

# NEW TESTAMENT 1

## UNIT NINE: THE LAST WEEK OF THE KING

### THREE SYMBOLIC ACTIONS

(Mark 11:1-33)

- Mark 11 begins with a record of three acts of *prophetic symbolism*.
  
- The Coming of the King (Mk 11:1-11).
  - For Jesus, his entry into Jerusalem is a declaration of his messiahship and its nature.
  - Even the disciples failed to spot the messianic significance (John 12:16).
  - The authorities failed to see the significance – it was not mentioned at Jesus’ trial.
  - The crowds certainly do not understand – they greet Jesus with the words of Psalm 118 but can’t have been greeting him as messiah.
  - On the surface there appears to be true and enthusiastic confession, but in reality there is none.

- Cursing the Fig Tree (Mk 11:12-14, 20-25).
  - Another prophetic, symbolic action of far reaching significance.
  - In the Old Testament, the destruction of a fig tree was associated with judgement.
  - The tree's appearance of fruitfulness contrasts with its true condition – this can be compared Israel itself.
  - The cursing of the tree suggests that the time for the judgement of Israel has come.
  - In the light of the temple cleansing with which it is associated, Jesus appears to be speaking of Israel and Judaism – what happens to the fig tree is the fate inevitably awaiting the and their leadership.
  
- Cleansing the Temple (Mk 11:15-19).
  - The commercial use of the outer *Court of the Gentiles* was a recent development.
  - In Jesus' time, the sanctity of the temple courts was clearly disregarded.
  - Jesus expelled the offenders, justifying his action in terms of Old Testament quotations from Isaiah and Jeremiah.
  - By evicting the merchants, Jesus prepares God's house for the last days, symbolically opening up the way for the Gentiles to come to God.
  
- These three actions expose the hollowness of the old order.

# CONFLICT WITH THE AUTHORITIES

(Mark 12:1-44)

- The authorities want to get rid of Jesus, and are grasping for evidence against him.
  
- The Parable of the Tenants (12:1-12).
  - The details of this parable are taken from Isaiah chapter 5.
  - It is a warning to the leaders to stop their opposition to Jesus.
  
- The question about tribute money (12:13-17).
  - The first attempt to catch Jesus off guard – about tax paid to the Romans.
  - The question is intended as a trap, but Jesus turns it against the Pharisees.
  - That they could produce a coin so readily shows their hypocrisy.
  - Jesus acknowledges that there is a duty to be paid to Caesar.
  - Debts to Caesar must be paid, but there are limits – God's rights must be honoured.
  - Caesar and all he has belongs to God.

➤ The question about resurrection (12:18-27).

- Jesus is challenged by the theological conservatives.
- The Sadducees intend to ridicule the doctrine of the resurrection.
- Their question attacks the very core of Jesus' message and ministry.
- First, Jesus addresses the manner of the resurrection
- The Scriptures say that God is a God of miracles.
- Those who understand the Scriptures will not deny the resurrection.
- Jesus then speaks of the fact of the resurrection.
- At the time of Moses, God still called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

➤ The question about the great commandment (12:28-34).

- A scribe asks Jesus what is the greatest commandment.
- The Law must be seen for what it is - obligation to God arising from the fact that he is one and has chosen Israel in covenant-faithfulness.
- The great obligation is to respond to God's love with the whole of one's being, and also to love others.

- The scribe, one of Jesus' opponents, is forced to recognise Jesus' wisdom, commending his answer – the plot to trap Jesus in his words is failing.
  
- The question about David's son (12:35-37).
  - Jesus seizes the opportunity to expose the weakness of his opponents.
  - He questions their understanding of the Messiah.
  - David called the Messiah *Lord* – this affirms the Messiah's greatness and challenges the Jews' limited expectations.
  
- Beware of the scribes (12:38-40).
  - Jesus warns the crowd against the scribes.
  - They are filled with pride, covetousness and hypocrisy.
  - Many were robbed by them, under the cover of religion.
  
- The widow's ruin (12:41-44).
  - The widow is a personification of the ruin caused to Israel by the scribes.
  - Her devotion contrasts with the hypocrisy of the scribes.

- Jesus has revealed who he is, condemned and announced the end of the old order and enraged them further.
- Jesus assures his followers that despite appearances, he will be victorious.

## THE VICTORY OF THE KING

(Mark 13:1-37)

- There has been debate about how much of chapter 13 refers to the destruction of the temple in AD70 and how much to the second coming of Christ.
- The chapter is mainly *apocalyptic discourse*, heavily laced with Old Testament imagery.
- The Situation
  - The disciples suggest that Jerusalem will enjoy eternal security.
  - Jesus' reply is shocking – one day the buildings they are admiring will be completely gone.
  - The disciples ask questions: in reply, Jesus begins the *apocalyptic discourse* – to focus them on him rather than the old system of Judaism.

## ➤ Difficult Times

- Jesus describes difficult times – the context in which the gospel is preached.
- As the disciples will preach the same gospel, they need to be warned.
- There will be persecution but they need to continue to preach the message given to them by the Spirit.

## ➤ The Great Distress

- Verses 14 to 23 expand on this picture of the last days.
- The disciples must watch for the *abomination that causes desolation* – which will bring a time of unprecedented distress.
- Some say that this refers to the destruction of the temple in AD70.

## ➤ The Coming of the Son of Man

- Following this distress, they will see *the coming of the Son of Man*.
- Some see this as a reference to Jesus' future return, others again connect it to the destruction of the temple.

## ➤ An Attitude of Expectancy

- When the disciples see these things, they will know that the kingdom of God is near – but not the exact timing.

## ➤ THE MARK 13 COUNTDOWN

<b>DIFFICULT TIMES</b>	<b>vv 5-13</b>
<b>THE GREAT DISTRESS</b>	<b>vv 14-23</b>
<b>THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN</b>	<b>vv 24-26</b>
<b>THE GATHERING OF THE ELECT</b>	<b>v. 27</b>
<b>THE KINGDOM!</b>	<b>v. 29</b>

### ➤ The Function of the Discourse

- The discourse would have raised expectations of all these things happening.
- The disciples were told to watch daily for these things.
- There is still debate about exactly what Jesus was referring to, but the discourse encourages modern readers to live in expectancy of Jesus' return.