

March 17, 2024

Steps—Mark, Chapter 11-13

Jerusalem Lessons



Jesus enters Jerusalem with much fanfare and celebration. He spends a week teaching the people and warning them of things to come. Imagine yourself witnessing the events and listening to the messages.

Arrival

Jesus is not a theologian taught by a renowned rabbi, he has no priestly pedigree, he is not recognized by certified religious authorities. Yet, when he enters Jerusalem, he is celebrated as the Messiah, a conquering hero, an amazing teacher, and the hope of the people.

Read Mark 11:1-21.

- What is significant about the way Jesus arrived?
- Explain how the fig tree is a metaphor for the nation of Israel.
- Why does the incident in the temple seem out of character for Jesus and yet exactly right?

Read Mark 11:22-33.

- What is Jesus' lesson about faith? How does it relate to us?
- Why did the authorities at the temple decide to say they "didn't know"? What does this tell you about their motives and priorities?
- How does this interaction become a lesson for the leaders of our Christian faith?

Teachings and Traps

Jesus spends most of his time in Jerusalem teaching the people and the disciples. The authorities try desperately to trap him by asking tricky questions, but Jesus knows their hearts and how to reply with another lesson.

Read Mark 12:1-12. In this parable the owner is God, the Vineyard is the nation of Israel, the tenants are the Jewish people, the servants are the prophets, and the son is Jesus.

- What is Jesus predicting will happen? Who are the new tenants?
- How should we take care of what God has blessed us with?

Two traps are laid for Jesus. The Pharisees and Herodians are on opposite sides of the tax issue. When Jesus picks a side they can label him for or against Rome and split his support. The Sadducees

and the Pharisees believed differently about resurrection. Making Jesus take sides would again split his support.

Read Mark 12:13-27.

- Note how the Pharisees and Herodians use flattery with Jesus. Give an example of how flattery is used in advertising and sales today. Why is it successful?
- How does Jesus avoid their trap? What does his answer mean to us today?
- The Sadducees are a small sect of the upper class in Jerusalem made up of wealthy and sophisticated men. They have a powerful influence over both politics and religion at this time. They only accept the five books of Moses (Torah), reject oral tradition, and deny that there is resurrection after death. Their beliefs set them at odds with the Pharisees and the common Jews. How does Jesus turn the tables on them without taking sides?
- What is Jesus' answer to their dispute and how does it speak to us today?
- How do we rise above the divisions of business, religion, and politics and fix our eyes on Jesus?

Next a teacher of Mosaic law asks a question. (Keep in mind that devout Jews had 613 commandments to obey.) This question is probably asked for clarification and to test Jesus' wisdom rather than trap him. The teacher is showing respect when he addresses Jesus as teacher.

Read Mark 12:28-34.

- What is the question and what is the answer?
- How does the teacher demonstrate his closeness to God? What was the final step he needed to take to enter God's kingdom?
- Do you know anyone who needs to take that final step? Pray for them.

Jesus then teaches two more important lessons.

Read Mark 12: 28-44.

- In verses 35-40 Jesus explains the dual nature of the Messiah—human and divine. He uses Psalm 110:1 to make his point. How would you explain this to someone else?
- What is the warning that came with this lesson? How does it apply to us?
- The Shopharoth is a trumpet shaped metal funnel/bowl for collecting offerings. Since only coins were used as money in those days, just imagine the sound of a bag of coins being dumped into it. This is a great way to show off your wealth and generosity. How does Jesus use this opportunity as a lesson on giving?
- How does God view our offerings?
- Why is how we give more important than what we give?

Predictions and Warnings

In the scripture below, Jesus starts with an innocent observation of the amazing size and splendor of the temple and ends with a dire warning that all this will be destroyed.

Read Mark 13:1-27.

- What does Jesus predict?
- When the disciples ask when it will happen, Jesus reveals some more disturbing information. How would you react to hearing this?

- The “abomination that causes desolation” is mentioned twice in the book of Daniel (vs 9:27 & 11:31) as part of his prophecy. Some scholars say that it refers to the altar to Zeus that Antiochus Epiphanes built on the site of the temple after its destruction by Romans in AD 70. Others say that it is an end-times prophecy. Others say both. What is the message about the future of Israel?
- Who are the elect? Why are their days shortened? What does that mean?
- What deceit will try to fool the elect? What signs will signal the return of Christ? What does this prophecy mean to you?

Israelites know that when a fig tree begins to grow leaves then summer is coming and the harvest will follow. The fig leaves represent the signs Jesus mentions.

Read Mark 13:28-37.

Verse 30 is often confusing because it says things will be fulfilled during the listeners’ lifetimes. Part of the prophecy is fulfilled in AD 70 with the destruction of the temple and the pagan worship on its grounds. This would have occurred in some of the listeners’ lifetimes. Other scholars suggest that “this generation” means “this race of Jews.” Thus it means that there will still be Jews around when Jesus returns.

- What is the message of the fig tree?
- How does verse 31 give the listeners hope?
- What is the message in the story of the master and his house?
- How can we stay awake and be on guard?

Take Action

Which lesson in these chapters surprised you the most? Why? What new insight did you gain from that lesson? How can you apply it to your life? Write your answers here: