

## EASTERN CHRISTIAN BIBLE CLASS

### Gospel of St. Mark

#### Chapter 11

ICSB: From this point on, St. Mark devotes the remainder of his Gospel (approximately 1/3) to our Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection.

Read Mk 11:1-6

ICSB 11:1 "Jerusalem" -Jesus now journeys to the Holy City while there would have been thousands of pilgrims arriving for the annual feast of passover.

ICBS 11:1 "Bethphage" -It's interesting that the name unknown city means "house of figs." This foreshadows an upcoming parable.

OBS: According to the Gospel of St. John (Jn 12:1-8), Jesus had entered the Holy City the evening before in nearby Bethany and had a banquet served by Martha and her family, in thanksgiving for His raising of her brother Lazarus from the dead. So all the city of Jerusalem was stirred to a frenzy partly from messianic enthusiasm to welcome him and partly because of this public and dramatic act of raising Lazarus (cf. Jn 11).

ADD: Just as the feast of Tabernacles formed the backdrop for the Transfiguration, notice the entire backdrop for our Lord's passion is the Passover (why Jesus goes to Jerusalem). This is another reason why this feast of our Lord's Resurrection is known as Pascha rather than Easter in our Byzantine Church tradition. Instead of the passover lambs, Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God is the one who takes away the sin of the world.

OBS: It is very likely our Lord had pre-arranged the colt. The animal was probably left at a door out on the street in plain view for the disciples as they entered. They probably needed a password. If challenged with "why are you doing this?" What were they were to respond? A. "The Lord has need of it." This reply would be intentionally ambiguous, since "the Lord" could be interpreted by observers to mean, the owner of the donkey was simply requesting his own animal." P.183

Read Mk 11:7-11

OBS: So at long last our Lord enters Jerusalem in triumph. His entry isn't just triumphant it's symbolic to let the people know His true identity as the Messiah and to show them what kind of Messiah He was.

ICSB v. 7 the colt recalls prophecy in Zechariah (9:9) about the coming messiah. The colt is a symbol of humility as he comes to Israel in "peace" and not on a horse use to lead military battles in war (9:10).

ADD: In other words, "the Messiah will bring peace, not war."

OBS: Not only this but this use of the colt fulfils a messianic prophecy. Num 19:2 stipulated that a heifer used for sacred service must be one on which a yoke had never been placed. By Jesus' coming into Jerusalem on such an animal, He was making a public demonstration that he was Messiah and was here to establish God's Kingdom. P. 180

ICSB v. 8-10 The three details in this story of the triumphal entry are directly tied with Psalm 117 LXX. (1) the use of branches (v. 8) (Ps 117:27), (2) the use of "Hosanna" (v. 9) which is also mentioned in Ps 117:25 "O Lord, save us now," and (3) Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord (v. 9), (Ps 117:26). Jesus goes back to this Psalm in the next chapter (Mk 12:11 ref. the stone which the builder rejected, Ps 117:22-23). So Psalm 117 is a Messianic Psalm that figures greatly in this story.

OBS: As Jesus rode humbly into the city, accompanied by His disciples and a crowd from Bethany, many from Jerusalem saw His approach on the donkey, and immediately grasped its significance. They had hoped He would come for Passover and when they saw Him riding in, in royal pomp, they knew that He was coming to usher in the new Kingdom. So they ran out to meet Him and welcome Him into the city in triumph. P.

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ICSB v. 8 the spreading of the garments is a symbolic gesture for honoring a newly crowned king (4 Kings 9:13); ...carpeting the road before Him. Others cut leafy branches to throw before him, probably for the same reason. P. 181

OBS: The crowd probably swelled with numbers and they exulted in what they felt certain was the coming Kingdom of their father David. So they openly hail Jesus as their Messiah.

OBS: v.9 They cried out "Hosanna," a Hebrew word literally meaning "Lord, save us" [but by this time was used simply as an acclamation like "Hurray"]. P. 182

OBS: Once He entered into Jerusalem He goes to the House of His own Father [recall what "Only-begotten" / "mono-genes" means]. He dismounted His donkey and entered into the Temple.

OBS: "He looked around everywhere" or "at all things" (v.11). Jesus was not there as a tourist or a pilgrim or even like a worshiper but like the Lord coming to His own place, inspecting it as its Lord to see if all was in order, fulfilling a prophesy of Malachi:

"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come into His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom you desire. 'Behold He is coming,' says the Lord Almighty" (Mal 3:1).

Then Jesus returns to Bethany (probably with Martha, Mary and Lazarus).

Read Mk 11:12-14

Note OSB 11:13-14

OBS: On His way from Bethany back to Jerusalem, Jesus sees from a distance a fig tree in leaf. Because He is hungry He goes to it to see whether He can find anything on it to eat (figs normally ripened in mid-August to October). At this time (spring), there would be no figs at all. So the tree's spectacular show of leaves served only to hide its fruitlessness underneath.

OBS: Our Lord does this act to show us that the fig tree represents the People of Israel and their Temple. Like the fig tree, the outward pomp and glory of the Temple that He had seen the other day seemed to draw attention to itself, promising and advertising to the world how pious the Jews were. But just as the leaves of the fig tree hid its fruitlessness, so the

outward glory of the Temple hid the real spiritual fruitlessness of Israel.

ICSB 11:13 Jesus' statement about the fig tree underlines what's most apparent about Israel at his time: it had not born the fruits of repentance. So when Jesus curses it, the death of the tree becomes prophetic of what awaits Jerusalem for rejecting their Messiah.

A similar point is behind Jesus' act of cleansing the temple.

OBS: Q. How do you think Jesus' curse of the fig tree might've sounded to the Apostles? A. They heard the curse and probably thought His words were a little irrational. But they would understand later. p. 184

ADD: Many times, even most times this is true for us as well.

Whatever it is God is doing in our lives often seems irrational and senseless. This is where faith and trust in God comes in. Its like visiting a building construction site. Explain.

Read Mk 11:15-19

Note OSB Mt 21:12-13

OBS: When Jesus comes to the Temple what does He find?

A. It was Not a place of spiritual faithfulness and fruitfulness but of worldliness and greed. One of the main problems with these tables and markets was that they were located within the Temple itself, in the Court of the Gentiles. This was a fairly recent development, having been established there as recently as about AD 30. The Gentiles were not permitted to enter the inner courts of the Temple.

It was punishable by death for them to enter into the Court of the Women or the Court of the Israelites beyond that. P. 184

ICSB; (v. 17) House of Prayer for All Nations is a reference to the Prophet Isaiah (56:7).

OBS: The only place that these Gentiles had to pray in, as they came from all the nations of the world, was the outer Court of the Gentiles, and it was just here that these markets had been lately set up. The Gentiles were hindered in their communion with the God of Israel, and unable to pray in peace because of the commotion and noise that inevitably accompanied any Eastern bazaar or marketplace. P. 184

OBS: Our Lord's concern is to restore proper sanctity to this holy place. Notice even those who carry vessels through the Temple (v. 16), using it as a shortcut, are refused access. P. 184-185

OBS: The Temple was supposed to be a universal witness to the God of Israel, Who called all the world to Himself. But it was no witness to the Gentiles at all. The very place set aside for them had been co-opted for base commerce. P. 185

ADD: So, in other words, even though this space was designated by God for the Gentiles to pray to Him, it was like the Israelites were saying, we don't really want you here. We don't really want you coming to our God. Q. Does this have any application to us welcoming other people to God through our Church?

ADD: Also we have to ensure our Temples don't become anything but places of worship of God and we have to remember that our own personal corruption can hinder the work of God.

Jesus' act of cleansing the Temple was a defiant challenge to the chief-priests & scribes' authority, and they burned with anger. But they didn't dare yet show it. Instead what do they do in (v. 18). A.

They could only meet secretly and discuss how they could destroy Him.

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Read Mk 11:20-21

Note OSB Mk 11:20-21

ADD: This meaning of this parable about Israel is also a warning for us as the Church which is called in Scripture, the New Israel. If we don't live lives that are fruitful to God, we will very likely end up the same way as that fruitless fig tree.

Read Mk 11:22-26

OBS: Peter mentions this to Jesus (v. 21) probably b/c he marvels at the miracle like it is something beyond understanding. Q. What is Jesus' response (v. 22)? "Have faith in God." The Lord is trying to help them understand that although they may think they could never do such wonders, they will do even greater wonders than these (so much greater than moving mountains are to a tree withering).

ICSB "this mountain" is probably a ref to Mt. Zion where Jerusalem stands. This saying of Jesus shows the power unleashed through prayer.

[On moving mountains, skip] Note OSB Mt 21:21

OBS: "Be taken up and cast into the sea..." the Dead Sea was nearby and perhaps even visible to them. Jesus is telling them (and us) God's power in His Church will be limited by nothing except their doubt (and our own).

Note OSB Mt 6:14-15 [on mutual forgiveness]

OBS: All of this miraculous "mountain moving" depends on our having pure hearts. So Jesus tells them (and us) whenever they stand praying (which was the universal posture for prayer -still is in the Byzantine Church), they must forgive all offenses, if they have anything against anyone. P. 187. ADD: This applies to us too if we are to be followers of Jesus.

Read Mk 11:27-33

OBS: Before in the temple the chief-priests and scribes had been caught off guard by Jesus' boldness. But now they are ready to confront Him. They were offended b/c they were the ones charged by God to keep order in His Holy House. Who did Jesus think He was to challenge and override this authority? P. 188

OBS: But Jesus' simple reply and question is a problem for them b/c they cared too greatly about how they looked in the eyes of others (and they feared for their own safety). P. 188

ICSB 11:30 If they deny that John's ministry is from heaven, they will lose their approval of the people, but if they say his authority is from heaven, they are guilty of ignoring god's plan for everyone's salvation.

Note OSB [Skip Lk 7:29-30;] Mt 21:23-27;

Q. So what do they say? A. We don't know. In other words, "no comment." Although they **came out boldly to challenge Jesus to His face, they were now confounded to "no comment"** and embarrassed They probably were being laughed at by the crowd as they retreated in humiliation.

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**"With God all things are possible... We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us... Woe to us if we do not preach the Gospel."**