

Presentation 9

Mk 11-13

Arrival into Jerusalem and Jesus' Apocalyptic Teaching



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1. *Preparing to Listen to Mk 11.1-12.44*

- *Mk 11.1-11*: A new mode of power symbolised by Jesus and his use of the colt. Jesus rides into Jerusalem, humbly, like a disciple, unlike the Roman Emperors, escorted by his disciples. He is acclaimed by the disciples' quoting Ps 118, 148.1, Job 16.9. vs 11. Jesus enters on to the Temple mount and then returns to Mt Olives.

Mark's Narrative Structure of Mk 11.11-27

A - **Jesus enters into Jerusalem** and withdraws (11:11)

B - **Curse of the fig tree** (11:12-14)

C - Confrontation in the Temple (11:15-19)

B¹- The withering of the **fig tree** (11:20-26)

A¹- **Jesus enters Jerusalem** and opposed by the Sanhedrin (11:27)

- Mk 11.12-14//11.20-26: 'Figs' are a symbol of Israel's religious leadership:

Jeremiah 24.1-10

The LORD showed me two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the LORD. This was after King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon had taken into exile from Jerusalem King Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim of Judah, together with the officials of Judah, the artisans, and the smiths, and had brought them to Babylon. ² One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. ³ And the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I said, "Figs, the good figs very good, and the bad figs very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten."

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to me: ⁵ Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. ⁶ I will set my eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up. ⁷ I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart. ⁸ But thus says the LORD: Like the bad figs that are so bad they cannot

be eaten, so will I treat King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who live in the land of Egypt.⁹ I will make them a horror, an evil thing, to all the kingdoms of the earth—a disgrace, a byword, a taunt, and a curse in all the places where I shall drive them.¹⁰ And I will send sword, famine, and pestilence upon them, until they are utterly destroyed from the land that I gave to them and their ancestors.

Jeremiah 29.16-19

Thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who live in this city, your kinsfolk who did not go out with you into exile:¹⁷ Thus says the LORD of hosts, I am going to let loose on them sword, famine, and pestilence, and I will make them like rotten figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten.¹⁸ I will pursue them with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, and will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be an object of cursing, and horror, and hissing, and a derision among all the nations where I have driven them,¹⁹ because they did not heed my words, says the LORD, when I persistently sent to you my servants the prophets, but they would not listen, says the LORD.

- *Mk 11.20-26*: Jesus teaches about prayer, forgiveness with an echo of the Lord's Prayer.



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Dome of the Rock, site of the Temple, looking towards the Mount of Olives
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- *Mk 11.27-33*: Jesus' authority questioned by the religious leadership and elite.
- *Mk 12.1-12*: Parable of the vineyard, reflective of the history of the Jesus movement and the rejection of Jesus. The key interpretative text from Psalm 118.22-23 helps to understand and interpret Jesus' story.
- *Mk 12.13-17*: The attempt to trap Jesus over taxation and the image of the God-King Caesar. The authorities on the Temple Mount have the image of the God-King, compromises their fidelity to the main Torah commandment: there is one God.
- *Mk 12.18-27*: God is the God of the resurrection, not of the dead.
- *Mk 12. 28-34*: The Great Commandment, from Dt 4.35 repeats the central Jewish prayer, the *Shemah* ('Hear'): 'Hear Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.' The key issue: what is at the heart of faith, of authentic religious faith, and one's relationship to God that flows over into relationship with neighbour (Lev 19.18).
- *Mk 12.35-44*: Jesus denounces the official interpreters of the Torah ('scribes'). 'Be aware of the scribes....' The widow, symbolic of the poor, gives her only coin to the Temple treasury. This contrasts to the way the scribes have abused the Temple institution as a place of oppression rather than freedom.



On the Mount of Olives

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2. *Preparing to Listen to Mk 13.1-37*

- This chapter reflects Mark’s appreciation of apocalypticism: It offers confidence and hope to those who struggle, drawing on Jewish understanding of apocalypticism that comes from Persia and Zoroastrianism.
- Four stages of Jewish Apocalypticism:
 1. **Present** Time
 2. The “**Beginning** of the Birthpangs”
 3. The **Birthpangs** proper (“The **Affliction**”)
 4. The “**End**”
 - The arrival of the Son of Man (the “Human One”)
 - The Gathering of the Elect
 - The Establishment of the Kingdom
- The words of Mark’s Jesus are not literal descriptions of what will happen, but are in the genre of apocalypticism.
- *Mk 13.1-2*: The context: Is the Temple already destroyed? The answer to this determines the dating of Mark’s Gospel.
- *Mk 13.3-7*: Mark reflects on those who think they have the answer. The end is ‘not yet’. Conflict will be part of the reality of Jesus followers.



The Old City of Jerusalem, looking towards the south-east corner of the city from the Mount of Olives

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- *Mk 3.8*: Upheaval will be ongoing. This ‘is but the beginning of the birth pangs’ according to the Jewish.
- *Mk 3.9-13*: Specific description of the ‘birth pangs’ reflects the experience of Mark’s household. In the midst of the struggle, God will support Jesus followers. ‘The one who endures to the end will be saved’, invites patience and trust in God.
- *Mk 3.14-23*: reference to a memory of the desecration of the Temple. But the need to be prepared what is about to take place. But God has ‘shortened the days’ God is in control; the disaster will not be eternal. It is controlled.
- *Mk 13.24-31*: Mk draws on Isaiah and Joel about the coming of the Son of Man. The image of the fig tree—assuredness of God’s coming. Jesus’ words are to be trusted, as God acts.

Mark 13:32-37 ³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Beware, *keep alert*; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on *the watch*. ³⁵ Therefore, *keep awake*—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶ or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: *Keep awake*”.

- Mark slows down the pace and prepares for the story of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection (‘evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn’). The stress on discipleship ‘watchfulness’. Staying awake is addressed to Mark’s Gospel household.



From the Mt Olives, looking north west, across the Kidron Valley
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An Overview Summary of Mk 11-13

- Over these chapters of Mark, the tension with the authorities and their institutions is heightened; the Temple becomes the site of conflict, argument and exorcism; the religious interpreters of the Torah find themselves unable to comprehend Jesus' action or prophetic teaching.
- The disciples continue to misunderstand and are unable to scrutinize clearly what is about to happen. To them the final words of this section are directed. They must "keep awake." Still, behind this injunction to remain alert and reflective before the face of impending disaster, Mark's great apocalyptic chapter which concludes the section offers a faint note of hope. Suffering and persecution will have reign for a limited period only; afflicted householders can be confident that God is with them and that ultimate victory and salvation is inevitable.
- The closing words of Jesus prepare for the final section of Mark's Gospel, the story of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. He encourages the disciples to keep awake through each of the major divisions of Roman time (evening, midnight, cockcrow, and dawn). These divisions will reappear as explicit temporal markers in the passion narrative (14:17,72; 15:25,33,42; 16:2). The last words of the chapter, 'What I say to you I say to all, "Keep Awake!"' (13.37), address Mark's audience and ourselves.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION & CONVERSATION

- In Mk 13, Jesus names the struggle that will come upon Mark's Gospel audience. What are the struggles we deal with now as a people, Church, globally?
- To what do you think we need to be alert to? To what do we have to 'Keep Awake'? What keeps us from really grasping what is going on around us?

IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT PRESENTATION

- For the next presentation, read Mk 14-15.

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