

# 14

# The Jesus Identity

## Studies in Mark's Gospel

### Introduction: Mark 10:46-11:25

The first and greatest Jerusalem temple was built by King Solomon in 950BC (see 1 Kings 6-8). It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587BC. The second temple was built by Zerubbabel (516BC) and was overrun and desecrated repeatedly by the Greeks and Romans in the third and second centuries BC. Herod the Great commenced reconstruction in 20BC and had much of the work completed by 30AD. So it is this third temple—and the religious system it housed-- that Jesus addresses in Mark 11-13.

Jesus actions here take place in the outer courtyard of the temple, the place where women and Gentiles were supposed to come and pray. They were not allowed to approach the 'men only' and 'priests only' areas of the temple.

In this section of Mark's gospel our focus turns to the Temple at Jerusalem—the centre of Jewish worship and the anchor for Israel's hope that God would again save his people. What do you understand was the significance of the temple for a Jewish person?

### Read Mark 10:46-52

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus meets a blind man named Bartimaeus.

1. Why is Bartimaeus an embarrassment?  
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2. Bartimaeus addresses Jesus as 'Son of David'. What is the significance of the title, 'Son of David'? [hint 2 Sam 7:12-16]  
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### Read Mark 11:1-11

Jesus, the 'Son of David', enters Jerusalem in a very deliberately staged way. The prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 comes to mind:

*"Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

3. What implication does Jesus expect people to draw from his arrival in Jerusalem on the donkey?  
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4. Some of those witnessing Jesus' arrival acclaim him by throwing their cloaks on the road, waving palm branches and singing Psalm 118. Why do you think Psalm 118:25-27 is *the* appropriate song for them to sing?  
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5. Think of two adjectives to describe Jesus' reception at the temple (v11)  
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### Read Mark 11:15-19

6. Imagine that you are a resident of Jerusalem who happens to be at the temple when Jesus does these things. What would you be thinking? What are the chief priests thinking?  
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7. What do you think Jesus intends people to understand from his actions here?

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**Read Mark 11:12-14 and 20-21.**

8. Jesus' cursing of the fig tree frames his actions in the temple and provides the key to understanding them. If the fig tree represents peace and prosperity in Israel (see 1 Kings 4:25; Joel 2:22; Micah 4:4; Zech 3:10) what might Jesus be saying about the temple?

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**Read Mark 11:22-25**

Making complete sense of these verses requires a bit of digging around in the Old Testament, but the main idea is clear. In response to the faithless and fruitless Jerusalem temple system, the disciples are to put their faith firmly in God. What seems impossible to them, God is able to do in response to their prayers.

9. What kind of faith is required to move mountains?

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10. What do you do when doubts arise in your prayers?

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**Faith that moves mountains [optional]**

Jesus words about praying that 'this mountain' will be thrown into the ocean make more sense when viewed in their Old Testament context of the book of Zechariah. The specific mountain to which Jesus refers is the Mount of Olives, the mountain they were standing on while looking at the dead Fig Tree. Zechariah 14:1-10 pictures the great and terrible Day of the Lord, when God fights against Israel's enemies and brings judgment against them. And then God himself will arrive at his temple, commencing a new dawning of holiness and security for his people. In split in two. In fact, all the mountains surrounding Jerusalem will be made flat—like being thrown into the sea—and the mountain of Zion, the temple mountain, will be raised up, secure and powerful.

Note that Jesus has already drawn attention to the prophet Zechariah by arriving at Jerusalem

11. With this Old Testament background in view, what specifically is a prayer for 'this mountain' to be thrown into sea? How might we pray in this way today?

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12. When praying The Lord's Prayer we pray 'your kingdom come'. Exactly how do you expect God to answer this prayer?

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