

## 11. Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem and His First Encounters

Jesus arrives outside Jerusalem and begins the last major episode of his life. The people overwhelmingly accept him, but the Jewish leaders overwhelmingly reject him.

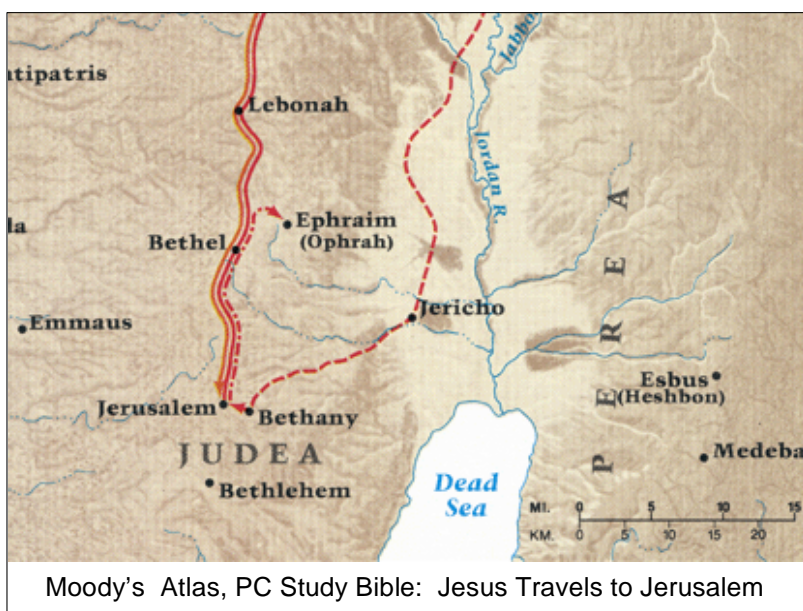
### ***The Entry on a Colt***

Mark 11:1-12

*11 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"*

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, he came to Bethphage and Bethany, which Mark locates at the Mount of Olives. There is no historical record to locate Bethphage exactly; however, the remains of an ancient town—perhaps Bethphage—exist atop the Mount of Olives. The mount itself, more often called a hill, was a common retreat from Jerusalem.

Later Mark will identify the Mount as being opposite the temple in Mark 13:3-4: "3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately. . . ." Luke speaks of it as place where Jesus spent each night in Luke 21:37: "37 Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives." Luke 22:39 calls Jesus' visits usual: "39 Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him." In Acts 1:12, Luke describes the Mount as being a Sabbath day's walk from Jerusalem:



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"12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city." The Sabbath day's walk was from rabbinical instruction and not from the law of God. They inferred from Ex 16:29-30 that they could not go far: "'Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out.' 30 So the people rested on the seventh day." From Josh 3:4, they concluded that one would have to go a thousand yards to worship: "But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between you and the ark; do not go near it." The point of all this is that this important place for the Lord was very near Jerusalem, and just outside the temple wall. Jerusalem, built on high ground at 2,400 feet above sea level, was almost as high as the Mount of Olives at 2,600 feet above sea level. From Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, a distance of 20 miles, the elevation changed from 2,400 feet above sea level to 1,384 feet below.

It was from here that Jesus sent the disciples to borrow the colt.

Mark 11:4-9

4 They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, 5 some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" 6 They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. 7 When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

10 "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest!"

11 Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Luke describes the beginning place of the glorious entrance of Christ, the King in Luke 19:37:

37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.



It was also along this road that some Pharisees challenged him; and this was his answer recorded by Luke 19:41-44:

41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace — but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Without a doubt, this passage marks the time of the coming, and with the coming came the King and the kingdom. Matthew elaborates on the event in Matt 21:4-5 and quoting Zech 9:9:

5 "Say to the Daughter of Zion,

'See, your king comes to you,

gentle and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

Hosanna, in the second quotation, means *save*, showing the people's recognition of the Savior come. In the quotation, the people recognize fully that this is the coming of the kingdom of David, otherwise known as the kingdom of God.

After looking at everything around the temple and Jerusalem, they returned to Bethany (Day one, the first day of the Week).

## Cursing the Fig Tree

Mark 11:12-14

12 The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. 14 Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.

This episode sets up a lesson that was not to be applied until the next morning. This lesson is not about the fig tree having no fruit, because the passage itself recognizes it was not the season for figs. The Lord teaches the lesson of the tree when they see the tree once again in Mark 11:20-25.

## Driving out the Money Changers

Mark 11:15-19

15 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. 17 And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written:

"My house will be called  
a house of prayer for all  
nations'?

But you have made it 'a den of  
robbers.'"

18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

19 When evening came, they went out of the city.

Jesus drove out the money changers, overturned their tables and benches, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. The important point is that he used the occasion to teach them. He looked to Isaiah first in quoting from Isa 56:7-8

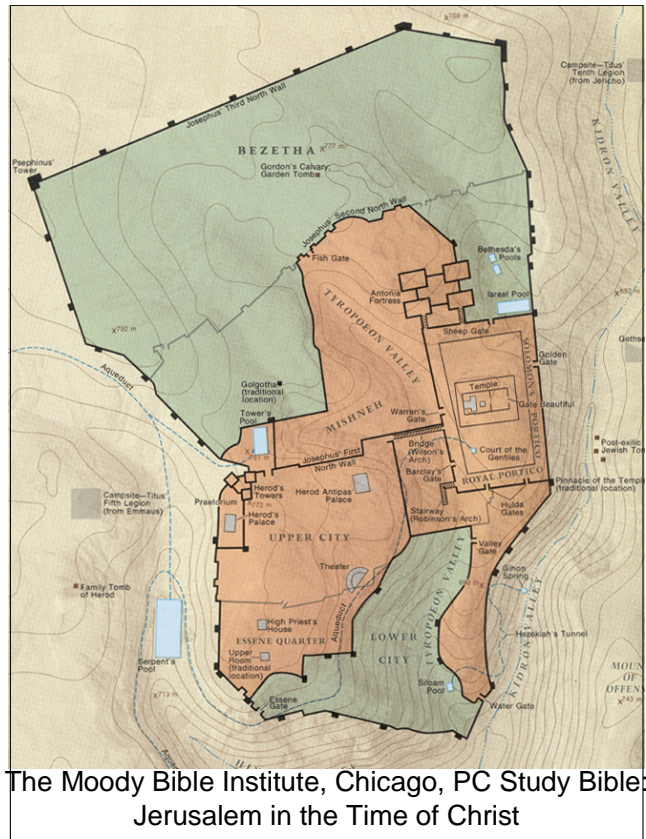
7 these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

8 The Sovereign Lord declares –

he who gathers the exiles of Israel:

"I will gather still others to them



besides those already gathered."

The second quotation is from Jer 7:11:

11 Has this house, which bears my Name,  
become a den of robbers to you?

But I have been watching! declares the Lord.

The contrast is between what the Lord expected and what they did. The passages continue to speak of this as the coming of the kingdom, a time when the exiles of Israel return and all nations with them.

After this they went out of the city (Day two of the week, our Monday).

### ***The Lesson of the Fig Tree***

Mark 11:20-25

*20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. 21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"*

*22 "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. 23 "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."*

The next morning they saw the withered fig tree. Once again, Jesus teaches: Have faith in God. Do not doubt in ones heart. Believe what you say will happen. When you pray, believe that you have received it. Forgive your enemy. Your Father in heaven will forgive you your sins. The power of prayer is having ones sins forgiven by the Father in heaven. Faith to wither fig trees and faith to move mountains are hyperboles that show how strong our faith must be when we address our Father in heaven about that most important of all matters—forgiveness of our sins.

### ***The Authority of Jesus Questioned***

Mark 11:27-33

*27 They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. 28 "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?"*

*29 Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 30 John's baptism – was it from heaven, or from men? Tell me!"*

*31 They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' 32 But if we say, 'From men' . . ." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)*

*33 So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."*

*Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."*

When Jesus arrived at the temple, the chief priests, elders, and teachers of the law challenged his authority. Jesus answered by confronting them with a dilemma: Was John's baptism from

heaven or from men. When they refused to answer, Jesus refused to tell them by what authority he did the things that he did. People of less station than these leaders had no trouble in recognizing the authority of Jesus. After the Sermon on the Mount, the people were amazed in Matt 7:28-29:

28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Jesus himself testified to his authority in John 17:1-5:

"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. 2 For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. 3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. 4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.