

The Life and Ministry of Christ, Part 43

Passion Week

Following His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, proclaiming Himself to be the Messiah, Jesus spent the night in Bethany on Sunday. That Monday, Jesus went again into Jerusalem and cleansed the Temple. Then He went back to Bethany and spent the night. Remember that on the way to Jerusalem on Monday, Jesus cursed the fig tree because it had no fruit. Now the next morning as they were going to the Mount of Olives, they passed the dead fig tree. When the disciples were amazed that the fig tree had withered away, Jesus taught them on the power of faith, (Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:11-14, 20-24). Matthew said the fig tree withered away immediately and they were all amazed at the fig tree's rapid response to the Lord's command. Mark said all the disciples saw the tree wither away and the leaves and buds fall to the ground before their eyes. On Monday when they passed by the tree, they noticed the full impact of what Jesus did.

Mark 11:20–22 NKJV Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God.

When Jesus cursed the fig tree, He said, *"Let no one eat fruit from you ever again."* Within twenty-four hours the tree had dried up from the roots. Upon the disciples seeing that the tree had dried up from the roots, Jesus taught about faith. He had instructed them about the value of real faith several times. They had witnessed the difference and power of faith in action. Jesus often took the negative events of life and taught positive lessons. Here is an incredible lesson on the power of faith-filled authoritative prayer.

Mark 11:23–24 NKJV For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Watch the components of this authoritative prayer.

Jesus initially said we are to speak to the mountain.

This involves defining and addressing the mountain, difficulty, or obstacle that is in the way. Consider why and how Jesus spoke to the

fig tree. There were at least three reasons for His cursing the fig tree. The first reason dealt with a human need, He was hungry. The second reason referred to the spiritual condition of Israel and the third was to provide a lesson on faith.

Tell the mountain what it is to do.

Jesus and the disciples were standing before the Mount of Olives when He said this. The Mount of Olives represented an immovable obstacle. Tell the immovable thing to “*Be removed and be cast into the sea.*” We are to be definitive and specific when we pray in faith.

Do not doubt in your heart but believe that what he says will be done.

Real faith is a matter of the heart. When we pray with faith, doubt and unbelief have no place in the heart of the person who prays with authority. If we are to receive the desired results, we must have faith that the immovable obstacle will respond to our prayer.

James 1:6–7 NKJV But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

From what Jesus said, we should be able to move mountains of difficulties by faith. When He cursed the fig tree, He knew it would die.

Mark 11:22-23 NKJV So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.

Mark 11:24 NKJV Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

The disciples were amazed at the speedy response of the fig tree, but Jesus’ reply indicated that this should be expected when we pray and believe that we will receive. The authoritative prayer of faith will be answered. Matthew said the tree withered away immediately and while they were watching the leaves began falling off the tree. Mark said when they came back by on Tuesday the tree had dried up from the roots.

Jesus said, “You will have whatever you say.”

Mark 11:24 NKJV Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Tuesday when Jesus arrived at the Temple, the leaders of the temple

questioned Jesus' authority, Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8

Luke 20:1–2 NKJV Now it happened on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes, together with the elders, confronted Him and spoke to Him, saying, “Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?”

“*These things*” refers to the various facets of His life and ministry. They were questioning Jesus’ authority to say and do everything He did. He had just cleansed the temple the day before and chased out the money changers and vendors who set up businesses in God’s house. Now the leaders questioned His authority to heal, do miracles, and teach in the Temple. Jesus’ actions were not sanctioned by the chief priest, scribes, elders or an influential rabbi. They had not given their approval for Him to teach and they did not approve of the miracles He did on the Sabbath. Throughout His ministry, the leaders and rulers of the Jews were curious about Jesus’ origins, the source of His wisdom, the way He performed these amazing feats, and the authority that granted Him the power to do them.

The leaders of the Sanhedrin asked, “Where did You get the authority to do these things?”

To be a teacher of the Jews, a person had to have approval of some rabbi or divine authority. One was an earthly and the other a divine authority.

Luke 20:3–4 NKJV But He answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one thing, and answer Me: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?”

John the Baptist had a huge following although he was not appointed by some rabbi or the Sanhedrin.

Luke 20:5–6 NKJV And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men,’ all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet.”

John the Baptist warned them to flee from God’s wrath and do works that were worthy of repentance. He was the forerunner of the Messiah who paved the way for what Jesus did. John preached accountability before God and he promised forgiveness. His ministry concluded the

Old Testament prophetic voice that paved the way for the Messiah.

Luke 20:7–8 NKJV So they answered that they did not know where it was from. And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Their refusal to answer Jesus disqualified them to question Him. In response to their refusal to answer, Jesus taught three parables, Matthew 21:28–22:14. Each of the parables referred to a group of people losing their position and being replaced by a people they despised. The change asks, “Who are the true people of God?” We will look at two of the parables now.

The parable of the two sons shows the difference between saying and doing.

Matthew 21:28–29 NKJV But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went.

Matthew 21:30–31 NKJV Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said to Him, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.

Jesus immediately applied this to the religious leaders who were high on talk and low on true righteousness.

Matthew 21:32 NKJV For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.

The tax collectors and harlots were like the first son. They made no pretense of listening to John the Baptist, but later they repented and followed Jesus. Sinners entered the kingdom, while the self-righteous religious leaders did not believe in Him. John came preaching repentance and faith and the religious leaders did not repent or believe.

While continuing to speak to the religious leaders, Jesus gave the parable of the vineyard, Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-18

Matthew 21:33 NKJV Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.

This parable is a message of God's care over Israel. He placed a hedge around Israel and built a watchtower. He chose and separated them from every other nation and people. He preserved them as His own distinct people and gave them His providential care so they would produce fruit for God.

Isaiah 5:4 NKJV What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?

In Isaiah 5:1-7, the prophecy spoke of Israel's failure to live up to God's expectations. The focus here was the failure of Israel's leadership and their rejection of God's Son.

Matthew 21:34–36 NKJV Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them.

God gave the care of His "vineyard" to the religious leaders. God gave careful instructions to the priests and Levites. God repeatedly sent prophets and messengers to call them to return to Him with all their heart. History shows that they persecuted, treated badly and killed some of them.

Matthew 21:37–39 NKJV Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Jesus was saying they knew that He was the Son of God and that they were without excuse in this. Even though they knew that He was the Son of God and the Messiah, they refused to believe in Him. Jesus was prophesying about what the religious leaders are about to do to Him.

They will take Him outside Jerusalem and kill the Son of God.

Matthew 21:40–41 NKJV "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."

Look how they knew what the "owner of the vineyard" would do.

Matthew 21:42 NKJV Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief

cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?

Their rejection and lack of faith in Jesus was a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

Isaiah 53:3 NKJV He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

After telling them that they had rejected Him Whom God had sent, Jesus told them what would happen.

Matthew 21:43–44 NKJV Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.

These words represent a dramatic change and a new community of believers being created. This represents an open door for anyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. There are two interpretations of this verse. First, the kingdom would be taken from the Jewish nation and would be given to the Gentiles. Second, the kingdom would be given to the church. Peter tells us who this nation is that will be blessed.

1 Peter 2:9 NKJV But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...

By rejecting God's Son and Savior, the leaders were bringing upon themselves destruction.

Matthew 21:45–46 NKJV Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.

List some things that demonstrated the Lord's authority.