

A First day in Jerusalem:

❖ Triumphant entrance. Mark 11:1-11.

- Jesus knew that there was a colt in Bethphage that he could use. He knew how to answer its owners so his disciples could take it away (Mark 11:1-7). He knew that by imitating Solomon at his coronation, he was fulfilling Zechariah's messianic prophecy (1 Kings 1:33-34; Zech. 9:9).
- It is evident that Jesus planned his exaltation. He wanted the people to recognize him as their king (Mark 11:8-10). However, it did not precipitate events. Upon entering Jerusalem, he slipped through the crowd unnoticed, and silently entered the temple (Mark 11:11).
- The Roman soldiers did not have to intervene. There was no attempt at rebellion. The Jewish leaders, filled with fear, breathed a sigh of relief when Jesus quietly left the Temple to return to Bethany.
- But the spark was lit. Now Israel had to decide whether to accept Jesus or reject him.

B Second day in Jerusalem:

❖ Curse and purification. Mark 11:12-26.

- Marcos presents us with his fourth “sandwich story”:
 - (1) Mark 11:12-14. Jesus curses the fig tree
 - (2) Mark 11:15-19. Jesus purifies the Temple
 - (3) Mark 11:20-26. Teachings from the dried fig tree
- In the central part of the sandwich, Mark shows us God's purpose for his people. The story surrounding it [the fig tree] shows us how Israel acted:
 - (1) The Temple [God's purpose]:
 - (a) He offered salvation for all (Mark 11:17a)
 - (b) But he was corrupt (Mark 11:17b)
 - (c) It was restored by Jesus (Mark 11:15-16)
 - (2) The fig tree [Israel's performance]:
 - (a) Its leaves attracted (Mark 11:13a)
 - (b) But it was not good for food (Mark 11:13b)
 - (c) It was rejected by Jesus (Mark 11:20)
- The plan of salvation is carried out through the Church. If the Church fails, God restores it. But those who corrupt the message of salvation and do not repent will be rejected.

C Third day in Jerusalem:

❖ The authority of Jesus. Mark 11:27-12:12.

- No one dared to rebuke Jesus when he expelled the merchants from the Temple court. However, the next day they decided to publicly discredit him by asking him about his authority (Mark 11:27-28).
- But Jesus also knew how to ask (Mark 11:29-30). Now the ball was in his court. Whether they accepted or rejected John's authority, they were to do the same with Jesus (Mark 11:31-33).
- As the debate ended in a tie, Jesus went on to counterattack. Isaiah compared Israel to a vineyard from which God “expected judgment, and behold, vileness; righteousness, and here is a cry” (Isaiah 5:1-7). Jesus used the same figure to portray the attitude of the leaders (Mark 12:1-11). They saw themselves reflected in the parable, but were not willing to rectify their behavior (Mark 12:12).

❖ Malicious questions. Mark 12:13-27.

- In order to trap Jesus, the Pharisees and Herodians joined together. They were even willing to praise him, and make an apparent public recognition of his status as a teacher (Mark 12:13-14a).
- The question was clearly malicious (Mark 12:14b). Admitting that they had to pay tribute meant being condemned by the people. To admit that they should not pay taxes was to be condemned by Rome.
- But not only was he freed from all condemnation, but he clarified the true relationship between state and church: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's” (Mark 12:15-17).
- It was the turn of the Sadducees to make Jesus look ridiculous. They used a parable that they commonly used to ridicule the Pharisees (Mark 12:18-23). Jesus revealed the two errors they were making (Mark 12:24-27):
 - (1) “you are ignorant of the Scriptures.” Contrary to what his parable implied, the Bible teaches that our resurrected bodies will not be the same as the ones we now have [“they will be like the angels”]; and that life after the resurrection will not be a mere continuation of it [“neither shall they marry nor be given in marriage”].
 - (2) “you are ignorant...of the power of God.” God can give life to the dead. Therefore, before Him all who accept Him are alive [“God is not God of the dead, but God of the living”].

❖ **A sincere question. Mark 12:28-34.**

- Now it is a scribe who enters the controversy. But, unlike the previous ones, this one sees in Jesus a true teacher with whom it is worth dialoging (Mark 12:28).
- Jesus answers his question about the most important commandment, and adds a “plus”: the second most important commandment (Mark 12:29-31).
- Excited by the conversation, the scribe summarizes Jesus' response, and adds his own conclusion: “loving [...] is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Mark 12:32-33).
- Jesus recognizes the man's sincerity, and invites him to take the step: you are close... you just need to accept me as your Savior (Mark 12:34a).
- If they kept asking him, in the end Jesus would manage to convert even the scribes and Pharisees. Just in case, they stopped instigating him (Mark 12:34b).