

**The Final Week (Monday):  
The Fig Tree Incident and Cleansing the Temple**  
*Looking into the Face of Jesus*  
*The Life of Christ, 2: Pages 248-252*  
**Manuscript: Lesson Plan 89**

**Introduction**

The texts for our lesson today are Matthew 21:12-19; Mark 11:12-19 and Luke 19:45-48; 21:37, 38. We will be looking at each account, so please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 21, Mark 11, and Luke 19.

How would Jesus respond if He were to enter our house of worship? We are going to study a couple of situations/incidents in this lesson, but first let us make sure we understand our timeline. What happened the Friday before His death? He traveled to Bethany. What did we read happened the next day? He ate dinner at Simon's house, and Mary anointed His head and feet. On Sunday, He triumphantly entered Jerusalem.

In this lesson, we are going to discuss what happened on Monday when He went into the temple and came across a fig tree that did not bear fruit. For this lesson, we need to read each of the texts that were given. (Read the texts.)  
Matthew and Luke's versions make it seem that Jesus may have cleansed the temple immediately after He entered Jerusalem. However, we are going to follow Mark's timeline.

Look at Mark 11:11 (read). It seems it was late when He entered Jerusalem on Sunday, so the two stories we are going to discuss today happened on Monday. [This may also be a good time to review the area surrounding Jerusalem and the city of Jerusalem itself (see map in For Further Study on web site).] Let us start by looking at . . .

**The Cursing of the Fig Tree**

Mark tells us that this happened first (Mark 11:12; "on the following day"). Christ was hungry; again, He was human. Did they leave before breakfast to get to Jerusalem early? We do not know. But they were on their way again to Jerusalem, and this is what happened.  
He saw a fig tree and went to see if there was fruit (Mark 11:13). Why did Jesus need to go and see? This was not like the previous day with the donkey and colt in Bethphage, where Jesus used His omniscience. It appears that Jesus did not always use His supernatural abilities.  
However, when He did not find fruit on the tree, Jesus cursed the tree (Mark 11:13, 14). This is the only miracle of judgement that Christ performed. This miracle was not like all the rest which were performed with mercy and compassion. Since Passovers happened either late March or April, figs were not in season (Mark 11:13). Fig trees would not bear fruit until May. This leads to the question of why Jesus would curse a tree that should not be bearing fruit anyway. Perhaps the answer is revealed a little later. For now, let us move on from this story and come back after the next incident . . .

## The Cleansing of the Temple

This was not the first time that Jesus cleansed the temple. Jesus cleansed it originally at the beginning of His ministry. Turn to John 2:13-17 (read).

Why did He cleanse the temple? Apparently, their worship was corrupted. They had made the house of worship a place of robbers (Mark 11:17). They also were apparently using the temple as a short cut through the city, and He would not let anyone carry things through the temple (Mark 11:16). This is an example of general lack of reverence as well.

After cleansing the temple, Christ began to teach (Mark 11:17). The crowds were astonished (Mark 11:18). The lame and the blind came to be healed (Matthew 21:14; this is the only record of healings being performed in the temple). Matthew 21:15 mentions the children that continued the praises from the day before.

The reaction of the chief priests and scribes by now is predictable. They saw His incredible works (Matthew 21:15). But it did not change their hearts; the text says they became indignant. They even tried to get Jesus to stop the children, but He said this was prophesied (Psalm 8:2). They could not arrest Him that day because they feared Him because the crowd was hanging on to every word He said and He astonished the crowd (Mark 11:18; Luke 19:48).

When evening came, He went out of the city (Mark 11:19). Let us see what Luke 21:37, 38 tells us (read). This defines what He would do daily these last few days.

Now it is time for us to consider . . .

## Lessons from the Fig Tree and Temple

Why do you think He cursed the fig tree? We really do not know for sure. He taught some lessons from the fig tree (Mark 11:20-25). He used a fig tree for lessons on the power of prayer, the power of faith, and forgiveness. But He never really explained why He cursed the tree.

But maybe the explanation was what happened once He entered Jerusalem. What did He see when He came to the temple? A group of people acting religious (having leaves) but not truly spiritual (bearing fruit). Many commentators feel this was just an object lesson to describe the Jewish people as a whole. But we cannot know this for sure because Jesus did not make that claim clearly. However, it seems to fit in Mark's context.

## Conclusion

Now that you have studied this text, if Jesus were to come into our house of worship, what would He do? If He were going to talk to you personally after worship, how would He describe it? How would He describe you? Are you a person full of leaves and not bearing fruit, or are you a person being productive for the Lord?