

Week #1

**Mark 11:1-25; Matthew 21:1-21; Luke 19:28-47;
John 12:12-19; John 2:13-25**

“Phony Figs and Other Things”

Scripture Stories: The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, The Cursing of a Fig Tree, and The Cleansing of the Temple

Focus Scripture: Mark 11:15 " When they arrived back in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the people buying and selling animals for sacrifices. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves."

Overview: Today a colt carries Jesus into Jerusalem and the crowds have gathered to shout his praises. But, there are a couple of hints of trouble. There's a problem with a fig tree and a problem with the temple. In this week's session Jesus reveals his feelings towards the phony religious people. Try to get a glimpse of the depth of his passion. By the end of this session Jesus will reveal more of the Kingdom of God.

SOME DEFINITIONS:

HALLEL: Psalms 113-118, typically part of the Passover Seder. "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" is from Psalm 118.

GREAT HALLEL: Psalm 136, "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His love endures forever."

FIG TREE: A symbol of Israel. (see Proverbs 27:18, Jeremiah 8:13, Hosea 9:10 and -if you dare- Song of Solomon 2:13)

CULTURAL AND/OR HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Fig trees bear fruit in two stages. First, from March to April, little nuggets are formed called taqsh. These are edible. By June the taqsh have all fallen off and the figs are growing and getting ready for harvest. If a fig tree bears no taqsh, it will bear no figs.

Jerusalem, Passover week 30'ish A.D.: Jerusalem is an occupied city. Rome oversees commerce to collect taxes, and keep the peace. Jews are fractured into political camps, the Hellenists (who side with Rome), the Zealots (who are radically against Rome), the Pharisees (who oppose Rome, but are determined to keep the peace between the Zealots and Rome). Jesus has achieved “rock star status” in all the surrounding territories because he heals crowds of people, and talks about God’s kingdom with authority. Zealots and the crowds believe he’s the Messiah who will conquer Rome with his “magical powers” and usher in a new kingdom like King David’s. It is Passover Week. Jews travel from all over the territories to celebrate (the liberation of their ancestors from slavery in Egypt) in the heart of their religious “Mecca”, Jerusalem, the city on a hill. All factions are present, and everyone is on edge. We enter this story on the day Jesus orchestrates a dramatic entry into this emotionally charged atmosphere. And he makes a splash!

Read the scriptures on the next page

- Take some time to imagine you are there.
- If you were there, what would your 5 senses be experiencing?
 - What do you see?
 - What do you hear?
 - What do you smell?
 - What might you feel?
 - Do you taste anything?
- Are there things in the passage that you've not noticed before?
- Are there clues as to what Jesus may be thinking and feeling?
- What do you wonder about?
- If Jesus is the embodiment of God, what do you glean about the nature of God from Jesus' words and actions?

