

Monday

Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:12-19;
 Luke 19:45-48; John 12:20-50

“And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling. . . . And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them” (Matthew 21:12-14).

Jesus had now arrived in Jerusalem. He would never be “Man of the Year” on the cover of a magazine or receive the Nobel Peace Prize, but He became our Savior! He rode on a donkey (a symbol of peace); He did not ride on a horse (a symbol of war). Since Solomon, no king had ridden into town on a donkey (see 1 Kings 1:38).

The issue, as always, was authority. On this day, Monday, Jesus would present His credentials.

JESUS CURSED A FIG TREE

Jesus was hungry. He saw a fig tree with leaves and was disappointed to find no fruit. He condemned this tree forever (see Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-26). This is not the Jesus most of us have created in our minds. His action on this occasion is one of only two negative (destructive) miracles that Jesus performed during His ministry (see Matthew 8:28-34). It harmed nature, but not

humanity. He was giving an object lesson that the apostles had to learn. The sin was pride and hypocrisy. The fig tree claimed to have fruit. It did not. Jewish leaders claimed to be of God. They were not. The Jews should have been humbled to be called by God. Instead, they thought they were superior and invincible.

Peter was amazed by the sudden death of that fig tree. Why? The apostles had seen Jesus walk on water, heal the sick, and raise the dead. Still, they were shocked to see the fig tree wither at Jesus' command!

JESUS CLEANSED THE TEMPLE

Next, Jesus went to the temple. Without introduction, He began teaching. On the side, He healed the blind and the lame (see Matthew 21:12–16; Mark 11:15–18; Luke 19:45–48). The chief priests and the scribes saw the marvelous things He did (Matthew 21:15) and were surely made aware of His deity.

The temple area was to be revered, but it was being abused! The people were using it as a shortcut through Jerusalem; they were using it as a place to exercise avarice and greed.

The Jews had to pay the temple tax with the Hebrew shekel. Those coming to Jerusalem had to exchange their Roman denarii or Greek drachmas for temple shekels in order to pay the tax. The money changers charged an exorbitant amount to exchange the worshipers' money.

As He cleansed the temple, Jesus did not attack men, but He did chase them away. He did rearrange the furniture. He quoted the Bible: "My house shall be called a house of prayer"; but you are making it a robbers' den" (Matthew 21:13; see Jeremiah 7:11). He was not a coward or a "sissy." He was a "man among men." He not only was

physically strong, but He also used the Scriptures mightily. His language was pointed and true.

JESUS CONTINUED HIS TEACHING

In the midst of all this, a delegation of Greeks came, wanting to see Jesus (John 12:20-50).¹ While the Jews sought to kill Him, the Greeks sought to hear Him! Philip was always bringing someone to Jesus. He partnered up with Andrew, and they approached Jesus. Jesus knew “His hour” had come, yet He continued to teach profound truths. He taught that seed must die to live and that those who love their lives will lose them (John 12:21–26).

Then Jesus said in the presence of others who had gathered, “Father, glorify Your name.” For the third time during His life, a voice spoke out of heaven (John 12:28). To some it sounded like thunder, but to Jesus it was a promise of victory. Satan was to be cast out by His death. Jesus declared at this time, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself” (John 12:32).

In spite of this glorious teaching that was accompanied by a mighty miracle, the religious leaders refused to believe. John concluded, “. . . they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God” (John 12:42, 43).

*The cross . . .
there is no other way!*

¹Commentators are not agreed as to whether this discourse was given on Monday or Tuesday. It is the only incident found in the Gospel of John between the Triumphal Entry on Sunday and the Last Supper on Friday.