

Bible Stories for Adults

Challenges in the Temple

Mark 11:1 - 12:40

Opening

Gathering: How does it feel when someone asks you a difficult question with no clear good answer?

Today's Focus: Jesus spent the first couple of days of His final week in the temple challenging and being challenged by the religious leaders.

Key Verses: *The Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap Him in His words.* Matthew 22:15

From then on no one dared ask Him any more questions. Mark 12:34

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Palm Sunday (*Mark 11:1-11*) = Last week's lesson

How did Jesus begin the last week of His ministry? = Had arrived the day before in Bethany
John 12:1, 12-15 = Rode into Jerusalem in a king's procession as prophesied in Zechariah 9:9

What did He do when He arrived in Jerusalem?

Mark 11:11 = Visited the temple then returned to Bethany for the night

No Figgy Pudding (*Mark 11:12-14, 20-26*)

How did Jesus begin His last Monday?

Mark 11:12-14 = Cursed a fig tree for not bearing any fruit

What effect did this curse from Jesus have?

Mark 11:20-21 = The tree was completely dead (*withered from the roots*) the next morning

How could this dead, fruitless tree serve as a faith lesson for Jesus' disciples?

James 2:26 = *Faith without deeds (fruit) is dead*

How did Jesus make sure the disciples caught this lesson?

Mark 11:22-25 = Taught them about the power of faith

What might be a later scribal addition because v25 is so similar to what Jesus said in Matthew 6:14?

Mark 11:26 (see NIV note) = A repeat of Matthew 6:15 from the Sermon on the Mount

Temple Déjà Vu (*Mark 11:15-18*)

What did Jesus do on Monday after cursing the fig tree?

Mark 11:15-17 = Entered the temple area and drove out the moneychangers and dove sellers

Why does this story sound like we already studied it?

John 2:13-17 = He had done the same thing at the beginning of His ministry

Bazaars of Annas - Temple marketplace owned by High Priest Annas

Animals for sacrifice were to be unblemished as approved by a priest

Certified animals were available for purchase in the temple markets

Unclean Roman money needed to be changed to clean temple money for offerings

How did the leaders react to Jesus' attack on the Bazaars of Annas at the beginning of His ministry?

John 2:18-22 = They asked to see His authority to show such zeal for God's House

How did the leaders react to Jesus' attack on the Bazaars of Annas at the end of His ministry?

Mark 11:18 = Strengthened their resolve to kill Him; Couldn't oppose Him before the crowds

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Jesus Came to Draw All to Himself (*John 12:20-50*)

What story did John record that is believed to have taken place on this Monday?

John 12:20-22 = Philip and Andrew took some Greeks to meet (literally *interview*) Jesus

What did Jesus feel was important to tell these Greeks and the rest of the crowd?

John 12:23-24 (23-26) = His time had come to fulfill His ministry

How did Jesus feel about what lay in store for Him now that *the hour has come*?

John 12:27 = His heart was troubled, but He was willing because it was His purpose

Was the purpose of His hour so that He would be glorified?

John 12:28 = No, it was to bring glory to the Father

Did the Father speak in order to encourage Jesus during His time of trouble?

John 12:29-30 = No, it was for the people

How was it for the benefit of the people and of the Greeks who had come to Him?

John 12:31-33 = God would drive out Satan and draw all to Jesus – including the Greeks

What else are we told about Jesus' last Monday?

Mark 11:19 = He returned to Bethany with His disciples for the night

Challenged by Jewish Leadership (*Mark 11:27-33*)

How did Jesus spend the next few days of His last week?

Luke 21:37-38 = Spent the days teaching in the temple and nights in Bethany

What did Jesus do on Tuesday after He used the dead fig tree to teach His disciples about living faith?

Mark 11:27 = They went to the temple - as usual

Did the Jewish priests, teachers and elders come to try to arrest Jesus or kick Him out of the temple?

Mark 11:28 = They couldn't go against crowd support; Tried to get Him to discredit Himself

How did Jesus answer their challenge?

Mark 11:29-32 = Gave a question about God's authority they wouldn't be willing to answer

How did they decide to respond?

Mark 11:33 = Wouldn't commit; Jesus didn't answer knowing they wouldn't accept His answer

Challenges to the Jewish Leadership (*Mark 12:1-11*)

How did Jesus turn the table and challenge the Jewish leaders' claim to authority?

Mark 12:1a = Told parables that hit them close to home

What was the first parable we have that Jesus gave in response to their challenge?

Matthew 21:28-30 = The Parable of the Two Sons

How did Jesus point the leaders to His point in this parable?

Matthew 21:31-32 = Clarified that following God is better than just saying you follow Him

What parable did He then give that is the only one included in Matthew, Mark and Luke?

Matthew 21:33-34 = A parable of a landowner who took great care in preparing a nice vineyard

Why is this called the Parable of the Tenants?

Matthew 21:35-37 = The focus is on the wicked tenants who rejected the landowner's servants

Did the tenants accept the landowner's son?

Matthew 21:38-39 = No, they were wicked and killed him

How did Jesus get the leaders to incriminate themselves in this parable?

Matthew 21:40-41 = Asked them what the landowner should do, they called for punishment

How did Jesus make sure they recognized that they were the wicked tenants?

Matthew 21:42-44 = He said that God would do just as they prescribed

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Setting a Trap (Mark 12:12-13)

How did the Jewish leaders feel about Jesus' parables?

Mark 12:12 = Strengthened their resolve to kill Him, but *they were afraid of the crowd*

Since they were afraid of the crowd's support of Jesus, what did the Jewish leaders try next?

Luke 20:20 = *They sent spies ... to catch Jesus in something He said* - public support to arrest

To what extent would they go to try to trap Jesus?

Mark 12:13 = Pharisees and Herodians teamed up - natural enemies allied against Jesus

Pharisees opposed foreign rule of Romans, Herodians supported Herod – Rome-appointed king

Strike 1 - Support God or the Government? (Mark 12:14-17)

How did these spies pretend to be honest in order to get Jesus to speak carelessly?

Matthew 22:15-16 = Said it was clear that He spoke God's truths and didn't sugar-coat it

How did they then try to trap Jesus?

Matthew 22:17 = Asked an unanswerable question - pay taxes to the Romans or not?

If Jesus said yes, He would appear to side with the Romans and alienate the Jews

If He said no, He would be promoting law-breaking and could be arrested

Did Jesus recognize the trap?

Matthew 22:18 = Yes and He pointed it out to the crowd who was watching

How did Jesus answer this unanswerable question? = Used them in an object lesson for impact

Matthew 22:19-21 = Pointed out that it isn't *either or*, but *and*

What was the result of this trap?

Matthew 22:22 = It surprisingly backfired, they had no follow-up so they left

Strike 2 - Heavenly Complications (Mark 12:18-27)

What group of the Jewish Leadership Entrapment Tag Team tried next?

Mark 12:18 = Sadducees - elite leaders, didn't believe in heaven, angels or resurrection

What trap did this group try to set for Jesus?

Mark 12:19-23 = A technicality of heaven; They really didn't care since they rejected heaven

Did Jesus recognize the trap?

Mark 12:24-25 = Yes, and He pointed out the ignorance involved in their question

How did He turn the table on this group? = Not a minor mistake, but a very costly one

Mark 12:26-27 = He showed how the Scriptures make it clear that heaven is real

What was the result of this trap?

Matthew 22:33 = It also backfired and the crowd was even more interested in hearing Jesus

Strike 3 - The Lawyer's Expertise (Mark 12:28-31)

What group of the Jewish Leadership Entrapment Tag Team decided to take another shot?

Matthew 22:34-35 = The Pharisees crafted a challenge by one of their experts

What was the challenging trap? = Whatever He picked, the expert would find a more important one

Mark 12:28 = Pick the most important of all of God's Laws

How did Jesus answer this unanswerable question? = By loving God with all, you obey all

Mark 12:29-30 = Gave familiar words from the Great Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

How did Jesus go further to reveal the importance of the question and answer? = Not just a challenge

Mark 12:31 = Quoted from Leviticus 19:18 to summarize second tablet of 10 Commandments

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The Lawyer's Reaction (Mark 12:32-34)

How did the expert lawyer respond to Jesus' answer?

Mark 12:32-33 = He conceded and commended Jesus for His great insight and answer

How did Jesus respond to the lawyer's understanding?

Mark 12:34a = He commended and encouraged him

The Trap Springs Back (Mark 12:35-37)

After withstanding the traps of the Jewish leaders, how did Jesus turn the tables?

Matthew 22:41-42 = He asked them an "easy" question about the Messiah (Himself)

How did this become a trap for the Pharisees?

Matthew 22:43-45 = He asked how the Messiah could be both David's descendant and Lord

What did the Jewish leadership decide after their traps backfired?

Matthew 22:46 = *From that day on no one dared to ask Him any more questions*

Warnings for the Crowd (Mark 12:37-40)

What did the people in the crowd think of this contest of spiritual wits?

Mark 12:37 = *The large crowd listened to Him with delight*

What did Jesus say to the crowd after these challenges were ended?

Mark 12:40 = He warned them to be wary of hypocritical spiritual leaders

Why did Jesus see the hypocritical spiritual leaders as so dangerous?

Matthew 23:13 = By misleading people they shut the kingdom of heaven to them

Matthew records a more complete version of Jesus' warnings in Matthew 23

See the study *Scribes and Pharisees* (NT409) for more detailed insights

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. What fruits have my faith produced?
(Mark 11:12-14, 20-24; Matthew 7:15-20; 12:33; 13:18-23; Luke 6:43-45; John 15:1-17; James 2:14-26; 3:11-12)
2. When have I caught myself in a sin and repented (turned from that sin)?
(Matthew 21:28-32; Jonah 3; Luke 19:8-9; Acts 26:9-20; Romans 2:1-8; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11; Revelation 3:2-3)
3. When have I had good intentions to follow God only to fall away?
(Matthew 21:28-32; Nehemiah 9; Mark 4:13-20; 14:27-31, 66-72; Galatians 3:6-9; Revelation 2:4-5)
4. How well do I give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's?
(Mark 12:13-17; Nehemiah 10:35; Psalm 116:12; Malachi 3:8-10; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17)
5. In what ways have I lived in the hypocrisy that Jesus warned against?
(Matthew 6:1-18; 23:1-32; Mark 7:6-8; 13:38-40; 1 John 2:3-6; 4:20)