

MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT JESUS AND HIS WAY

Mark chapter 11

1. False understanding of the Messiah and his mission (Mark 11: 1-11). They thought he was coming into Jerusalem to set up his kingdom and throw out the Romans violently. But, as Jesus himself said, his kingdom was not of this world (John 18: 36). His mission was to come and humbly die for the sins of the whole world then rise again by the power of God to prove that all he said was true. His mission was to tell people about the kingdom of God and preach repentance, save sinners, release those who were captive to sin and oppression, have compassion on the poor and down trodden, serve, give his life as a ransom, show us all what being truly human is all about and give us a truly abundant life of joy, even though he also said we will go through suffering (Mark 1: 15; Matthew 9: 12; Mark 10: 45; Luke 4: 14-22; Luke 19: 10; John 1: 10-13, 29; John 3: 17; John 9: 39; Romans 4: 25; 1 Corinthians 15: 14, 17; 2 Corinthians 5: 16-17, 21; John 10: 10). When they said "Hosanna" they were praising him, but the word also means "save." So, they could have been thinking that Jesus was going to save them from the Roman occupation (rule). Notice that Jesus rode a donkey not a powerful war horse like a conquering warrior. This shows the humility of Jesus and that he was not coming as a warrior to defeat the Romans and set up his kingdom on earth. This was also to fulfill prophecy as recorded in Zechariah 9: 9. If you want to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you need to accept him for who he truly is not for who you would like him to be.

2. Triumphalism or a theology of glory (Mark 11: 1-11). This is the idea that you don't have to go through suffering as part of following Christ. Some verses on suffering: 2 Thessalonians 1: 5-10; Philippians 1: 29; Acts 14: 22; 2 Corinthians 1: 3-11; Romans 5: 3-5; 8: 18; John 15: 18-25. This is connected to the first point. The people wanted to be a part of the glorious restored kingdom of David with Jesus on the throne as the Messiah. But they had no room in their minds for suffering. They could not conceive of the Messiah dying. Peter himself rebuked Jesus for talking about going to the cross and dying (Mark 8: 32-33). Of course, Jesus rebuked Peter and said that he had in mind the ways of men not the ways of God. The way of men is the way of glory without suffering. The way of Jesus is glory through suffering, sacrifice and completely following the will of God. What does following Jesus mean to you? Are you expecting glory without suffering and sacrifice?

3. Exclusivism, religious corruption, ethnocentrism, and oppression of the poor (Mark 11: 12-19). Isaiah 56: 6-8 says the temple will be a house of prayer "for all nations." The Jews had totally forgotten the purpose of the temple. It was to be a house prayer for all the nations. But they had made the "*court of the Gentiles*" into a market place to sell goats, sheep, and doves for sacrifices. There was no room and too much noise for people to come and pray. They were also cheating the poor by selling them things at too high of a price. They were exclusive in that they excluded the Gentiles from coming to worship. They corrupted their religion because they lost sight of the Mission of God and were cheating people. They were ethnocentric; that is, they thought that their ethnic race was the most important. We must never think that Christianity is just for one race of people. It is for all the world. So, in this sense, it is inclusive of all nations. It is exclusive only in the good sense that it proclaims the truth about Jesus being the only way to God, but it is inclusive in that it invites all people to the salvation that Jesus offers (John 14: 6; John 3: 16-17). The Bible says in 2 Peter 3: 9, "*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*"

4. Outward religion (leaves) with no real fruit (Mark 11: 12-14; 20-21). Sometimes things are not as they seem. This can also apply to societies that have an outward show of prosperity, but no real moral character and stability. This is also about depending on your own outward show of goodness without trusting in God for your salvation and ongoing strength. The fruit usually comes before the leaves on the fig tree, but this tree was an anomaly. Probably it stood out because it had leaves when the others did not. It was not even time for figs, much less the leaves that usually come later. This tree was a great example of something not being right, something not being as it seemed. There should have been fruit, but there was none. This tree was like Israel. They had a show of religion on the outside like the leaves, but there was no fruit of true faith, obedience and hearts truly given to God. Jesus said that it is by their fruit that we can test people (Matthew 7: 15-20). God does not just want your outward acts of goodness, he wants your heart. He wants your total dedication to him. He wants to see true fruit in your life that comes from a heart that is trusting in Jesus and his sacrifice for its strength. Jesus' cursing of the fig tree represents the coming destruction of false religion, any dependence on outward show and all hypocrisy. The truth will be revealed. Light will shine on all hidden motives and all dependence on one's own goodness. The book of John 3: 19-21 says, *"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."* Judgment came on Israel in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Judgment will also come on us if we don't repent (2 Thessalonians 1: 5-10). The Bible also says we will experience judgment in this life as a consequence of our actions. We will reap what we sow (Galatians 6: 7-10). There is a Chinese proverb that says, "Do good, reap good; do evil, reap evil." Romans 6: 23 says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Hebrews 9: 27-28 says, *"Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."* John the Baptist said even before Jesus started his ministry, *"The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire"* (Matthew 3: 10). To escape this judgment, God wants you to believe in Jesus, truly repent of your sins from your heart, confess that Jesus is Lord and Savior, and be baptized into Christ Jesus so that you can receive forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit (John 3: 16; Acts 2: 38; Romans 10: 9-10) and to continue to go forward and bear fruit. To learn more about spiritual fruit, look at Galatians 5: 22-23. In John chapter 15 Jesus also talks about how we need to continue to be close to him so we can bear fruit.

5. Lack of faith (Mark 11: 22-25). Jesus draws an application about faith from the miracle of his cursing the fig tree. He is saying that we can do incredible things if we believe. But we must never think that we can just ask anything we want and God will give it to us. Other passages say that if it is God's will, he will give it to us (1 John 5: 14). The great downfall of many of the people of Israel was that they did not have faith (Romans 11: 20, 23). Following a religion is not the same as having true faith in Jesus. Are you just following a religion or do you really have a true sincere faith in Jesus?

6. Fear, religion and the lack of deep spiritual insight (Mark 11: 27-33). Verse 32 says, *"They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet."* They had a fear of the truth. Holding on to their religion and power was more important than seeking the truth. They were more interested in proving Jesus wrong than approving of the truth. They were looking on the surface of things. They had no deep spiritual insight. Are you looking on the surface of things? Is your fear keeping you from following Jesus?