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Mark 11

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Mark 11.

Topics.

- The disciples bring a colt to Jesus.
- Blessed is the coming Kingdom, hosanna in the highest!
- My House shall be called a House of prayer for all nations?
- A fig tree withered away.
- A mountain thrown into the sea.
- Whatever you ask in prayer, believe and it will be yours.
- Forgiveness and unforgiveness.
- Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?

The Previous Chapter: Jesus explained divorce to his disciples and told them he will be killed and rise again on the third day. They begin to go to Jerusalem and on the way Jesus heals a blind beggar named Bartimaeus.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

MARK 11:1-6

1

The Disciples bring a Colt to Jesus.

- **Mark 11:1-6:** Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples ²and said to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. ³If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.’” ⁴And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵And some of those standing there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” ⁶And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go.

Jesus and the disciples arrive at Bethphage and Bethany near Jerusalem on the Mount Olivet (Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived in Bethany). This story shows us how much Jesus fame had spread and how much the people of Bethphage and Bethany thought of the Lord. The disciples go and untie a man’s colt, (a very valuable work animal) and walk away with it, to anyone watching this would look like they are stealing it, but as soon as they say it is for the Lord the people trust the disciples and let them go. No-doubt Mary, Martha, and Lazarus have told their stories to all their friends and the good testimony of Jesus has spread throughout the region.

MARK 11:7-11

Blessed is the coming Kingdom, Hosanna in the Highest!

- **Mark 11:7-11:** And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹And those who went before and those who followed were

shouting, "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 And he (Jesus) entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Hosanna: is a Jewish form of praise, approval applause and exclamation of adoration it means:

- To deliver and defend, to be free successful, victorious and safe.
- To save, help, preserve, rescue avenge and bring salvation.

As Jesus rode on the colt toward Jerusalem multitudes were dancing and rejoicing believed he was coming in the name of the LORD and that he was going to establish the promised Kingdom of King David (v9-10). Imagine the anger and fury of the religious leaders, the Pharisees chief priests and scribes as they watch and hear from the walls of Jerusalem the people singing praises and giving glory to this humble man riding on a donkey. Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem, goes into the temple of God, and then takes the apostles to Bethany for the night.

Ponder for a moment: as Jesus was approaching the city of Jerusalem, he would have been somewhat excited at seeing God's Holy City and the LORD'S temple, his Father's House again. He spent some time strolling around the streets of Jerusalem and his Father's House, but the following verses show us that any excitement Jesus might of had was quickly crushed as the story of the fig tree makes it very clear he was not impressed with what he saw in the city of Jerusalem and in the temple nor with its priesthood or the cities religious leaders the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes.

MARK 11:12-14

2

A Fig Tree is Cursed.

- **Mark 11:12-14:** On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry.¹³ And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season (time in KJV) for figs. ¹⁴And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples (the twelve) (v11) heard it.

Bethpage adjoined Bethany both were fig regions, their names mean house of figs. The fig tree was able to produce two crops of figs one in the winter and one in the summer. The figs could appear in the leaves or on the wood of the previous season. Jesus sees the leaves and therefore expects the tree to have figs, but the fig tree was fruitless.

The Fig Tree/Bush: the fig tree can grow as a bush which grows to 1-12 feet high or as a tree 3 to 40 feet high it can produce first and second crops of figs and both crops can grow two crops in the same year. The first crop develops only when fertile seeds are present and the second crop develops common figs which do not require pollination of either crop, the figs often appear before the leaves.

Good figs: very good and ripe figs are likened to the exiles of Judah who obeyed the LORD and the word of the prophets and went into captivity to Babylon (Jeremiah 24:1-7).

Bad figs: very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten are likened to the people of Judah who disobeyed the word of the LORD and the prophets and refused to go into Babylon captivity (Jeremiah 24:8-10). In Luke chapter thirteen Jesus said if a fig tree is fruitless, feed it for a time, but if it still bears no fruit cut it down, why should it use up the ground? (Luke 13:6-9).

The idea is that fig trees should produce fruit and spread out and multiply if they don't, they are not only worthless, but all the time and labour given to them is wasted and therefore better spent on fig trees that do produce figs.

The symbolism of the parable: the fig tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel during the Old Testament era and during the New Testament a symbol of the Pharisees, scribes, chief priests and elders representing the nation of Israel. The New Testament period was the season for Israel to blossom and produce abundant fruit because Christ Israel's King, Messiah and Saviour had arrived. Israel's leaders should have recognised the season they were in, but instead because of the Pharisees, scribes, chief priests and elders' pride and selfish ambition they were a barren of fruit so Jesus condemned them. Figuratively the fig tree is a symbol of those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, if they are faithful and bare-fruit they are likened to a good fig tree, but if they rebel and are fruitless they are likened to a bad fig tree.

Fig tree withered to its roots (v20). The fig tree withered to its roots is a perfect symbol of the Pharisees, scribes, chief priests and elders who represent the nation of Israel. Like the fig tree Jesus cursed the Pharisees because they had not produced any fruit because of their hypocrisy which along with their extreme legalism and formalism had made them barren. Jesus destroyed the Pharisees at their roots by abolishing the entire Levitical Priesthood and ceremonial law as a way to God and replacing the path to salvation with grace. Since the death and resurrection of Christ no-one needs a human priest to intercede for them because the Lord Jesus Christ is everyone's perfect and eternal High Priest nor does anyone need to adhere to ceremonial rites, holy days, or keep religious customs and traditions to be in union with God and saved to eternal life.

MARK 11:15-18

My House shall be called a House of Prayer for all Nations?

- **Mark 11:15-18:** And they (Jesus and the twelve (v11) came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹⁶And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." ¹⁸And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.

Isaiah said the same thing:

- These I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isaiah 56:7).

You have made the it a den of robbers is alluding to the following verses:

- Do not trust in these deceptive words: *'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'* ⁵For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, ⁶if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, ⁷then I will let you dwell in this place in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever. ⁸"Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. ⁹Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, ¹⁰and then come and stand before me in this house (the Temple) which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations? ¹¹Has this house which is called by my name, become a *den of robbers* in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 7:4-11).

In these verses God is telling the Old Testament priests and religious leaders of the temple not to trust in the following deceptive words:

- This is the temple of the LORD, this is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD (Jeremiah 7:4).

The priests and religious leaders of Judah believed that they were right with God because they had the temple of God, but they were stealing, perverting justice, shedding innocent blood, oppressing the poor, committing adultery, making false promises and worshipping other gods. God through Jeremiah is telling the Old Testament religious leaders that they cannot trust in the temple for salvation and live as they please and make the temple, the LORD'S House that is called by His name a den of robbers (i.e. full of corrupt priests). God is basically saying no matter how much they trust in the LORDS temple it will mean nothing to God if their lifestyle is full of hypocrisy, corruptness and they are oppressing the poor (Jer. 7:1-11). Now the amazing thing is that even though hundreds of years have passed the priest and religious leaders have not changed we know this because Jesus is saying the exact same thing to the religious leaders of the New Testament the chief priest's, Pharisees and scribes, that God said to the Old Testament priests and religious leaders in the time of Jeremiah. Prior to Jesus death and resurrection, the people were still under the law so they were still bringing sacrifices to the temple. It was quiet common for those who had nothing to offer or who had to travel a great distance to buy their sacrifice when they arrived at the temple, so it is most likely that the priests of the temple had taken advantage of this and made a business out of selling sacrificial animals in the temple, no-doubt at very exorbitant prices. Money and profit were their god not the LORD, thus the reason Jesus said they have turned God's temple into a den of robbers (v11) and overturned the money-changers seats and tables. When the chief priests heard that Jesus had turned over the money changes tables and stopped them from doing business in the temple, they were furious and seek a way to destroy him.

MARK 11:19-26

A Fig Tree Withered away and a Mountain Thrown into the Sea.

- **Mark 11:19-26:** And when evening came they (Jesus and the twelve) (v11) went out of the city. ²⁰As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. ²¹And Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." ²²And Jesus answered them "Have faith in God. ²³Truly, I say to you whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. ²⁴Therefore I tell you (the twelve) (v11) whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵And whenever you (the twelve) stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." ²⁶But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses

A fig tree withered away: the fig tree in this story is a symbol of the religious leaders of Israel the Pharisees, scribes' elders and chief priests, like the fruitless fig tree the Pharisees were also fruitless as they had not produced any fruit. For this reason, the fig tree withering away even to its roots is a perfect symbol of the entire Levitical priesthood and all its ceremonially religious rites being totally done away with even to its roots (i.e. its leaders the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes. These religious leaders had great authority, power and enormous influence over the entire national religious system of Israel, but because of their lack of grace, mercy and love they had turned the Kingdom of God into a man-made religious system of legalism, formalism, self-effort and outward works rather than a Kingdom of kindness, mercy and love. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ entirely did away for any need of the Levitical priesthood its ceremonially religious rites the chief priests,

Pharisees and scribes because since Christ resurrection no-one needs a human priest to intercede for them as the Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect eternal High Priest for everyone who will come to him, thus just as the fig tree withered to its roots so likewise did the entire religious system that the chief priest, Pharisees and scribes had established.

A mountain thrown into the sea: the typology of the fruitless fig tree and Israel is very figurative language. Just a day or so ago Jesus made his triumphant entry on the colt into Jerusalem by way of the Mount of Olives (Olivet) this mountain is opposite the temple in Jerusalem, so the literal mountain Jesus has in mind is the Mount of Olives which in the Old Testament is called the Mount of Corruption (2 Kings 23:13) and the figurative mountain the Lord is speaking of is the religious hypocrisy and corruption of the chief priests the Pharisees, the scribes and elders, they are referred to as a mountain because they have total authority and power over the entire national religious system of Israel.

Jesus is telling the disciples to have faith in God and this mountain of religious corruption at Jerusalem and in God's temple will be destroyed, (i.e., be taken up and thrown into the sea). Jesus death and resurrection totally destroyed the entire Levitical priesthood with all its religious ceremonies, feast days, rules and regulations thus the mountain of religious hypocrisy corruption, legalism and formalism of the chief priests the Pharisees, scribes and elders and the power authority and control they had over the common people was figuratively speaking, cast into the sea, meaning totally destroyed.

Whatever you ask in prayer, believe and it will be yours: Jesus is telling the twelve apostles that they do not need to go to God through the Levitical priesthood, sacrifices or religious ceremony, because of their relationship To Christ they can pray to God themselves they do not need human priests or even the temple. Jesus is saying to the twelve from now on no-one needs the priesthood or sacrifices simply pray to God and believe and it will be answered.

NOTE: this statement is made in the context of everything that is offensive to God being thrown into the sea (destroyed) therefore when Jesus says, "whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" is in the context of praying for God's will to be done (v22-26).

Forgiveness and unforgiveness: Jesus tells the twelve, if they do not forgive, neither will their Father which is in heaven forgive them their trespasses (v25-26) it is absolutely imperative to forgive. A key to living a life of happiness is to forgive, this is one of the reasons Jesus says when a brother or sister repents (meaning if they feel guilt, remorse, shame and contrition) forgive them and lay aside any sense of anger, revenge or bitterness that you may have toward them. Those that belong to Christ are to always be inwardly ready to forgive, but the healing of a broken relationship cannot take place until the guilty repents. Jesus forgiveness is always available to everyone, but a sinner does not experience it until they repent toward God. Forgiveness is not something the believer turns off and on it is a constant attitude or willingness to be always ready to forgive. Having a heart that is in a constant mode of forgiveness is enormously powerful it is what stops people harbouring the destructive attitudes of resentment and bitterness, added to this God's Spirit abundantly dwells in a heart that is full of forgiveness, compassion and mercy, but flees from one the is engulfed in hatred, bitterness and resentment.

Forgiveness sets a person free: Jesus told the twelve, if they do not forgive, neither will their Father which is in heaven forgive them their trespasses (Mark 11:25-26) it is absolutely imperative to forgive. Notice Jesus does not add, "Providing they repent" this forgiveness is independent of the other person's response, for the following three reasons:

1. God freely grants to everyone in Christ forgiveness and righteousness every-day. Everyone who has eternal life is totally indebted to God, simply because without the righteousness that God grants to them because of their faith in Christ none of us would be counted worthy, added to this there is nothing we can do to repay God for the life of His Son or repay Christ for his suffering.
2. God wants to set us free from the mental torment that comes with unforgiveness, but he can only do it when we forgive. If we do not forgive whoever offends us bitterness, hatred and a craving for revenge (i.e. to see the other person suffer) will take hold of our hearts and fill it with every other destructive attitude and in extreme cases even murder.
3. As long as we remain in unforgiveness we continue to allow the person we are not forgiving to have control over our thoughts and our hearts and that will hurt us mentally and emotionally and rob us spiritually. The Spirit of God (i.e. joy, peace and contentment cannot dwell in a human heart that is filled with bitterness, the lust for revenge and hatred). Forgiveness keeps our hearts free from all these destructive attitudes such as its tremendous healing power.

Forgiveness and repentance: Jesus heart is always open and ready to forgive whoever comes to him in repentance, his heart is continually overflowing with forgiveness, but only those who come to him in repentance enter the family of God. The following verses show that it is a Bible principle, that before forgiveness can be received a person must acknowledge (confess) their wrongdoing. God in the Old Testament said:

- If Israel confesses their iniquity that they committed against me and if their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, with Isaac and with Abraham, and I will remember the land (meaning bless it) (Lev 26:40-42).

6

David when speaking of himself in Psalms says:

- I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin (Psalm 32:5).

And in the New Testament the apostle John says:

- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Added to what God, David and John say God's forgiveness though permanently available to everyone through Jesus is only realised and experienced when a sinner comes to Christ in honest repentance and sorrow. If a person does not acknowledge their wrong doing how can they possibly be sorry for the hurt they have caused? Even more how can they put right something they don't acknowledge is wrong, thus God's forgiveness is always available, forever flowing, but confessing ones wrong actions is required before it can be received and experienced in the heart and before we can be reconciled to God. In some cases when possible restitution may be required to help repair the hurt caused to others. True repentance would automatically bring about this desire in the heart. Restitution in most cases may simply be saying sorry to the person offended or to God.

An amazing testimony: I remember listening to the testimony of a woman sharing how a man had thrown a bucket of hydrochloric acid into her face, her entire face was grossly scared and deformed (it still is). She said, "I made the choice to forgive, because I was not going to allow my grandchildren to grow up knowing a grandmother full of bitterness, hurt and resentment. What a tremendous influence of good and strength this grandmother would have imparted to her grandchildren. It is certainly true that to make such a choice takes an enormous amount of fortitude and strength of character, but it is also true that there is no personal value or benefit in holding onto resentment and anger?"

Forgiveness and trust: now trust is a totally different thing to forgiveness, a person may forgive another but that does not always mean that they will become a bosom friend or even have contact with the person who is forgiven, in many cases that would be foolishness. The woman who had the acid thrown in her face or a girl who has been raped will have to forgive to set their own heart free from the hurt and bitterness and everything that stems from it, but they would be foolish to have immediate contact with the men who had so cruelly abused them until they had proven their honest heartfelt remorse and done whatever is needed to heal the deep wound they have inflicted on their innocent victims and proven they can be trusted. Forgiveness is never easy because it always involves forgiving someone who has hurt or offended us, to overcome the reluctance to forgive it is helpful to look at Jesus who though we were sinners against God was prepared to be cruelly nailed to the cross, and even more while in tremendous suffering he prayed: -

- Father forgive them for they know not what they do (Luke 23:32-34).

There is no malice in the heart of Christ only love and if we are to have a deeper relationship with God we cannot do it with malice in our hearts. Take the hurt and pain to the throne of God and before the bloodstained cross and forgive and embrace the eternal love and grace of God who showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

MARK 11:27-33

Was the Baptism of John from Heaven or from Man?

- **Mark 11:27-33:** And they (Jesus and the twelve) (v11) came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, ²⁸and they said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?" ²⁹Jesus said to them "I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me." ³¹And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ³²But shall we say, 'From man?'— they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. ³³So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

NOTICE: Jesus was not asking if John was from heaven, but whether his teaching of Baptism was from heaven (v30). The phrase from heaven or came from heaven is Jewish language meaning approved of God, sent from or sent by God contrasted with being approved of man or sent by man. The Old Testament prophets could be spoken of as being sent from heaven meaning sent by God because they had the authority of God and spoke His message. It is the same when the Bible says, Jesus came from heaven. It is simply a Jewish way of saying he was sent by God (it can also embrace the fact that he was born of God). The Jews avoided using God's name for fear of blaspheming the LORD so they would often use the expression, sent from heaven and the Kingdom of heaven, the first means sent from God and the second means the Kingdom of God. The Pharisees were of the tribe of Levi who God had established as the Levitical priesthood; in this sense the Levites were sent from heaven meaning they had the authority of God.

The brilliance of Jesus: the mountain that will be thrown into the sea (v23) is again seen here in the authority of the chief priests, scribes and elders. They had tremendous power over the people of Israel because they belonged either to the household of Aaron or the Levitical tribe of Levi and therefore had all the authority of Moses. The chief priests, scribes and elders try to trap Jesus by asking him who gave him authority to minister, but Jesus was brilliant at asking questions that put the religious rulers in an almost impossible position to answer. He asks the religious

leaders, "Was John's Baptism from heaven or from man?" This put them in an impossible position to answer. If they had said from heaven, (meaning John was in the will of God) then they would condemn themselves, because they rejected him, and if they had said he was not sent of God, all those following John would have rose up against them. So, the Pharisees gave no answer. This was the brilliance of Jesus, he never agued or quarrelled, but simply put those trying to trap him in conversation in positions that they could not respond to without their answer turning against them.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

Bible House of Grace