

# CHAPTER 11

We are now come to the Passion-Week, the week in which Christ died, and the great occurrences of that week.

- I. Christ's riding in triumph into Jerusalem (v. 1-11).
- II. His cursing the barren fig-tree (v. 12-14).
- III. His driving those out of the temple that turned it into an exchange (v. 15-19).
- IV. His discourse with his disciples concerning the power of faith and the efficacy of prayer, on occasion of the withering of the fig-tree he cursed (v. 20-26).
- V. His reply to those who questioned his authority (v. 27-33).

## ◀▶ MARK 11:1-11

### CHRIST'S ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM

We have here the story of the public entry Christ made into Jerusalem, four or five days before his death. And he came into town thus remarkably,

1. To show that he was not afraid of the power and malice of his enemies in Jerusalem. He did not steal into the city *incognito*, as one that durst not show his face; no, they needed not send spies to search for him, he comes in with observation. This would be an encouragement to his disciples that were timorous, and cowed at the thought of their enemies' power and rage; let them see how bravely their Master sets them all at defiance.
2. To show that he was not cast down or disquieted at the thoughts of his approaching sufferings. He came, not only publicly, but cheerfully, and with acclamations of joy. Though he was now but taking the field, and *girding on the harness*, yet, being fully assured of a complete victory, he thus triumphs as though he had put it off.

I. The *outside* of this triumph was very *mean*; he rode upon an ass's *colt*, which being an ass, looked contemptible, and made no figure; and, being

but a *colt*, *whereon never man sat*, we may suppose, was rough and untrimmed, and not only so, but rude and ungovernable, and would disturb and disgrace the solemnity. This *colt* was borrowed too. Christ went upon the water in a *borrowed* boat, ate the passover in a *borrowed* chamber, was buried in a *borrowed* sepulchre, and here rode on a *borrowed* ass. Let not Christians scorn to be beholden one to another, and, when need is, to go a borrowing, for our Master did not. He had no rich trappings; they threw their clothes upon the colt, and so he *sat upon him*, v. 7. The persons that attended, were mean people; and all the show they could make, was, by *spreading their garments in the way* (v. 8), as they used to do at the feast of tabernacles. All these were marks of his humiliation; even when he would be taken notice of, he would be taken notice of for his meanness; and they are instructions to us, not to *mind high things*, but to *condescend to them of low estate*. How ill doth it become Christians to *take state*, when Christ was so far from affecting it!

**II.** The *inside* of this triumph was very *great*; not only as it was the fulfilling of the scripture (which is not taken notice of here, as it is in Matthew), but as there were several rays of Christ's glory shining forth in the midst of all this meanness.

**1.** Christ showed his knowledge of things distant, and his power over the wills of men, when he sent his disciples for the colt, v. 1-3. By this it appears that he can *do every thing*, and *no thought can be withholden from him*.

**2.** He showed his dominion over the *creatures* in riding on a *colt that was never backed*. The subjection of the inferior part of the creation to man is spoken of with application to Christ (~~PS~~ Psalm 8:5, 6, compared with ~~HE~~ Hebrews 2:8); for to him it is owing, and to his mediation, that we have any remaining benefit by the grant God made to man, of a sovereignty in this lower world, ~~GE~~ Genesis 1:28. And perhaps Christ, in riding the ass's colt, would give a shadow of his power over the spirit of man, who is born as the *wild ass's colt*, ~~JI~~ Job 11:12.

**3.** The colt was brought from a place *where two ways met* (v. 4), as if Christ would show that he came to direct those into the right way, who had *two ways* before them, and were in danger of taking the wrong.

**4.** Christ received the joyful *hosannas* of the people; that is, both the *welcome* they gave him and their *good wishes* to the prosperity of his

kingdom, v. 9. It was God that put it into the hearts of these people to cry *Hosanna*, who were not by art and management brought to it, as those were who afterward cried, *Crucify, crucify*. Christ reckons himself honoured by the faith and praises of the multitude, and it is God that brings people to do him this honour beyond their own intentions.

(1.) They *welcomed his person* (v. 9); *Blessed is he that cometh*, the *homerchomenos*, *he that should come*, so often promised, so long expected; he comes *in the name of the Lord*, as God's Ambassador to the world; *Blessed be he*: let him have our applauses, and best affections; he is a *blessed Saviour*, and brings blessings to us, and blessed be he that sent him. Let him be *blessed in the name of the Lord*, and let all nations and ages call him *Blessed*, and think and speak highly and honourably of him.

(2.) They *wished well to his intent*, v. 10. They believed that, mean a figure as he made, he had a *kingdom*, which should shortly be set up in the world, that it was the kingdom of *their father David* (that father of his country), the kingdom promised to him and his seed for ever; a kingdom that came *in the name of the Lord*, supported by a divine authority. *Blessed be this kingdom*; let it take place, let it get ground, let it come in the power of it, and let all opposing rule, principality, and power, be put down; let it go on *conquering, and to conquer*. *Hosanna* to this kingdom; prosperity be to it; all happiness attend it. The proper signification of *hosanna* is that which we find, <sup>(66)</sup>Revelation 7:10. *Salvation to our God, that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb*; success to religion, both *natural and revealed, Hosanna in the highest*. Praises be to our God, who is in the *highest heavens* over all, God blessed for ever; or, Let him be praised by his angels, that are *in the highest heavens*, let our *hosannas* be an echo to theirs.

Christ, thus *attended*, thus *applauded*, came into the city, and went directly *to the temple*. Here was no banquet of wine prepared for his entertainment, nor the least refreshment; but he immediately applied himself to his work, for that was his *meat and drink*. He went *to the temple*, that the scripture might be fulfilled; "*The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, without sending any immediate notice before him; he shall surprise you with a day of visitation, for he shall be like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap,*" <sup>(30)</sup>Malachi 3:1-3. He came to the temple, and took a view of the present state of it, v. 11. He *looked round about upon all things*, but as yet said nothing. He saw many

disorders there, but *kept silence*, ~~(XVI)~~ Psalm 50:21. Though he intended to suppress them, he would not go about the doing of it all *on a sudden*, lest he should seem to have done it *rashly*; he let things be as they were for this night, intending the next morning to apply himself to the necessary reformation, and to take the day before him. We may be confident that God sees all the wickedness that is in the world, though he do not presently reckon for it, nor cast it out. Christ, having made his remarks upon what he saw in the temple, retired in the evening to a friend's house at Bethany, because there he would be more out of the noise of the town, and out of the way of being suspected, a designing to head a faction.

## ~~(XVII)~~ MARK 11:12-26

### THE BARREN FIG-TREE CURSED

Here is,

**I.** Christ's cursing the fruitless fig-tree. He had a convenient resting-place at Bethany, and therefore thither he went at resting-time; but his work lay at Jerusalem, and thither therefore he returned in the morning, at working-time; and so intent was he upon his work, that he went out from Bethany without breakfast, which, before he was gone far, he found the want of, and *was hungry* (v. 12), for he was subject to all the sinless infirmities of our nature. Finding himself in want of food, he went to a *fig-tree*, which he saw at some distance, and which being well *adorned* with green leaves he hoped to find *enriched* with some sort of fruit. But he *found nothing but leaves*; he hoped to find some fruit, *for though the time of gathering in figs was near, it was not yet*; so that it could not be pretended that it had had fruit, but that it was gathered and gone; for the season had not yet arrived. Or, He found none, for indeed *it was not a season of figs*, it was no good fig-year. But this was worse than any fig-tree, for there was not so much as one fig to be found upon it, though it was so full of leaves. However, Christ was willing to make an example of it, not to the *trees*, but to the *men*, of that generation, and therefore cursed it with that curse which is the reverse of the first blessing, *Be fruitful*; he said unto it, *Never let any man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever*, v. 14. *Sweetness and good fruit* are, in Jotham's parable, the honour of the *fig-tree* (~~(XVIII)~~ Judges 9:11), and its serviceableness therein to man, preferable to the preferment of

being *promoted over the trees*; now to be deprived of that, was a grievous *curse*. This was intended to be a type and figure of the doom passed upon the Jewish church, to which he came, *seeking fruit, but found none* (<sup><4136></sup>Luke 13:6, 7); and though it was not, according to the doom in the parable, immediately cut down, yet, according to this in the history, *blindness and hardness* befel them (<sup><5118></sup>Romans 11:8, 25), so that they were from henceforth *good for nothing*. The *disciples heard* what sentence Christ passed on this tree, and took notice of it. Woes from Christ's mouth are to be observed and kept in mind, as well as blessings.

**II.** His clearing the temple of the market-people that frequented it, and of those that made it a thoroughfare. We do not find that Christ met with food elsewhere, when he missed of it on the fig-tree; but the zeal of God's house so ate him up, and made him forget himself, that he came, hungry as he was, to Jerusalem, and went straight to the temple, and began to reform those abuses which the day before he had marked out; to show that when the Redeemer came to Zion, his errand was, *to turn away ungodliness from Jacob* (<sup><5116></sup>Romans 11:26), and that he came not, as he was falsely accused, to *destroy* the temple, but to purify and refine it, and reduce his church to its primitive rectitude.

**1.** He cast out the *buyers and sellers, overthrew the tables of the money-changers* (and threw the money to the ground, the fitter place for it), and threw down the *seats of them that sold doves*. This he did as one having authority, as *a Son in his own house*. The filth of the daughter of Zion is purged away, not by might, nor by power, but by *the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning*. And he did it without opposition; for what he did, was manifested to be right and good, even in the consciences of those that had connived at it, and countenanced it, because they got money by it. Note, It may be some encouragement to zealous reformers, that frequently the purging out of corruptions, and the correcting of abuses, prove an easier piece of work than was apprehended. Prudent attempts sometimes prove successful beyond expectation, and there are not those lions *found* in the way, that were feared to be.

**2.** He *would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel, any sort of goods or wares, through the temple, or any of the courts of it*, because it was the nearer way, and would save them the labour of going about, v. 16. The Jews owned that it was one of the instances of honour due to the

temple, not to make the mountain of the house, or the court of the Gentiles, a road, or common passage, or to come into it with any bundle.

**3.** He gave a good reason for this; because it was written, *My house shall be called of all nations, The house of prayer*, v. 17. So it is written, <sup><286></sup>Isaiah 56:7. It shall pass among all people under that character. *It shall be the house of prayer to all nations*; it was so in the first institution of it; when Solomon dedicated it, it was with an eye to the sons of the strangers, <sup><108></sup>1 Kings 8:41. And it was prophesied that it should be yet more so. Christ will have the temple, as a type of the gospel-church, to be,

**(1.)** *A house of prayer.* After he had turned out the oxen and doves, which were things for sacrifice, he revived the appointment of it as a *house of prayer*, to teach us that when all sacrifices and offerings should be abolished, the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise should continue and remain for ever.

**(2.)** That it should be so *to all nations*, and not to the people of the Jews only; for *whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved*, though not of the seed of Jacob, according to the flesh. It was therefore insufferable for them to *make it a den of thieves*, which would prejudice those nations against it, whom they should have invited to it. When Christ drove out the buyers and sellers at the beginning of his ministry, he only charged them with making the temple a *house of merchandise* (<sup><416></sup>John 2:16); but now he chargeth them with making it a *den of thieves*, because since then they had twice gone about to stone him in the temple (<sup><408></sup>John 8:59; 10:31), or because the traders there were grown notorious for cheating their customers, and imposing upon the ignorance and necessity of the country people, which is no better than downright thievery. Those that suffer vain worldly thoughts to lodge within them when they are at their devotions, turn the *house of prayer* into a *house of merchandise*; but they that make long prayers for pretence to devour widows' houses, turn it into a *den of thieves*.

**4.** The scribes and the chief priests were extremely nettled at this, v. 18. They hated him, and hated to be reformed by him; and yet they *feared him*, lest he should next overthrow *their* seats, and expel *them*, being conscious to themselves of the profaning and abusing of their power. They found that he had a great interest, that *all the people were astonished at his doctrine*, and that every thing he said, was an oracle and a law to them; and what durst *he* not attempt, what could *he* not effect, being thus supported? They

therefore sought, not how he might make their peace with him, but *how they might destroy him*. A desperate attempt, and which, one would think, they themselves could not but fear was *fighting against God*. But they care not what they do, to support their own power and grandeur.

**III.** His discourse with his disciples, upon occasion of the fig-tree's withering away which he had cursed. At *even*, as usual, he *went out of the city* (v. 19), to Bethany; but it is probable that it was in the dark, so that they could not see the fig-tree; but the next morning, as they *passed by*, they observed the *fig-tree dried up from the roots*, v. 20. More is *included* many times in Christ's curses than is *expressed*, as appears by the effects of them. The curse was no more than that it should never bear fruit again, but the effect goes further, *it is dried up from the roots*. If it bear no fruit, it shall bear no leaves to cheat people. Now observe,

**1.** How the disciples were affected with it. Peter remembered Christ's words, and said, with surprise, *Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away*, v. 21. Note, Christ's curses have wonderful effects, and make those to wither presently, that flourished like the green bay-tree. *Those whom he curseth are cursed indeed*. This represented the character and state of the Jewish church; which, from henceforward, was a tree dried up from the roots; no longer fit for food, but for fuel only. The first establishment of the Levitical priesthood was ratified and confirmed by the miracle of a *dry rod*, which in *one night* budded, and blossomed, and brought forth almonds (<sup>CHITOS</sup> Numbers 17:8), a happy omen of the fruitlessness and flourishing of that priesthood. And now, by a contrary miracle, the expiration of that priesthood was signified by a flourishing tree dried up in a night; the just punishment of those priests that had abused it. And this seemed very strange to the disciples, and scarcely credible, that the Jews, who had been so long God's own, his only professing people in the world, should be thus abandoned; they could not imagine how that *fig-tree* should *so soon wither away*: but this comes of rejecting Christ, and being rejected by him.

**2.** The good instructions Christ gave them from it; for of *those* even this *withered* tree was *fruitful*.

**(1.)** Christ teacheth them from hence to *pray in faith* (v. 22); *Have faith in God*. They admired the power of Christ's word of command; "Why," said Christ, "a lively active faith would put as great a power into your prayers,

v. 23, 24. *Whosoever shall say to this mountain, this mount of Olives, Be removed, and be cast into the sea; if he has but any word of God, general or particular, to build his faith upon, and if he shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith, according to the warrant he has from what God hath said, shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith.*” Through the strength and power of God in Christ, the greatest difficulty shall be got over, and the thing shall be effected. And therefore (v. 24), “*What things soever ye desire, when ye pray believe that ye shall receive them; nay, believe that ye do receive them, and he that has power to give them, saith, Ye shall have them. I say unto you, Ye shall,* v. 24. *Verily I say unto you, Ye shall,*” v. 23. Now this is to be applied,

[1.] To that *faith of miracles* which the apostles and first preachers of the gospel were endued with, which did wonders in *things natural*, healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out devils; these were, in effect, the removing of mountains. The apostles speak of a faith which would do that, and yet might be found where holy love was not, <sup><41D></sup>1 Corinthians 13:2.

[2.] It may be applied to that *miracle of faith*, which all true Christians are endued with, which doeth wonders in *things spiritual*. *It justifies us* (<sup><41D></sup>Romans 5:1), and so removes the mountains of guilt, and casts them into the *depths of the sea*, never to rise up in judgment against us, <sup><37D></sup>Micah 7:19. It *purifies* the heart (<sup><41D></sup>Acts 15:9), and so removes mountains of corruption, and *makes them plains* before the grace of God, <sup><30D></sup>Zechariah 4:7. It is by faith that the world is conquered, Satan's fiery darts are quenched, a soul is crucified with Christ, and yet lives; by faith we set the Lord always before us, and see him that is invisible, and have him present to our minds; and this is effectual to remove mountains, for at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, the mountains were not only moved, but removed, <sup><1B0A></sup>Psalms 114:4-7.

(2.) To this is added here that necessary qualification of the prevailing prayer, that we freely forgive those who have been any way injurious to us, and be in charity with all men (v. 25, 26); *When ye stand praying, forgive.* Note, Standing is no improper posture for prayer; it was generally used among the Jews; hence they called their prayers, their *standings*; when they would say how the world was *kept up* by prayer, they expressed it thus, *Stationibus stat mundus* — *The world is held up by standings*. But the primitive Christians generally used more humble and reverent gesture of kneeling, especially on fast days, though not on Lord's days. When we



are at prayer, we must remember to pray for others, particularly for our enemies, and those that have wronged us; now we cannot pray sincerely that God would do them good, if we bear malice to them, and wish them ill. If we have injured others before we pray, we must go and *be reconciled to them*; ~~4123~~ Matthew 5:23, 24. But if they have injured us, we go a nearer way to work, and must immediately from our hearts *forgive* them.

[1.] Because this is a *good step* towards obtaining the *pardon* of our own sins: *Forgive*, that *your Father may forgive you*; that is, “that he may be qualified to receive forgiveness, that he may forgive you without injury to his honour, as it would be, if he should suffer those to have such benefit by his mercy, as are so far from being conformable to the pattern of it.”

[2.] Because the want of this is a certain bar to the obtaining of the pardon of our sins; “*If ye do not forgive* those who have injured you, if he hate their persons, bear them a grudge, meditate revenge, and take all occasion to speak ill of them, *neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*” This ought to be remembered in prayer, because one great errand we have to the throne of grace, is, to pray for the pardon of our sins: and care about it ought to be our daily care, because prayer is a part of our daily work. Our Saviour often insists on this, for it was his great design to engage his disciples to love one another.

## ~~4112~~ MARK 11:27-33

### THE PHARISEES NONPLUSSED

We have here Christ examined by the great Sanhedrim concerning his authority; for they claimed a power to call prophets to an account concerning their mission. They came to him when he was *walking in the temple*, not for his diversion, but *teaching* the people, first one company and then another. The Peripatetic philosophers were so called from the custom they had of *walking* when they taught. The cloisters, or piazzas, in the courts of the temple, were fitted for this purpose. The great men were vexed to see him followed and heard with attention, and therefore *came to him* with some solemnity, and did as it were arraign him at the bar with this question, *By what authority doest thou these things?* v. 28. Now observe,

**I.** How they designed hereby to run him aground, and embarrass him. If they could make it out before the people, that he had not a *legal mission*, that he was not duly *ordained*, though he was ever so well qualified, and preached ever so profitably and well, they would tell the people that they *ought not to hear him*. This they made the last refuge of an obstinate unbelief; because they were resolved not to receive his doctrine, they were resolved to find some flaw or other in his commission, and will conclude it invalid, if it be not produced and ratified in their court. Thus the Papists resolve their controversy with us very much into the mission of our ministers, and if they have but any pretence to overthrow that, they think they have gained their point, though we have the scripture ever so much on our side. But this is indeed a question, which all that act either as magistrates or ministers, ought to be furnished with a good answer to, and often put to themselves, *By what authority do I these things? For how can men preach except they be sent? Or how can they act with comfort, or confidence, or hope of success, except they be authorized?* <sup>223</sup>Jeremiah 23:32.

**II.** How he effectually ran them aground, and embarrassed them, with this question, “What are your thoughts concerning *the baptism of John? Was it from heaven, or of men?* By what authority did John preach, and baptize, and gather disciples? *Answer me*, v. 30. Deal fairly and ingenuously, and give a categorical answer, one way or the other.” By this resolve of *their* question into *this*, our Saviour intimates how near akin his doctrine and baptism were to John's; they had the same original, and the same design and tendency — to introduce the gospel kingdom. Christ might with the better grace put this question to *them*, because they had sent a committee of their own house to examine John, <sup>418</sup>John 1:19. “Now,” saith Christ, “what was the result of your enquiries concerning him?”

They knew what they *thought* of this question; they could not but think that *John Baptist* was a man sent of God. But the difficulty was, what they should *say to it* now. Men that oblige not themselves to speak *as they think* (which is a certain rule) cannot avoid perplexing themselves thus.

**1.** If they own the baptism of John to be *from heaven*, as really it was, they *shame themselves*; for Christ will presently turn it upon them, *Why did ye not then believe him*, and receive his baptism? They could not bear that Christ should say this, but they could bear it that their own consciences should say so, because they had an art of stifling and silencing them, and

because what conscience said, though it might gall and grate them a little, would not *shame them*; and then *they* would do well enough, who looked no further than Saul's care, when he was convicted, *Honour me now before this people*, <sup>4950</sup>1 Samuel 15:30.

2. If they say, "*It is of men*, he was not sent of God, but his doctrine and baptism were inventions of his own," they *expose themselves*, the people will be ready to do them a mischief, or a least clamour upon them; for *all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed*, and therefore they could not bear that he should be reflected on. Note, There is a carnal slavish fear, which not only wicked subjects but wicked rulers likewise are liable to, which God makes use of as a means to keep the world in some order, and to suppress *violence*, that it shall not always *grow up into a rod of wickedness*. Now by this dilemma to which Christ brought them,

(1.) They were confounded and baffled, and forced to make a dishonourable retreat; to pretend ignorance — *We cannot tell* (and that was mortification enough to those proud men), but really to discover the greatest malice and wilfulness. What Christ did by his wisdom, we must labour to do by our well doing — *put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*, <sup>4025</sup>1 Peter 2:15.

(2.) Christ came off with honour, and justified himself in refusing to give them an answer to their imperious demand; *Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things*. They did not deserve to be told; for it was plain that they contended not for truth, but victory; nor did *he* need to *tell them*, for the works which he did, told them plainly that he had authority from God to do what he did; since no man could do those miracles which he did unless God were with him. Let them wait but three or four days, and his resurrection shall tell them who gave him his authority, for by that he will be *declared to be the Son of God with power*, as by their rejecting of him, notwithstanding, they will be declared to be the enemies of God.