

# Judgment Is Announced

Matthew 21	Mark 11	Luke 19
	<b>11</b> Jesus entered into the temple in Jerusalem. When he had looked around at everything, it being now evening, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.	
<b>18</b> Now in the morning, as he returned to the city, he was hungry.	<b>12</b> The next day, when they had come out from Bethany, he was hungry.	
<b>19</b> <sub>{a}</sub> Seeing a fig tree by the road, he came to it, [...]	<b>13</b> <sub>{a}</sub> Seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came [...] <sup>1</sup>	
	<b>13</b> <sub>{b}</sub> [...] to see if perhaps he might find anything on it. [...]	
<b>19</b> <sub>{b}</sub> [...] and found nothing on it but leaves. [...]	<b>13</b> <sub>{c}</sub> [...] When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, [...]	
	<b>13</b> <sub>{d}</sub> [...] for it was not the season for figs.	
<b>19</b> <sub>{c}</sub> [...] He said to it, “Let there be no fruit from you forever!” [...]	<b>14</b> <sub>{a}</sub> Jesus told it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” [...]	
	<b>14</b> <sub>{b}</sub> [...] and his disciples heard it. <sup>2</sup>	
<b>19</b> <sub>{d}</sub> [...] Immediately the fig tree withered away. <sup>3</sup>		
	<b>15</b> <sub>{a}</sub> They came to Jerusalem, [...]	

<sup>1</sup> Though Mark points out that figs were not in season (Mk 11:13d), the tree was covered with leaves (Mt 21:19b; Mk 11:13a,c). These leaves *advertised* the presence of figs, which explains why Jesus approached the tree. According to A.T. Robertson, the tree “had promise without performance” (See *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Mk 11:13), making it a picture of Israel’s spiritual condition.

<sup>2</sup> Note that the text says the disciples heard Jesus’ pronouncement (Mk 11:14b), but it nowhere says they *watched* the withering of the tree. Had they done so, there was no reason for Peter to express surprise at the sight of it the next morning (Mk 11:21).

<sup>3</sup> One of the areas where the Gospels are most commonly accused of contradiction is the timing of the withering fig tree. The text of Matthew describes Jesus [1] cleansing the Temple (Mt 21:12-17) and [2] cursing the fig tree, which then withered (Mt 21:18-20). Mark, on the other hand, shows Jesus [1] cursing the fig tree (Mk 11:12-14), [2] cleansing the Temple (Mk 11:15-17), and [3] returning to find the tree withered (Mk 11:20-21). On this basis, skeptics say there is a contradiction between Matthew and Mark. However, the Gospels are arranged chronologically in some places and thematically in some places. (All of the material is accurate, but not all is *meant* to be in chronological order.) I believe Mark follows the story chronologically, in this case, while Matthew discusses the cleansing of the Temple before circling back to deal with the cursing and withering of the fig tree in one setting. In this, Matthew’s text deals with the curse then the fulfillment in order to emphasize Jesus’ teaching about the power of faith (Mt 21:20-22). Mark provides the story chronologically, with the cursing and withering of the tree surrounding the cleansing of the Temple, allowing the events with the fig tree to emphasize Jesus’ message of judgement against Israel. The most reasonable timeline seems to be that [1] Jesus cursed the fig tree and left (Mt 21:18-19c; Mk 11:11-15a); [2] the tree withered immediately (Mt 21:19d), though not necessarily before Jesus and the disciples left (Mk 11:15a); [3] Jesus cleansed the Temple (Mt 21:12-16; Mk 11:15b-18; Lk 19:45-48); [4] Jesus and the disciples returned to Bethany that evening (Mt 21:17; Mk 11:19), not seeing the withered tree, either because it was dark or because they used a different route (See A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Mk 11:20); [5] Jesus and the disciples returned to Jerusalem the next morning by the same route they had taken the day before and found the tree completely withered (Mt 21:20; Mk 11:20-21). This would mean that Mt 21:12-17 are not positioned in chronological order.

Matthew 21	Mark 11	Luke 19
<b>12</b> <sub>{a}</sub> Jesus entered into the temple of God, and drove out all of those who sold and bought in the temple, [...]	<b>15</b> <sub>{b}</sub> [...] and Jesus entered into the temple, and began to throw out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, [...]	<b>45</b> He entered into the temple, and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it,
<b>12</b> <sub>{b}</sub> [...] and overthrew the money changers' tables and the seats of those who sold the doves. <sup>4</sup>	<b>15</b> <sub>{c}</sub> [...] and overthrew the money changers' tables, and the seats of those who sold the doves.	
	<b>16</b> He would not allow anyone to carry a container through the temple.	
<b>13</b> He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers!" <sup>5</sup>	<b>17</b> He taught, saying to them, "Isn't it written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations?' But you have made it a den of robbers!"	<b>46</b> saying to them, "It is written, 'My house is a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of robbers!'"
<b>14</b> The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.		
		<b>47</b> <sub>{a}</sub> He was teaching daily in the temple, [...]
<b>15</b> <sub>{a}</sub> But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, [...]	<b>18</b> <sub>{a}</sub> The chief priests and the scribes heard it, [...]	<b>47</b> <sub>{b}</sub> [...] but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people [...]
<b>15</b> <sub>{b}</sub> [...] and the children who were crying in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the son of David!" [...]		
<b>15</b> <sub>{c}</sub> [...] they were indignant,		
<b>16</b> and said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes. Did you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing babies you have perfected praise?'" <sup>6</sup>		
	<b>18</b> <sub>{b}</sub> [...] and sought how they might destroy him. [...]	<b>47</b> <sub>{c}</sub> [...] sought to destroy him.
	<b>18</b> <sub>{c}</sub> [...] For they feared him, because all the multitude was astonished at his teaching.	
		<b>48</b> They couldn't find what they might do, for all the people hung on to every word that he said.

<sup>4</sup> Not only were there dishonest dealings involved in these trades (Mt 21:12; Mk 11:15b-16; Lk 19:45), but another reason for Jesus' anger was that their market was set up in the Court of the Gentiles, a place where non-Jews were welcome to come pray and worship the God of Israel (See James M. Freeman and Harold J. Chadwick, *Manners & Customs of the Bible*, Mt 21:8). They were *literally* depriving entire nations of the ability to come and worship, explaining Jesus' reference to Isaiah in note 5 below—particularly as recorded in Mk 11:17.

<sup>5</sup> Mt 21:13; Mk 11:17; Lk 19:46 ref: Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11.

<sup>6</sup> Mt 21:16 ref: Psalm 8:2.

Matthew 21	Mark 11	Luke 19
17 <sub>{a}</sub> He left them, and went out of the city [...]	19 When evening came, he went out of the city.	
17 <sub>{b}</sub> [...] to Bethany, and camped there.		
	20 As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away from the roots.	
	21 Peter, remembering, said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which you cursed has withered away.”	
20 When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree immediately wither away?”		
	22 Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God.” <sup>7</sup>	
21 Jesus answered them, “Most certainly I tell you, if you have faith, and don’t doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you told this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it would be done.” <sup>8</sup>	23 “For most certainly I tell you, whoever may tell this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and doesn’t doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is happening; he shall have whatever he says.”	
22 “All things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”	24 “Therefore I tell you, all things whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you have received them, and you shall have them.”	
	25 “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father, who is in heaven, may also forgive you your transgressions.”	
	26 “But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your transgressions.”	

<sup>7</sup> The Greek phrase, ἔχετε πίστιν θεοῦ (*Echete pistin theou*), literally means ‘Have [the] faith of God.’ According to Adam Clarke, this is how “the Hebrews expressed the superlative degree” (See *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, Mk 11:22), which means that Jesus was instructing them not *just* to have faith in God but also that it should be unlimited.

<sup>8</sup> The idea of moving mountains (Mt 21:21; Mk 11:23) was apparently a common figure of speech, describing the accomplishment of something thought impossible. Adam Clarke explains: “Removing mountains, and rooting up of mountains, are phrases very generally used to signify the removing or conquering great difficulties. [...] In this sense our Lord’s words are to be understood. He that has faith will get through every difficulty and perplexity; mountains shall become molehills or plains before him” (See *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, Mt 21:21). Here, and in the verses that follow, Jesus was teaching the disciples to trust God as they served Him because He could do seemingly impossible things.