

13. The three days in Jerusalem

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Jerusalem at Passover season was the delight of the Jews and the anxiety of the Romans. Thousands of devout Jews from all over the world arrived in the Holy City, their hearts filled with excitement and nationalistic fervor. The population of Jerusalem swallowed up more than three times during the feast, making it necessary for the Roman military units to be on special alert. They lived with the possibility that some Jewish Zealots might try to kill a Roman official or start a riot, and there was always potential for disputes among the various Jewish religious groups.

Into this situation came Jesus with less than seven days remaining before He would be crucified outside the city walls. In this chapter 11, we are going to see Jesus' three days of the last week on this city of God.

A. THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Mark 11:1-11 Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; 2 and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. 3 And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here." 4 So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. 5 But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" 6 And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. 7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. 8 And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' 10 Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" 11 And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.*

On the road Jesus took, a traveler would arrive first at Bethany and then come to Bethphage, about two miles from Jerusalem. The elevation at this point is about 2,600 feet, and from it you have a breathtaking view of the Holy City. The Lord was about to do something He had never done before, something He had repeatedly cautioned others not to do for Him. He was going to permit His followers to give a public demonstration in His honor.

Some skeptics would say, "Jesus was riding a colt. But the prophetic verse from Zech 9:9 says it was a donkey."

Zechariah 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.

That person heard the verse from someone without checking it out thoroughly. But to Jesus, it made no difference that this was an unbroken colt. He was the Creator come into this scene as a Man, and all the animals don't have a problem obeying Him not like human.

This very day that had been foretold by Daniel in Daniel 9:24-27. Exactly 173,880 days after the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Jesus fulfilled this Messianic prophecies on this day.

Previously the adoring crowds followed Him only for what they could get from Him, and most of His audience rejected any kind of personal commitment to Jesus. It was not much different on this day, either. They were welcoming Him as a king who might set them free from the Roman's occupation. The majority of these people didn't understand God's way or the purpose of Jesus' trip to Jerusalem. These are the people who screamed at top of their lungs to crucify Jesus less than a week. They clearly were moved in mob mentality.

Let's turn our attention to our heart for a few moments. Is Jesus your King who reigns in your heart or is He an emergency personnel who gets called in whenever you are in tight corner to bail you out? You cannot have Jesus in somewhere in your heart and let Him out when you need Him and shove Him back in when you don't need Him. Either He reigns over your life or you reign over yours. If you've been running your own show, it is no wonder why your life is a mess. It will stay in that way until you yield your heart to Jesus completely.

While I am at it, I need to talk to you about your praise and worship to Him. We are not here to sing a few of your favorite worship songs before the sermon or give you enough time to come to the church late. If the worship leader didn't choose your favorites, you decide that the worship wasn't good. Whom are we worshipping? Ourselves or God? If it is for God, it really doesn't matter what kind of worship songs we sing. After all, it is all about Jesus, not about us. Don't you agree?

By the way, why did Jesus want to be praised? It was not for His sake. First, He is worthy of our praise. Secondly, while we praise Him we get to have the right perspective about everything. Thirdly, we get to know about our Savior Jesus.

After looking into the temple area, Jesus left the city and spent the night in Bethany, where it was safer and quieter. No doubt He spent time in prayer with His disciples, seeking to prepare them for the difficult week that lay ahead.

B. WHAT, NO FRUIT? YOU ARE OUT

Mark 11:12-14 Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. 13 And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it.

What we are going to see here are the back to back judgements by Jesus against the nation of Israel. In spite of its many privileges and opportunities, Israel was outwardly fruitless symbolized as the fig tree and inwardly corrupt also symbolized as the temple.

This fig tree had a presence of leaves which meant a presence of its fruits, but there was none. Jesus is warning us about outward appearance of spirituality, yet inside empty.

2 Timothy 3:5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Many people in the Body of Christ pretend or even deceive themselves to be spiritual while they are far from Jesus. If you are one of them, please take this warning into your heart.

C. THE TEMPLE CLEANSING

Mark 11:15-19 So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 16 And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. 17 Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. 19 When evening had come, He went out of the city.

This is not the only time Jesus cleansed the temple. He had cleansed the temple during His first Passover visit according to John 2:13-22. But the results had been temporary. It was not long before the religious leaders permitted the money changers and the merchants to sneak back in.

The merchants, in cooperation with the priests, robbed the worshippers by forcing them to purchase "approved" sacrificial animals and currencies at inflated prices. Every Jewish male had to pay a yearly temple tax – an amount equaling about two days pay. It had to be paid in the currency of the temple, and the money exchangers would change you your money for the temple money, and they did it at outrageous rates.

This "religious market" was set up in the court of the Gentiles, the one place where the Jews should have been busy doing serious missionary work. The court of the Gentiles should have been a place for praying, but it was instead a place for preying and paying.

Let's stop here and look at our own temple that is our own heart where the Holy Spirit resides. When Jesus came into our hearts, He cleansed them. Before long, the sins start to creep back in, because we allow them. Soon our hearts are riddled with spiritual carnal garbage that needs another cleansing from Jesus.

If we can see our spiritual bodies in this room, we would be gasping in surprise and regret. The only time the majority of Christians have any contact with their Bible is when they come to church. That means that they don't do daily devotions and prayers to the Lord. It is no wonder why they get tempted and fall for it.

D. THE FAITH THAT MOVES A MOUNTAIN

Mark 11:20-24 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." 22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. 23 For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. 24 Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Can you imagine if there were Green Earth Environmentalists around Jesus while He curse and killed that fig tree? They would have a major hissy fit.

This is the third day for Jesus in Jerusalem.

In Jewish imagery, a mountain signifies something strong and immovable, a problem that stands in the way. We only can move these mountains by trusting God.

We must be careful not to isolate this portion from the rest of Scripture. Prayer must be in the will of God, and the one praying must be abiding in the love of God.

1 John 5:14-15 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

Prayer is not an emergency measure that we turn to when we have a problem. Real prayer is a part of our constant communion with God and worship of God.

E. NO FORGIVENESS WITHOUT FORGIVENESS

Mark 11:25-26 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

True prayer involves forgiveness as well as faith. I must be in fellowship with both my Father in heaven and my brothers and sisters on earth if God is to answer my prayers. We do not earn God's blessing by forgiving one another.

The person who does not forgive others is a prisoner of his own bitterness. Our bitterness comes from dissatisfaction against what God does against the one we have problems with. In other words, bitterness is sin against God. The only way can be freed from any bitterness is forgiving that person. Forgiveness is an essential and mandatory in Christian life.

However, it doesn't mean that everything has to be restored as if nothing happened before.

F. THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

Mark 11:27-33 Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. 28 And they said to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?" 29 But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: 30 The baptism of John--was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me." 31 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 32 But if we say, 'From men'"--they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. 33 So they answered and said to Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

These bloodhounds of hatred are resisting Jesus at every turn. They challenged His authority and sought to destroy Him. Jesus knew what they were doing, so He countered their question with another question and exposed their hypocrisy.

When Jesus asked them to answer the question regarding John the Baptist, He was not evading their question. As a matter of fact, He was leading them into the truth, because if John was from God, then he was Jesus the Messiah. If what John said was true, then Jesus had all authority as the Messiah.

In today's world, no one wants to be told what to do and the question the authority of anyone who tells them what to do. However, no matter how we feel, there is an absolute and final authority in this universe. That is not Buddha, that is not Allah, nor some New Age guru from a twilight zone, nor yourself. All of us should recognize and submit to God's authority to tell us what to do. You can argue and fight against Him, but I guarantee you that you will ultimately lose.

G. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Walking with Christ requires daily devotion, prayers and daily cleansing through the blood of Jesus by confession of our sins to Him.
- 2) We might be able to fool others with our spiritual piety, but God cannot be fooled nor mocked.
- 3) Our prayer must be in the will of God and we must be abiding in the love of God.