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Portraits of Jesus

A Study of the Gospel of Mark

by Gary Fisher

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Thank you for your interest, and God bless your study of His word.

Jesus vs. Jewish Leaders

Lesson 8

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

>>> **Read Mark 11:1-11.** <<<

Jesus sent two disciples into Jerusalem to bring him a colt. As He rode it into the city thousands of people lined the route, spreading their clothes and leafy branches in His path to honor Him. While the enthusiastic crowd cheered, Jesus remained calm. Why had He chosen to enter the capital on a donkey, not on some great white steed (see Zechariah 9:9-10)? His life reflected one of His favorite sermons: greatness in the kingdom comes to the one who humbles himself.

1 What did Jesus ride when He entered Jerusalem? (a) a horse, (b) a boat, (c) a chariot, (d) a donkey colt. Answer: _____.

2 As Jesus entered Jerusalem what did the crowd **not** do? a) put their clothes in the road; b) shout praises; c) try to prevent Him from entering the city; d) lay leafy branches in His path. Answer: _____.

Jesus Curses a Fig Tree and Expels Commerce from the Temple

>>> **Read Mark 11:12-26.** <<<

Jesus was hungry and saw a fig tree in leaf. When He approached, He observed that it had no fruit. He cursed it and by the next day, it was withered up. Jesus' action taught the amazed disciples some lessons. First, people who bear no fruit will be cursed by God. This principle applied to the Jewish nation as a whole, because it was bearing no fruit for the Lord. Second, Jesus noted that God has the power to wither fig trees and move mountains; in short, to respond to prayer. What we must do is to trust Him and turn to Him with our needs.

When Jesus entered the temple He saw a stockyard and money-changers' booths. Some people were selling the special coin used to pay the temple tax, while others sold animals for sacrifices. Jesus began to cast out these merchants, overturning the money-changers' tables and the vendors' chairs. He said that the temple was supposed to be a place of prayer but had been turned into a robbers' den.

Note -- Would Jesus cleanse the temple again? Why did Jesus vehemently oppose these activities? It wasn't because He was against selling animals or changing money; rather, He opposed the perversion of the temple's function. God had given the temple for spiritual purposes, and it was wrong to make it a bazaar. We must never use what God has given us for purposes He has not authorized. God gave us a pattern

for the local church. Its function is to worship, teach the gospel and help needy Christians. But many churches have begun to do other things: they sponsor recreation, entertainment, secular education, etc. If Jesus returned, would He not come to churches and begin to cast out all of the unauthorized practices that have crept into them?

3 What was on the fig tree that Jesus saw? a) figs; b) leaves, but no figs; c) neither figs nor leaves; d) rotten figs. Answer: _____.

4 Whom did Jesus expel from the temple? a) money changers and animals sellers; b) priests; c) harlots and murderers; d) Gentiles. Answer: _____.

5 What was the main problem with the money changing and animal sales? a) it was always wrong to sell animals and change money; b) they were cheating people in the transactions; c) these activities weren't a part of God's purpose for the temple; d) there was no problem with it. Answer: _____.

(Thought question: What else have we already studied about people who change what God has revealed in His will? Hint: Restudy Mark 7.)

Question about Jesus' Authority

>>> **Read Mark 11:27-33.** <<<

Jesus' bold actions in the temple stirred opposition. The Jewish leaders thought that the temple belonged to them, so they questioned Jesus' right to come into it and make such drastic revisions. Jesus replied to their challenge with a question. He asked whether John's baptism came from God or men. They consulted among themselves and decided that it would be politically unwise to answer. Their refusal demonstrated that they were not sincerely seeking truth. Therefore, Jesus refused to answer their question.

Note -- Jesus' question is a model: *Jesus asked the Jewish leaders an outstanding question: Did John's baptism come from God or man? This is the question that we should ask about every religious practice. Anything that originates in man should be rejected; all that God commands should be carefully observed. There is an easy way for us to determine whether a given teaching or activity comes from God or man. Everything that comes from God is in the Bible. If a particular doctrine or practice is not in the Bible, it is not from God. We should verify everything we do by this simple test: Does it come from God or from man?*

6&7 When Jesus asked the Jewish leaders about John's baptism, what two choices did He give for its origin? Answer: He asked whether it came from _____ or from _____.

8 Why did Jesus refuse to answer the Jewish leaders' question? Answer: They proved they were dishonest because they refused to _____ His question.

Parable of the Vineyard

>>> **Read Mark 12:1-12.** <<<

Jesus told about a man who planted a vineyard, equipped it with first-class installations and then rented it out. His rent was to be a share of the crop. When the harvest time arrived, he sent servants to collect, but the renters beat, mistreated and even killed them. Finally the owner of the vineyard sent his son to demand payment, but they killed him too. How outrageous! The owner would undoubtedly destroy his tenants and rent the vineyard out to others. The story meant this: God was the owner of the vineyard; the Jews were the renters. God blessed the Jews greatly and expected them to bear the fruit of righteousness, truth, mercy, etc. He sent prophets to collect this "fruit," but they were mistreated and killed. Finally He sent His son, Jesus, whom they murdered. God would certainly destroy the Jewish nation and give His blessings to others. The religious leaders understood that Jesus had spoken this story against them (12:12).

***Note -- God's stone:** Jesus spoke of the stone the builders rejected which God used as His chief cornerstone (12:10-11). He was speaking of Himself, rejected by the Jewish leaders, but selected by God as the foundation of His great building. These words were being fulfilled as Christ spoke. The Jewish authorities, intent on building their own religion, decided Jesus was unsatisfactory--He wasn't suitable for their building. God often reverses human values, however. That which men rejected, God chose and exalted above all (see Philippians 2:5-11).*

9 What did the renters **not** do to the ones sent to collect the fruit? a) mistreat; b) beat; c) kill; d) give the fruit. Answer: _____.

10 Jesus spoke this parable to rebuke whom? a) His disciples, b) the religious leaders of the Jews, c) Old Testament prophets, d) no one. Answer: _____ .

11 In the Scripture about the stone rejected by the builders, the stone referred to whom (see also Acts 4:11)? Answer: The stone was _____, who was rejected by the Jews' religious leaders.

Question about Taxes

>>> **Read Mark 12:13-17.** <<<

The Jews were desperately seeking to discredit Jesus. To do so, various groups began to ask Him questions designed to trap Him. They asked about paying taxes. At this time, the Jews were ruled by the Romans, who were the ones receiving the tax money. The people hated the Roman government and thought it was contrary to the will of God. So Jesus was trapped. If He said not to pay taxes, He would be guilty of treason and liable to prosecution. If He told them to pay, patriots would view Him as a traitor and even disloyal to God. Jesus didn't answer the question at first. Instead, He requested a coin. He asked whose name and picture were on it. They replied: Caesar's. Since you put your name and picture on something you own, Caesar's markings on the coin showed that it

belonged to him. The Jews had no right to withhold Caesar's property from him when he requested it. So Jesus said simply: Give back to Caesar what belongs to him; and give to God what belongs to Him. His answer could not be challenged. It still provides the basis for our relationship to government. We should pay our taxes **and** serve the Lord.

12 What question was Jesus asked (v14)? Answer: Is it lawful to _____ to Caesar.

13&14 What answer did Jesus give (v17)? Answer: Render to Caesar the things that are _____ and to God the things that are _____.

Question about the Resurrection

>>> **Read Mark 12:18-27.** <<<

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. They asked a question designed to show that the doctrine of the resurrection was absurd. It involved the invented case of a woman who was married to seven brothers in succession. They asked Jesus to tell them whose wife she would be in the resurrection, since all of them had been married to her. Jesus' reply revealed the ignorance of the Sadducees: There is no marriage in heaven. Furthermore, Jesus showed how even the Old Testament proved the resurrection. He cited the text where God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and described Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, even though they had been dead for hundreds of years. If death was the end of existence (as the Sadducees believed), then God would have been calling Himself the God of that which doesn't exist. For God to call Himself their God, in some sense Abraham, Isaac and Jacob must still have been "alive" and thus the Sadducees' view of death was wrong.

15 What did the Sadducees believe? Answer: They believed there is no _____.

16 How did Jesus answer their question about marriage? Answer: He said that, when we rise from the dead, there will be no _____.

17 How did Jesus prove the Sadducees' belief about resurrection was wrong? Answer: He quoted a passage in which God said, "I am the _____ of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," even after those men were dead.

Question about the Greatest Commandment

>>> **Read Mark 12:28-34.** <<<

A scribe tried his hand at stumping Jesus. He asked Him to name the greatest commandment in the law. Jesus easily replied that it was to love God. He added that the second was to love others. This response demonstrated remarkable insight. Instead of choosing a specific command, Jesus cited the principles that form the foundation for all of the God's laws. Even the scribe had to admit that Jesus' answer was right.

18&19 What did Jesus say are the greatest commands? Answer: The greatest command is to _____ God, and the second greatest is to _____ your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus Condemns the Scribes

>>> **Read Mark 12:35-40.** <<<

After weathering their barrage of questions, Jesus asked His opponents a question: How could the Christ be both David's son and David's Lord? This question was crucial, because the scribes' objection to Jesus was that He (a mere man they thought) claimed divine authority. Jesus showed by His question that the Old Testament had predicted that the Messiah would be both David's son (human) and David's Lord (divine).

20 How did Jesus show that the Jewish leaders misunderstood the Christ? Answer: They thought the Christ would just be David's son (i.e., He would be human), but Jesus quoted a passage showing He would also be David's _____ (i.e., He would be Divine).

Observations on the Collection

>>> **Read Mark 12:41-44.** <<<

Jesus sat and observed people contribute into the temple treasury. He saw many rich people deposit large offerings. He also saw an impoverished widow give two small coins which were nearly worthless. The Lord explained that the widow had contributed more than the rich--she put in everything she had, while they had simply given their surplus.

***Note -- Jesus contradicts modern views of giving:** Many modern churches seem to regard large donations more highly than small ones. Some honor wealthy donors in special ways and allow them more influence in church policy; occasionally they even ridicule small contributions as unworthy of the Lord. It is clear that the Lord Himself viewed giving in a very different way. He was unimpressed by the absolute size of the offering, whether large or small, but very concerned with the attitude of the giver. To Jesus, the gift of the widow, while having almost no monetary value, was worth much more than the large and impressive donations of the rich. We need to think of riches like Jesus did.*

21 How did Jesus' view of giving differ from that of most religious leaders then and now? He said the most important thing is: a) how much we give, b) the attitude with which we give, c) we must give a tenth, d) we must give as much as others give. Answer: _____.

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