

Week Forty-three: A Misunderstood King - Mark 14:3-9; 11:1-26



Overview

Promises of the coming King and pictures of His redemption and reign pepper the story of the Bible from Genesis to the Gospels. God promised Adam and Eve a coming Seed who would crush the head of the serpent. He promised Abraham and his descendants that they would be a blessing

to all the families of the earth. He promised Jacob that Judah's descendants would produce "Shiloh"—Him to whom "shall be the obedience of the people" (Gen. 49:10). The Passover pictured the substitutionary death of the innocent on behalf of the guilty. God promised David that he would never lack a descendant upon his throne. Through the prophets He spoke of the Messiah's birth, ministry, substitutionary death, and resurrection. Israel had all the right information, but that information wasn't coupled with expectation. Many, through unbelief, missed His coming.

How could such a people with such great promises and such clear pictures of Jesus' identity and work miss His coming? They expected a regal king to overthrow Rome; therefore, they missed the suffering Servant who came "to seek and to save that which is lost" (Lk. 19:10).

Lesson Objective:

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will understand that the misapplication of Scripture will lead people to misinterpret God's work in their midst in the same way that the Jews missed the Messiah even as they were looking for Him.

Key Truths

Unprepared people miss the coming of their King.

The LORD works in unexpected ways, quietly and under the radar. Only those who sit at His feet discern the times.

Lesson Outline

1. The Anointing of the King by a Woman - Mark 14:3-9

The prophet Samuel anointed both Saul and David as kings of Israel (1 Sam. 9:16-17; 10:1; 16:13). Solomon was anointed by the Zadok the High Priest and Nathan the prophet (1 Kings 1:32-34, 39). Christ the King, however, was anointed by Mary of Bethany (sister of Martha and Lazarus). His anointing, unlike that of the kings of Israel, was not for His coronation, but for His burial.

The expense of such an outpouring created quite a disturbance. Some asked, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted?" (Mk. 14:4). They reprimanded Mary for her extravagant "waste" when the perfume could have been sold to care for the poor.

Jesus accepted Mary's anointing and ensured her and all in the room that it would never be forgotten: "She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (14:9).

Mary's constant position at the feet of Jesus attuned her to a spiritual reality missed by everyone else and placed her prominently in His Story.

2. The Misunderstood Presentation of the King by a Crowd - Mark 11:1-10

Jesus instructed two of His disciples to enter the village of Bethphage and to secure a young donkey, on which He would enter Jerusalem. His disciples covered the donkey's back with their robes, and Jesus rode into Jerusalem. The crowds welcomed Him by spreading their robes on the road, waving leafy branches, and shouting as He passed by, "Hosanna Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord Hosanna in the highest" (9-10).

One theologian describes Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as paradoxical: "There is a paradoxical aspect to the Triumphal Entry. Jesus was obviously fulfilling the prediction of Zech. 9:9 and the shouts (i.e. liturgy from the Psalms) of the crowd were an affirmation of His Messiahship. However, it must be remembered that these Hallel Psalms were used to welcome the pilgrims every year as they came for the Passover. The fact that they were applying them to a particular person was the uniqueness of this event. This is clearly seen in the consternation of the religious leaders."¹ Although the crowd quoted Scripture, they misinterpreted the event. They hoped for a descendant of David to take Israel's throne; therefore, they could not imagine that a King's death and burial would precede His rule.

Sadly, the same crowd that shouted, "Hosanna," also shouted, "Crucify him" a few days later. Just as Jesus' anointing was misunderstood, so was His Triumphal Entry.

3. The Rejection of the King by a Nation - Mark 11:12-14; 20-26

¹ Bob Utley, *The Gospel According to Peter: Mark and 1 & 2 Peter* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2000), in loc.

Jesus, walking past a leafy fig tree, noted its lack of figs and responded by cursing the tree. This act must have seemed odd to all those observing, since it wasn't the season for figs. The fig tree, however, symbolized faithless Israel throughout the Old Testament:

- Jeremiah 8:13 - "I will surely consume them," says the LORD. "No grapes shall be on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things I have given them shall pass away from them." See also Jeremiah 29:17.
- Hosea 9:10 – "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. But they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves to that shame; they became an abomination like the thing they loved." See also Hosea 2:12; 9:16-17.
- Joel 1:6–7 - "For a nation has come up against My land, strong, and without number; his teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a fierce lion. He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree; he has stripped it bare and thrown it away; its branches are made white."

Jesus cursed a fruitless fig tree symbolically to demonstrate Israel's unpreparedness for the coming of her King. Israel had the Old Testament with its Messianic promises, yet they missed the fulfillment of those very promises. All Israel was in expectation of the Messiah, yet they missed the Messiah in their midst.

Questioned by His disciples regarding the withering of the fig tree the next morning, Jesus expressed that, though the tree had withered, His Kingdom would prevail, "Have faith in God. For assuredly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says" (11:23). Jesus used a mountain barrier as another symbol to capture Israel's rejection of their King. Christ's kingdom is not dependent upon Israel's belief; rather, those who have faith in God and practice forgiveness and prayer may experience the coming of His kingdom.

4. The Abuse of the King's Temple - Mark 11:15-18

Nearly three years after Jesus' first cleansing the temple of commercial activity, He entered the temple again and dealt with the abuse of the temple (Jn. 2:13-22).

Hundreds of years earlier Isaiah had prophesied that the Lord's house would be a place for eunuchs and foreigners:

For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me and hold fast My covenant, even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants—everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all

nations.” The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, “Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him.” (Is. 56:4-8)

The outer court where the buying and selling occurred was also called the “Court of the Gentiles.” The only place where the Gentiles could worship the Living God was no longer a place of prayer, but rather had been turned into a corrupt marketplace crowded with cages of birds and pens of animals for sale. Jesus’ rebuke galvanized the chief priests and scribes into action, and they “sought how they might destroy Him” (Mk. 11:18).

Application - What does this lesson teach us about God? Man? Sin? Redemption? *The humble and discerning act of one person doesn’t go unnoticed or unrewarded by our Lord.*

Bible literacy prepares God’s people to interpret the times in which they live.

Those with the most access to the Truth often miss an encounter with the Truth Himself.

Summary

God speaks and rewards Mary for her sacrificial and timely gift. He speaks about Israel’s rejection of their King through the cursing of the fig tree. He speaks through His prophets and assures the Gentiles that they will have access to Him.

God acts by withering the fig tree at the command of Jesus.

God reveals His foreknowledge of Israel’s rejection and the Gentiles’ reception.

Discussion Questions

Why does the Lord promise Mary that what she has done will be spoken of throughout the world? In how many Gospels does this story occur?

In what ways can churches today turn from being houses of prayer into marketplaces of corruption?

If Jesus were to pass by our lives, would he find fruit or barrenness on them? How do churches and Christians today miss God’s work in their very midst?