forgive us, but unforgiveness brings bitterness and an evil heart (see notes on Matt. 6:15; 18:21-34).

This is the only occurrence in Mark of “transgressions,” (or as translated in the KJV, “trespasses”), a term that denotes a falling aside or departing from the path of truth and uprightness.

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,"

“Temple”: Again this was the Court of the Gentiles; this time more specifically Solomon’s porch or the royal porch on the south side of the court (verse 11; John 10:23; Acts 5:12).

“Chief priests” (see note on Matt. 2:4). The group that met Jesus might well have included Caiaphas and Annas, who served concurrently for several years (Luke 3:2). Because of the importance of this confrontation, the captain of the temple, the second highest official, may also have been present.

Jesus was not avoiding the scribes, elders, and priests now. In the verse above, they were questioning Jesus' authority.

Mark 11:28 "And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?"

“By what authority”: The leaders wanted to know what credentials Jesus, an untrained, unrecognized, seemingly self-appointed rabbi, claimed that would authorize Him to do what He was doing. They had recovered from the initial shock of the previous day’s events, and had become aggressive in demanding an explanation (see note of Matt. 21:23; John 2:18).

“These things”: Primarily a reference to His actions in cleansing the temple. But the undefined, vague nature of this expression leaves open the inclusion of everything Jesus had been doing and teaching during His public ministry.

When they asked Him who gave Him authority to drive the money changers out, they were saying, "We are the only ones who could give you this authority, and we didn't give you any authority". If it were in our day they would probably have said, "Who do you think you are anyway?"

My opinion of why they were so opposed to Jesus was because down deep they knew what He had was so much more powerful than what they had ever encountered before. They were afraid and jealous of Jesus.

Mark 11:29-30 "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." "The baptism of John, was [it] from heaven, or of men? answer me."

“Baptism of John” (see notes on 1:4; Matt. 21:25). Jesus put them on the defensive and made their evaluation of John’s authority a test case for their evaluation of His own authority.

“From heaven or of men?” Jesus gave the Jewish leaders only those two alternatives in judging the source of John’s authority, and by implication, His own authority. Christ was in effect forcing the men to carry out their roles as religious guides for the people and to go on record with an evaluation of both John’s and His ministries (see note on Matt. 21:25).

“Answer me”: This challenge by Jesus is only in Marks’ account. It implies that the Jews did not have the courage to answer His question honestly.

In keeping with a favorite tactic, Jesus responds to a question with a question. This was also common practice in normal rabbinic debate.

John the Baptist was thought very highly of. Jesus was saying here, "John testified of me, do you believe him?" John baptized Jesus and a voice from heaven had come and said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

John the Baptist had proclaimed Jesus from one end of the country to the other, and all had great respect for John and what He taught (even Herod who had him beheaded). Jesus always answered their questions with a question that there was no way to answer.

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?"

You see, John had preached, "Repent and make the way ready for the Messiah". John had taught that Jesus was the awaited Messiah. Jesus had put them on the spot. Whatever they said, they were trapped. If they said that John the Baptist was a true man of God, then they had to accept Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah.

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."

“All men counted” is like saying it was popular opinion.

If they said that John was a false prophet and that the things he said were not true, then the people would attack them, because the people thought very highly of John. They truly were trapped with no answer to give.

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."

We see here that they could tell, but they wouldn't because they were trapped. They lied because they knew they were in trouble either way. Jesus told the truth. He said, "Neither do I tell you". He made no excuses. Jesus could tell them, but they wouldn't believe even if He did.

Mark Chapter 11 Continued Questions

1. Why did the scribes and priests want to destroy Him?
2. What was everyone astonished at about Jesus?
3. What did the priest want to do more than kill Jesus?
4. What was the difference in Jesus' message?

5. What did the priests fear?
6. What had happened to the fig tree?
7. In the daytime, Jesus was in _____, and in the evening He stayed in _____
8. Who is the fig tree symbolic of?
9. Who remembered and reminded Jesus about the fig tree?
10. Jesus answered him and told him to have _____.
11. Why did Jesus tell Peter this?
12. What did Jesus say about moving a mountain?
13. What is the secret to getting our prayers answered?
14. Everything in the world is subject to whom?
15. Why and how can we do the same miracles Jesus did?
16. What did Jesus say when He healed?
17. In verse 25, we are told to do what before we pray?
18. When Jesus was walking in the temple, who came and questioned Jesus?
19. What did they ask Him?
20. What is the author's opinion of why they opposed Jesus?
21. What did Jesus ask them about John the Baptist?
22. What had John taught about Jesus?
23. Why did they not say John was from heaven?
24. Why did they not say John was from men?
25. When they would not answer Jesus, what did He tell them?