

Mark: The Mysterious Messiah

Week 21: Mark 11:1-11:33

Introductory Exercise: What were the main purposes of the Jerusalem Temple?

As Jesus approaches Jerusalem, what wordplay does he employ to get the colt? Although Mark (unlike Matthew) does not quote any Bible here, what Bible passage does Jesus seem to be enacting? What Bible passage do the crowds invoke when they call out upon his entry? What does the rather anticlimactic ending of the episode in 11:11 tell you about the entrance as the book of Mark imagines it?

Mark 11:12-11:25 form what Bible scholars call an “inclusio” (not unlike Mark 5:21-43 and Mark 6:7-44), a story framed by a story that helps the reader interpret the story-in-the-middle. What famous episode is the middle-story, and how does the curse of the fig tree comment on it? Within the Temple story itself, what Bible teaching moves Jesus to overturn the tables, and what contrasting reality contradicts what the Bible calls for? What are *lestai*, and why is that word important?

In Mark 11:23, which mountain is most likely “this mountain”? How do the teachings on prayer in 11:24 and 11:25 relate to one another? How do these teachings on prayer relate to other things that Jesus teaches about the coming Kingdom of God? Does your Bible have a Mark 11:26?

When Jesus returns to the Temple, what question do the Temple authorities use to confront him, and what question does he ask in return? What do the officials' deliberations disclose about their relationships to John the Baptist, to Jesus, and to the volatile Jewish world of the first century?