

# A Study of Mark – Lesson 33

## Mark 11:12-33

### The Fig Tree, Righteous Rage, Death Plans

**11** <sup>12</sup> The next day / as they were leaving Bethany, / Jesus was hungry. / <sup>13</sup> Seeing / in the distance / a fig tree in leaf, / he went to find out / if it had any fruit. / When he reached it, / he found nothing but leaves, / because it was not the season for figs. / <sup>14</sup> Then he said to the tree, / “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” / And his disciples heard him say it. /

<sup>15</sup> On reaching Jerusalem, / Jesus entered the temple courts / and began driving out those / who were buying and selling there. / He overturned the tables of the money changers / and the benches of those selling doves, / <sup>16</sup> and would not allow anyone / to carry merchandise / through the temple courts. / <sup>17</sup> And as he taught them, / he said, / “Is it not written: / ‘My house / will be called a house of prayer / for all nations’? / But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’” /

<sup>18</sup> The chief priests / and the teachers of the law / heard this / and began looking for a way to kill him, / for they feared him, / because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. /

<sup>19</sup> When evening came, / Jesus and his disciples / went out of the city. /

<sup>20</sup> In the morning, / as they went along, / they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. / <sup>21</sup> Peter remembered / and said to Jesus, / “Rabbi, / look! / The fig tree / you cursed / has withered!” /

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<sup>22</sup> “Have faith in God,” / Jesus answered. / <sup>23</sup> “Truly / I tell you, / if anyone says to this mountain, / ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ / and does not doubt in their heart / but believes / that what they say / will happen, / it will be done for them. / <sup>24</sup> Therefore I tell you, / whatever you ask for in prayer, / believe that you have received it, / and it will be yours. / <sup>25</sup> And when you stand praying, / if you hold anything against anyone, / forgive them, / so that your Father in heaven / may forgive you your sins.” <sup>[26]</sup>

<sup>27</sup> They arrived again in Jerusalem, / and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, / the chief priests, / the teachers of the law / and the elders came to him. / <sup>28</sup> “By what authority / are you doing these things?” / they asked. / “And who gave you authority to do this?”/

<sup>29</sup> Jesus replied, / “I will ask you one question. / Answer me, / and I will tell you / by what authority / I am doing these things. / <sup>30</sup> John’s baptism / —was it from heaven, / or of human origin? / Tell me!”/

<sup>31</sup> They discussed it among themselves / and said, / “If we say, / ‘From heaven,’ / he will ask, / ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’/ <sup>32</sup> But if we say, / ‘Of human origin’ ...” / (They feared the people, / for everyone held / that John really was a prophet.)

<sup>33</sup> So they answered Jesus, / “We don’t know.”/

Jesus said, / “Neither will I tell you / by what authority / I am doing these things.”

## ***Vocabulary***

1. **To drive out:** to move something or someone with strength and force them out. To forcibly compel someone to leave.
2. **Merchandise:** Goods. Items for sale.
3. **To curse:** (To put a curse on something) To wish evil on someone.
4. **Withered:** To shrivel or to dry out and become useless.

## ***Questions***

1. Why do you think we have such a detailed account of *Passion Week* activities of Jesus?
2. What do you know of fig trees? Why would Jesus curse it? Is there a bigger message here for believers?
3. Find a map of Herod's temple, (often in the back of Bibles) and look at it? Can you guess where the merchants and priest had set up a marketplace?
4. How much profit do you think would be in the selling of items of religious significance? Do we still do that today?
5. What do you think the purpose of a church or temple should be?

## ***Notes***

1. Some light is shed on this passage by an article in *Hard Sayings of the Bible* by F. F. Bruce:

W. M. Christie, a Church of Scotland minister in Palestine under the British mandatory regime pointed out first the time of year at which the incident is said to have occurred (if, as is probable, Jesus was crucified on April 6th, A.D. 30, the incident occurred during the first days of April). "Now," wrote Christie, "the facts connected with the fig tree are these. Toward the end

of March the leaves begin to appear, and in about a week the foliage coating is complete. Coincident with [this], and sometimes even before, there appears quite a crop of small knobs, not the real figs, but a kind of early forerunner. They grown to the size of green almonds, in which condition they are eaten by peasants and others when hungry. When they come to their own indefinite maturity they drop off." These precursors of the true fig are called *taqsh* in Palestinian Arabic. Their appearance is a harbinger of the fully formed appearance of the true fig some six weeks later. So, as Mark says, the time for figs had not yet come. But if the leaves appear without any *taqsh*, that is a sign that there will be no figs. Since Jesus found "nothing but leaves" - leaves without any *taqsh*- he knew that "it was an absolutely hopeless, fruitless fig tree" and said as much.

2. The episode of Jesus overturning the tables of the moneylenders and sellers is told in all four gospels. It is the only account we have of Jesus using physical force.
3. Here we find those in power looking for a way to kill Jesus.
4. Huge amounts of money were made in the temple markets. People had to purchase sacred animals that the priests would accept, those without a blemish. This demanded quality cost more. Also, the people could not use the Roman money but had to change the money into "temple" coins. No coin to God could have a human figure on it. .
5. The Jewish Temple was built by Herod. Had it not been destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, it could have been among the wonders of the ancient world. Herod took care to offend no Jew as he constructed it.

