

"Since the fruit of the fig tree begins to appear about the same time as the leaves, ... the appearance of leaves in full bloom should have indicated that fruit ... was already growing. Jesus' actions here have symbolic importance, signifying the hypocrisy of all who have the appearance that they are bearing fruit but in fact are not. The specific reference, though, is to Israel, since in the OT the **fig tree** often serves as a metaphor for Israel and its standing before God."²

5. Jesus arrives back in the temple courts that he had seen the night before (v. 11).
- What does he do? (vv. 15–16; 📖* Consider how good king Hezekiah restored the temple in 2 Chronicles 29:3–8, 15–19.)

"But for [Jesus], the supreme blasphemy was that this place, which was to have been in God's purpose a place of prayer for non-Jewish people of every nation, ...[became] a business-house, and for dishonest business at that (11:17). ...It is natural that Mark, a gospel written for the Gentiles, should record the passionate concern of Jesus that Gentiles should be able to worship God in the temple."³

- What has provoked Jesus' anger? (v. 17)

- Why is his anger appropriate? (Psalm 69:9a; Isaiah 56:6–7)

6. What are the differing responses to Jesus? (v.18)

7. On their return to the temple the next morning, Peter notices that the fig tree Jesus cursed has withered (vv. 20–21).
- What does the fig tree symbolize? (Hosea 9:10; Jeremiah 8:4–6, 12–13)

- What connection do you see between the cursing of the fig tree and the temple cleansing?

8. What is your response to the power of Jesus to both curse and cleanse?

9. Jesus uses the withered fig tree to instruct the disciples in faith-filled prayer.⁴ How should believers pray? (vv. 22–25; John 14:12–14; 15:7–8)

“whatever you ask. ... Some have misused this verse by telling people that if they pray for physical healing (or for some other specific request) and if they just have enough faith, then they can have confidence that God has already done (or will do) whatever they ask. But we must always have the same perspective that Jesus had—that is, confidence in God’s power but also submission to his will”⁵

Read Mark 11:27–33.


10. What motivates the religious leaders to question Jesus? (v. 28; Recall Mark 1:22 and 11:18.)

11. What questions do they ask Jesus? (v. 28)

12. Jesus responds with a question to the religious leaders about John’s baptism (vv. 29–30). Recall what happened when Jesus was baptized by John (Mark 1:9–11). Why do the religious leaders avoid answering Jesus’ question? (vv. 31–32)

13. What are the ways you see Jesus demonstrating his authority throughout this passage?

Write a prayer of praise to King Jesus.

This lesson on Mark’s Gospel is adapted from “Life of a Servant” by New Life Glenside Women’s Bible Study, 2002–2003.  indicates the passage is for further study.

¹ *The Holy Bible*, New International Version (NIV), (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1986), 895 (note on Mark 11:9).

² *The ESV Study Bible*, with notes by Hans F. Baylor (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 1918 (highlight on Mark 11:13–14).

³ R. Alan Cole, *Mark*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 257–258.

⁴ R. Alan Cole, “Mark” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, consulting editors D. A. Carson et al., (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1994), 968.

⁵ Baylor, 1919 (highlight on Mark 11:24–25).