

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Mark: Jesus, The Perfect Servant Of God

Part III: The Perfect Sacrifice Of Jesus, The Perfect Servant Of God, Mark 11:1-15:47

B. Learning From The King's Discipline Of His Subjects

(Mark 11:12-20)

I. Introduction

- A. John Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark was rebounding from having abandoned Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey (Acts 13:13) due to John Mark's lapse in following the Lord because of some difficulty.
- B. Mark's lapse signaled sin in him, sin that had to be overcome for Mark to rebound unto effective service.
- C. Jesus found sin in the temple when He arrived as Israel's King in His triumphal entry, and He addressed it in the cleansing of the temple that was also clarified in a profound illustration that instructs us today (as follows):

II. Learning From The King's Discipline Of His Subjects, Mark 11:12-20.

- A. The Mark 11:12-20 text presents "a 'sandwich' structure" in which Jesus' judgment on the fig tree that is pronounced in Mark 11:12-14 and is then fulfilled in Mark 11:20 is "divided by the account of His cleansing the temple precincts (vv. 15-19)," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 157.
- B. For this reason, "(t)his structure suggests that each episode helps explain the other," Ibid., and we explain:
 1. When Jesus came from Bethany the day after His triumphal entry, He was hungry, and seeing a fig tree at a distance with leaves on it, He rightly presumed that even though it was not the summer time for fig production, there should have been spring "early green 'fruit' (buds)" on it that "was common food for local peasants," Ibid.; Mark 11:12-13a. Similarly, when Jesus entered the temple area close to Passover, the *hieron*, or "large outer court of the Gentiles surrounding the inner sacred courts of the temple itself," He looked for the "fruit" of righteousness that one would expect to see, Mark 11:11, 15a; Isaiah 5:1-2, 7.
 2. However, when Jesus came up to the fig tree, He found nothing but leaves, no "early green 'fruit' (buds)" that anyone would have expected to see then, Ibid. Similarly, when He entered the temple court of the Gentiles, He found no true righteousness, but just "leaves" of profuse artificial righteousness:
 - a. Christ's Mark 11:17 complaint in cleansing the temple reveals that Israel had kept the temple from being a house of prayer for the nations largely by corrupting the outer court of the Gentiles with a den of thieves.
 - b. To explain, imperial Roman and provincial Greek coins that bore human faces were understandably held to be idolatrous, in need of being exchanged for Jewish coins to pay the annual half-shekel tax due from all Jewish men age 20 and older, Ex. 30:12-16; Ibid., p. 157-158. A small surcharge was allowed for these exchanges. However, this exchange was allowed to occur in the court of the Gentiles, and it had led to extortion and fraud there, so such profane activity led secular merchants "loaded with merchandise" to take "shortcuts though this area, making it a thoroughfare from one part of the city to another," Ibid., p. 158.
 - c. Thus, where Christ and God had wanted the court of the Gentiles to be a place where all of the world's nations could gather to worship the Lord in holiness, Israel's people had turned it into a profane market venue of sin to the harm of the spiritual vitality of all, and such false righteousness infuriated Jesus! (Ibid.)
 3. Accordingly, not finding the expected "'fruit' (buds)" of early spring, Jesus declared that no man would eat fruit of that tree again, Mark 11:14. Similarly, Jesus cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, He overthrew the moneychangers' tables and the seats of them that sold doves, and would not let anyone carry any vessel of merchandise through the *hieron*, the court of the Gentiles, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 171.
 4. The next day, as they passed by it, the disciples noticed that the fig tree Jesus had cursed the previous day had miraculously dried up down to its roots (*ek rizon*, lit. "to its roots," U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 171; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 743; Mark 11:20.) Similarly, that generation in Israel would be suddenly, severely judged, with God's blessings being given to another generation of Israel [after the Great Tribulation] that would bear the true righteousness that pleased the Lord, cf. Matt. 21:43.

Lesson: *By way of the illustration of Christ's judgment on the unproductive fig tree, He purged the court of the Gentiles of artificial spirituality, signaling the need for all of God's people down through the ages to confess their artificial spirituality and turn from it lest the Lord Himself suddenly and severely discipline them for such error!*

Application: *(1) May we who trust in Christ confess and turn from false spirituality in ourselves. (2) In specific application of this passage, may we avoid (a) profaning our worship with worldly activity, especially activity that rises from the love of money, and (b) live in reverence of God before the world that they might revere Him also!*