

Pentwater Bible Church

Gospel of Mark

Message 43

February 8, 2015



Christ Driving the Money Changers out of the Temple by El Greco cir. 1600

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Mark
Message Forty-Three

JESUS CASTS OUT THE MONEY CHANGERS

February 8, 2015

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Casting Out the Money Changers by Giotto Cir 14th Century

THE BARREN FIG TREE AND THE TEMPLE

Mark 11:12-19

¹² And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:
¹³ and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. ¹⁴ And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

¹⁵ And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; ¹⁶ and would not [allow] that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. ¹⁷ And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. ¹⁸ And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. ¹⁹ And when even was come, he went out of the city (KJV).

THE BARREN FIG TREE

Mark 11:12

¹² *And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry (KJV).*

After resting for the night in the safety of Bethany Jesus and the disciples left for Jerusalem. This would be the pattern for most of the last week before the crucifixion, nights in Bethany, days in Jerusalem. Since Jesus was fully divine and fully man He experienced hunger like all human beings do. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the Most High God Himself and He has all of the attributes of God.

The following facts affirm this:

1. Titus 2:13 says that as Christians we are *"looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus."*
2. Upon seeing the resurrected Christ, Thomas cried out, *"My Lord and my God!"* (John 20:28). Hebrews 1:8 gives us God the Father's direct testimony about Christ: *"But of the Son He says, 'Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever'"*
3. The apostle John calls Jesus *"the only begotten God"* (John 1:18).
4. He knows everything (Matthew 16:21; Luke 11:17; John 4:29)
5. Is everywhere (Matthew 18:20; 28:20; Acts 18:10),
6. He has all power (Matthew 8:26, 27; 28:18; John 11:38-44; Luke 7:14-15; Revelation 1:8),
7. He depends on nothing outside of Himself for life (John 1:4; 14:6; 8:58)
8. He rules over everything (Matthew 28:18; Revelation 19:16; 1:5)
9. He never began to exist and never will cease to exist (John 1:1; 8:58)
10. Jesus is our Creator (Colossians 1:16).

The apostle John says that anyone who denies that Jesus is man is of the spirit of the anti-Christ (1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 7). Jesus' humanity is affirmed by the following facts:

1. He was born as a baby from a human mother (Luke 2:7; Galatians 4:4)
2. He became weary (John 4:6)
3. He became thirsty (John 19:28)
4. He became hungry (Matthew 4:2, Mark 11:12)
5. He experienced the full range of human emotions such as marvel (Matthew 8:10), weeping, and sorrow (John 11:35).

He lived on earth just as we do. In other words, everything that God is, Jesus is. For Jesus is God.

Hebrews 4:15

¹⁵ *For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (KJV).*

Mark 11:13-14

¹³ and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. ¹⁴ And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it (KJV).

Fig trees were a standard source of inexpensive food in Israel. In March the fig tree had small edible buds and the following month it would produce large attractive leaves. In May the buds would fall off leaving the full figs. This incident was taking place in April and there were leaves but no buds. It should have had buds but there were none. The appearance of leaves gave some promise of fruit but there was nothing. Jesus cursed the tree by saying, “No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.” In doing so He was making reference to the Nation Israel who should have been spiritually fruitful but was not. Prophetically Jeremiah in a scathing denunciation of Judah, said, “There will be no figs on the tree, and their leaves will wither” (Jeremiah 8:13). Like the fig tree with its leaves but no fruit, the Jews had a beautiful Temple and a rich history of God choosing them to bring His Word to this world but were spiritually bankrupt. Their Messiah was in their midst and they were about to kill Him.

JESUS GOES TO THE TEMPLE

Mark 11:15-16

¹⁵ And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; ¹⁶ and would not [allow] that any man should carry any vessel through the temple (KJV).

God had decreed in the Mosaic Law that the people must bring sacrificial animals to the Tabernacle (Temple) from their *own* flocks (Deuteronomy 12:5-7). The sacrificed animal was to be pure and without defect (Leviticus 1:2-3) In this the individual would give something personally valuable to God as a temporary atonement for their sins. At the time of Jesus this was not always practicable.

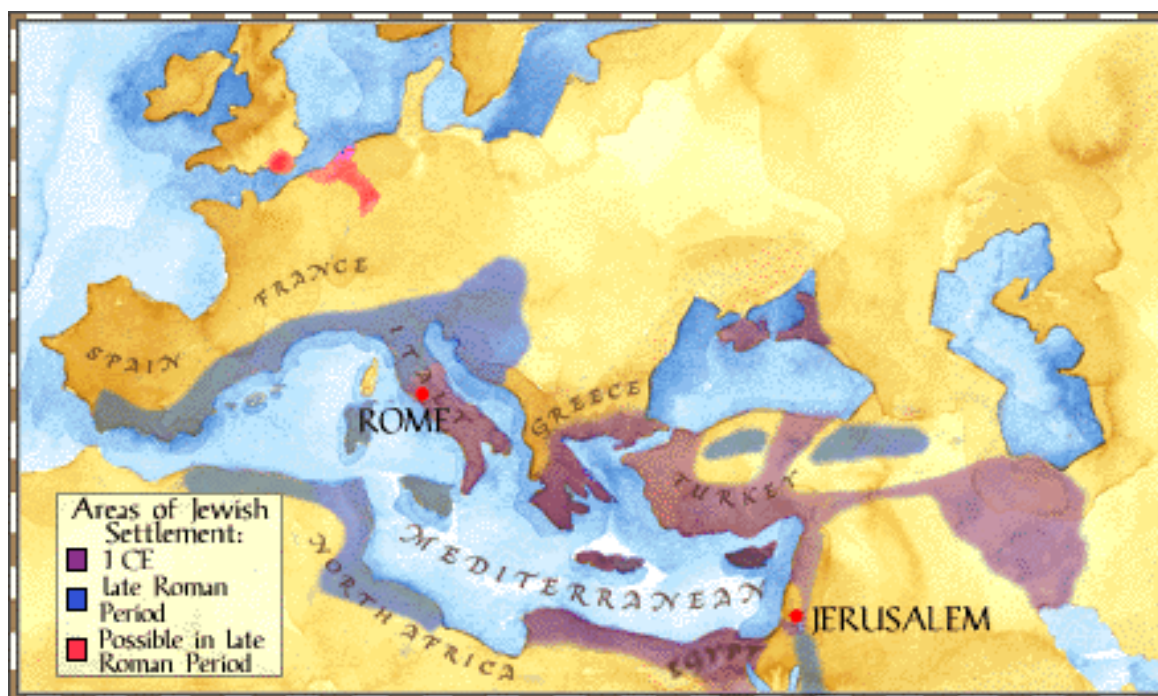
With the Assyrian captivity of the northern ten tribes in 722 B.C. and the Babylonian captivity of the Jews of Jerusalem and its resultant destruction of the Temple the Jews were scattered to many different countries. Additionally the Egyptian king Ptolemy I (323–285 BC) captured many Jews and carried them off to Egypt about 300 BC. Those exiles populated Alexandria, a city thereafter noted as a center of both Greek and Jewish scholarship. Elsewhere large colonies of Jews were exported from Babylonia to Phrygia and Lydia by Antiochus III (the Great) of Syria (223–187 BC). The Romans transplanted a sizable group of Jews to Rome. The Roman general Pompey took many there as slaves in the first century BC.¹ The Jews were required to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year for the three major Festivals to the Lord called the Shalosh Regalim. They were Pesach (Passover), which was coupled with the festival of Unleavened Bread, Shavot (Weeks/Pentecost) and Sukkot (Booths). By the time of Jesus more Jews lived in the

¹ Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). In *Tyndale Bible dictionary* (p. 381). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

diaspora than in Israel. How widely the Jews were scattered is suggested in the NT book of Acts, where Luke listed Jerusalem’s visitors: *Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya toward Cyrene, visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabians* (Acts 2:9–11). Those Jews of “the Diaspora” were in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost.²

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

16 Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before Jehovah thy God in the place which he shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before Jehovah empty: 17 every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of Jehovah thy God which he hath given thee (ASV 1901).



Map of the 1st Century Jewish Diaspora from: <http://www.mrstpierre.com/phoenicians-and-isrealites.html>

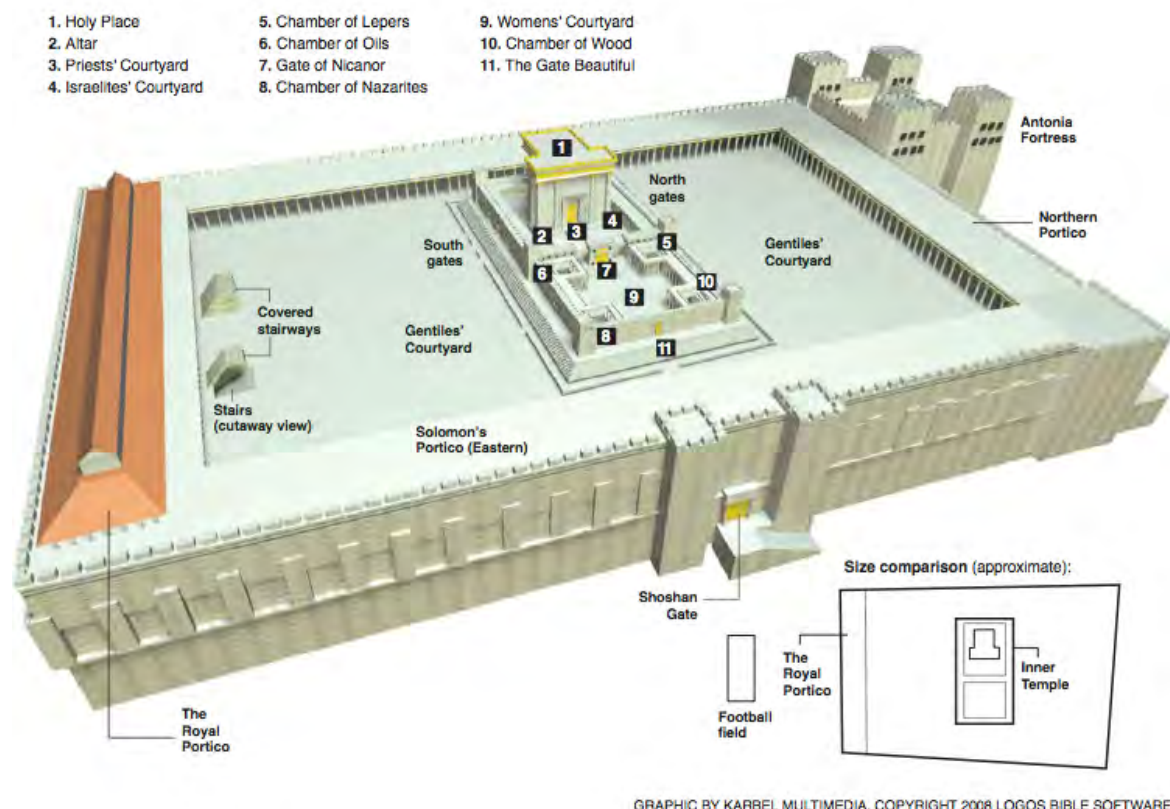
Adherence to the Mosaic Law regarding offering their own pure unblemished animals for sacrifice had become impractical for the Jews in the diaspora returning for the three major festivals. They would buy an animal for their required sacrifices from the markets on the Mount of Olives, which had been set up by the religious leadership. The native Jews who brought their own animals were frequently accused by the authorities as having a blemished, unacceptable animal. They forced them to purchase one from them. One such market was set up in the Court of the Gentiles. This was a huge area just outside the temple surrounding the Temple. It was in competition with the markets on the Mount of Olives and forced the sales on the people. The Gentile converts to Judaism had to stay in this area for their worship activities. No Gentile was allowed beyond this area. Within this area the High Priest Caiaphas had authorized a market for the sale of ritually pure

² Ibid

sacrificial animals as well as wine, oil, and salt. It was also necessary for the pilgrims of the diaspora to change their money into the local currency.

Herod's Temple on the Temple Mount

King Herod the Great began renovations on the Temple in approximately 20–19 BC. The entire temple expansion, including the massive Temple Mount, was not complete until approximately AD 62–64, only to be destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.



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Money from three sources circulated in Israel in New Testament times: imperial money (Roman), provincial money (Greek), and local money (Jewish). Money changers provided the required Tyrian (Jewish) coinage for the annual half-shekel temple tax (Exodus 30:12–16) required of all male Jews 20 years of age and up. This was in exchange for their Greek and Roman currency, which featured human portraits considered idolatrous. Though a small surcharge was permitted in these transactions, dealings were not free from extortion and fraud. In addition (according to Mark 11:16) people loaded with merchandise were taking shortcuts through this area, making it a thoroughfare from one part of the city to another.³ While the money changers were necessary they occupied a place of worship and did a large amount of business at inflated rates. This along with the exorbitant prices charged for the animals caused Jesus to *cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves.*

³ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). Mark. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 157–158). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Other certified markets were available outside the Temple Mount. He recognized that the Gentile converts did not have adequate space to worship so He *would not* |allow| *that any man should carry any vessel through the temple*. This was His action to free up space so the Gentiles could worship because the merchants were using this as a thoroughfare for their merchandise. One can only imagine the chaos with animals bellowing and merchants haggling, which is a complete desecration of the intent of the Temple. The enormity of the temple industry may be further appreciated by a comment from Josephus that in A.D. 66, the year the temple was completed, 255,600 lambs were sacrificed for Passover!⁴ Even the office of the High Priest had become corrupt.

The High Priest was supposed to come from the line of Aaron the brother of Moses. He was the first High Priest (ha Kohen Gadol). The office was to be hereditary and to be preserved in perpetuity in his family (Exodus 29:9, 29). The Toldot of Moses clearly demonstrates that ten generation from him is Zadok (Exodus 6:16-25). When the Jews came back from the Babylonian captivity Joshua, a Zadokite was ordained High Priest (Zechariah 3:6-10, Haggai 1:12). Since there was no more kings for Israel Zerubbabel assumed the role of civil administrator in Israel and continued to maintain the separation of civil and religious leaders unlike King Uzziah (II Chronicles 26:18-19). Further the sons of Zadok will have a special place in the Millennial Temple (Ezekiel 40-48).

The High Priest was charged with distributing the tithe that came into the Levites (Numbers 18:28). In general the family of the High Priest was wealthy but became enormously wealthy through the profits of the sacrifice sales and temple taxes. Additionally, the High Priest's office had become a political appointment by King Herod who served at the pleasure of the Roman occupiers. The functional separation of King and High Priest was no longer being carried out since Herod controlled the office and they would defer to him. The High Priest was also not of the sons of Zadok but just a political appointee. All these factors caused Jesus to act out aggressively against this blatant disregard for the Temple activities.

JESUS BEGINS TO TEACH

Mark 11:17

¹⁷ *And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves (KJV).*

Following a stunning display of resentment toward the massive corruption within the Temple system He began to teach the many people who crowded around Him. He uses a question to affirm a truth "*Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer?*" This comes from Isaiah 56:7 exactly as it appears in the Septuagint and explains God's purpose for the Temple: a place of prayer for all nations. God desired that both Gentiles and Jews use the temple as a place of worship (John 12:20). This was relevant to Mark's designated audience in Rome. By His actions Jesus was claiming authority over the Temple and its activities. He was usurping the High Priest (Hosea 9:15; Malachi 3:1-5).

⁴ Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1987). *The works of Josephus: complete and unabridged*. Peabody: Hendrickson.

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS FEAR HIM

Mark 11:18-19

¹⁸ And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. ¹⁹ And when even was come, he went out of the city (KJV).

The Jewish priests were mostly Pharisees, the teachers of the Law and Sadducees who were wealthy upper class types. Both were very political. While the two groups had general contempt for each other they were coming together to silence Jesus. He was undermining their authority in the Temple activities and His knowledge of the genuine Law of God far surpassed their self-made corrupt version designed to enslave the people. His popularity with the people kept the authorities from arresting Him immediately. They were afraid of Him.

As usual during this last week of His pre crucifixion he left the city before nightfall. Presumably he went to the safety of the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus in Bethany. He knew the authorities were now plotting to kill Him and He was going to make sure it would be on the Passover as well as out in the open for all to see.

Unfortunately the sins of mankind in the religious arenas have not change much. Corruption, business like activities and a lust for power and control pervade Christianity. Coupled with corrupt doctrine it bodes well for the near return of Jesus.

II Timothy 4:2-4

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴ and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (KJV).

PRAYERS, FORGIVENESS AND JESUS' AUTHORITY

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

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