

**October 29, 2023**

# Nothing But Leaves

Jeff Rogers / Empty Nesters Bible Study

Mark 11:12-20

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## **We are now amid Passion Week with the Lord:**

**Saturday:** He arrived in the vicinity of Jerusalem to Bethany. Two miles to the east over the Mount of Olives. He stayed with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead only a few weeks before.

**Sunday:** He stays in Bethany. Crowds come to see Him and to see Lazarus there (recently raised from the dead).

**Monday:** He enters Jerusalem for the week of Passover. It is the Triumphal entry. The day ends with this observation in **Mark 11:11**, *And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.*

**Tuesday:** In the morning, He is returning with His disciples to Jerusalem and to the temple. Pick up the narrative in Mark 11:12-25. The destructive miracle is the only one in the gospels, the destruction of the fig tree. It is a parable, an analogy, a metaphor, an illustration of the coming destruction of the Temple.

### **I. The Track Record of Spiritual Decline**

- A. Located on Mount Moriah, the Temple location is linked directly back to Genesis 22 (Abraham offers Isaac).
- B. 900 years later, David purchased Mount Moriah from Ornan (1 Chronicles 21:18-26)
- C. Six years later, Solomon begins construction of the temple (1 Kings 6 & 2 Chronicles 3)
- D. 350 years later, the Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. Anything and everything of value was loaded up and carried back to Babylon
  1. Why did this judgment occur?
  2. It occurred because of false worship, idolatry, apostasy, and false religion. Jeremiah details the complete corruption of Judaism.
- E. 70 years later, the people return from captivity. Zerubbabel enables the building of the second Temple (modest in scope when compared to Solomon's temple) (Ezra 6:15)
- F. However, over the years, the Temple descended into pagan worship.
  1. Antiochus, a pagan ruler, desecrates the temple (Statue of Jupiter and the offering of pigs on the altar). Some modest revival occurs but does not last under Judas Maccabees.
- G. In 20 BC, Herod the Great, decided he would re-build the temple (renovate, expand, overhaul the second temple. The project lasted over 80 years until 64 A.D.)
- H. In 70 A.D., the Romans came and destroyed the Temple.
- I. There will be a Temple during the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27); the anti-Christ will desecrate it.
- J. There will be a final temple as described in Ezekiel 43.

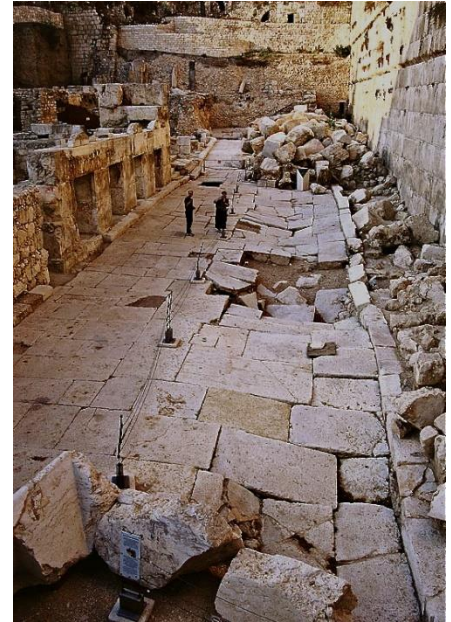
### **II. The Deception of False Assurance (Mark 11:12-14, Luke 13:6-9)**

- A. The Illustration (Mark 11:12-14, 20)
  1. Jesus is hungry (Son of Man) He sees a fig tree with leaves. It was not uncommon for a fig tree to have fruit at this point that was edible (one name for it is a Breba crop) Fig can produce two crops of figs depending on variety (mentioned in Hosea 9:10).
  2. Jesus comes expecting to find food (fruit) but finds nothing but leaves.
  3. Jesus responded by cursing the tree (Mark 11:14, 21; Matt 23; Rom 2:17-23 Rom 10:1-4).
    - a) The fruitless fig tree pictured a false profession.
    - b) The fruitless fig tree pictured hypocrisy.
    - c) The fruitless fig tree pictured false worship.

### **III. The Danger of False Worship (Mark 11:15-19)**

- A. This was the second attempt to bring them to true worship (John 2:13-17) at the start of His ministry.
- B. What God seeks from those who worship Him:
  1. John 4 – worship Him in Spirit and Truth
  2. Philippians 3 – worshipers who put no confidence in the flesh

- C. Instead, Jesus enters the chaos of corrupt leaders, a corrupt temple, and corrupt people.
1. Priests ran a religious scam in cahoots with the merchants.
    - a) Money changers for the temple tax
    - b) Animals for the sacrifice (Priest-approved)
  2. Jesus sought to challenge the false worship. (Mark 11:17; Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11)
    - a) My house – It is His house. **Isaiah 56:7**, *These 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 peoples.*”
    - b) Shall be called a house of prayer (quiet, meditative) **Psalm 27:4**, *One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.*
    - c) For all nations –
      - (1) **1 Kings 8:29–30**, *That your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. 30 And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.*
      - (2) **1 Kings 8:41–42**, *“Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name’s sake 42 (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, 1 Kings 8:43, hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.*
      - (3) But instead, the Jews made it a robber’s den (**Jeremiah 7:11**, *Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord.*)
  3. The reaction of the chief priests and leaders (Mark 11:18)
    - a) The destruction of the Temple started on Tuesday when Jesus tossed out the merchants.
    - b) It continued Friday, when the temple curtain was ripped top to bottom.
    - c) It was finished 40 years later by the Romans.



#### IV. What about our worship?

- A. **Psalm 24:1–5**, *The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, 2 for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.*
- B. **3 Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?**
- C. **4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart**, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.
  1. Check our heart - **Ezekiel 11:19–20**, *And I will give them **one heart**, and a **new spirit** I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.*
  2. Prepare our heart (confess known sin – wash our hands) **Isaiah 1:15**, *When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.*
- D. **5 He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.**