



## 9. Mark 11:1–13:37

Byzantine icon of Christ entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday

The Triumphal Entry and the Weeklong Jerusalem Ministry begins the final act of the Marcan drama, the Climax in Jerusalem

## Structure

- **Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem** (11:1–12:44)
  - Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday, 11:1–11)
  - Cursing of the Fig Tree and the Cleansing of the Temple (Monday, 11:12–19)
  - Exhortations (Tuesday, 11:22–25)
  - Six Interrogations in the Temple (11:27–12:37)
  - The scribes and the widow (12:38–44)
- **Jesus' Prophecies of End** (13:1–37)
  - "The Little Apocalypse"

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## The Triumphal Entry (11:1–11)

### Geographic References

- **Bethany**
  - 2 miles southeast of Jerusalem (close to Bethpage, where Jesus' disciples found the colt, within a Sabbath's day journey of 2,000 cubits)
  - Home of close disciples (other gospels tell us Lazarus, Mary, and Martha)
- **Mount of Olives**
  - Hill east of Jerusalem
  - Associated with defeat (2 Sam 15:13–30, David fleeing Absalom)
  - God's presence left the Temple before its destruction by the Babylonians by passing over the Mount of Olives (Ezekiel 10–11)
  - Associated with eschatological triumph (Zechariah 14:4)
- **Jerusalem and the Temple Mount**

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## The Triumphal Entry

### Symbols

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  - Donkey colt (Zechariah 9:9); cf. unyoked, consecrated animals in the OT
  - Spreading of clothing and tree branches: *reminiscent of royal and festal processions*
  - *Hosanna*: "[God] save us now!"
- Christ recognized as the Son of David by **the masses**
  - Urban population analogous to the Galilean *'am Ha'aretz*
    - Opposed to the Sadducean establishment and to some extent the Pharisees
  - Still influenced by political messianic expectations

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## The Fig Tree and the Temple

(11:12–19, dramatic episode with a miracle story)

- The stories are interwoven, each interpreting the other
  - Matthew and Luke have the cleansing of the temple immediately after Jesus' entry
  - Mark seems to have moved it to Monday, allowing an **intercalation** (a "sandwich") with the story of the fig tree
- **Fruitless fig tree cursed opens the frame** (11:12–14)
  - Israel likened to a fruitless fig tree by OT prophets (e.g. Jeremiah 8:13; Hosea 9:10)
- **Cleansing of the Temple** (11:15–19)
  - Emphasizes the sanctity that should obtain (11:17)
  - Also serves as a symbolic prophecy of the temple's destruction (cf. 13:1-2; 14:57-58)
- **The withered fig Tree Tuesday morning closes the frame** (11:20–21)
  - The temple misused a barren tree ripe for destruction?

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## Exhortations (11:22-25, teaching sayings)

- **On Faith (11:22–24)**
  - "And Jesus answering saith unto them, **Have faith in God**. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith."
  - "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have them."
- **On Forgiveness (11:25–26)**
  - "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. **But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.**"

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## Interrogations in the Temple

(11:27–12:37, controversy narratives)

- **Jesus' Authority Questioned (11:27–33)**
  - Is Jesus being evasive in citing John the Baptist?
- **Parable of the Wicked Tenants (12:1–12)**
  - Directed a chief priests (Sadducees) and elders
- **Question over Paying Taxes (12:13–17)**
  - Pharisees and Herodians pose this question to catch Jesus either way
  - "... He said unto them, 'Whose is this image and superscription?' And they said unto him, 'Caesar's.' And Jesus answering said unto them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they marvelled at him." (12:16–17)
    - The Caesar here would be the Emperor Tiberius

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## Interrogations in the Temple (cont.)

- **Questions about the Resurrection (12:18-27)**
  - Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection
  - The issue is not celestial marriage (cf. D&C 132:15-36)
    - No suggestion that the wife is sealed
    - Sealings presumably must all be done *before* the resurrection
- **The Great Commandments (12:28-34)**
  - "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, **Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** There is none other commandment greater than these." (12:29-31)
    - "Hear, O Israel . . ." began the Jewish *Shema*, or confession of faith (Deut. 6:4)
- **Question about David's Son (12:35-37)**
  - "... and the large crowd was listening to him with delight." (12:37 NRSV)

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## Jesus' Prophecies of the End from the Mount of Olives (13:1-37)

- Calling this "The Little Apocalypse" because of some similarities with Revelation is **misleading**
  - This is a brief **discourse**, containing **prophecies** and **teachings**, set into the narrative
  - Is **not a dramatic vision report with all the characteristics of apocalyptic literature**
    - An apocalypse is usually a visionary tour of world history narrated or guided by a divine being, although perhaps here Jesus *is* the divine being!
  - Probably better called "The Olivet Discourse"
- **Prophecies**
  - Destruction of the Temple Foretold (13:1-8)
  - Persecution Foretold (13:9-13)
  - The "Abomination of Desolation" (13:14-23)
  - The coming of the Son of Man (13:24-27)
- **Teachings**
  - Lesson of the Fig Tree (13:28-31)
  - "Watch ye therefore . . ." (13:32-37)

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## Some Details

- **Destruction of the Temple (13:1-8)**
  - "... Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."
- **The "Abomination of Desolation" (13:14-23)**
  - **Something or someone unholy (not God's) on the site of the temple that prevents proper worship**
    - "the abomination that causes desolation" standing where it does not belong" (NIV)
    - "the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be" (NRSV)
  - Cf. Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11
    - Antiochus III Epiphanes (168 B.C.)
    - Phannai, illegitimate high priest installed by zealots before Jerusalem's destruction
    - Titus (A.D. 70)
    - **Future Antichrist**
- **The Coming of the Son of Man (13:24-27)**
  - Dan. 7:13-14; Rev. 1:7
  - "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory . . ." (13:26)
    - Here we get some genuine apocalyptic!

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