

## **Dr. Mark Jennings, Mark, Session 18, Temple Cursing, Fig Tree, Tenants (Mark 11:12-12:12) Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Jennings, Mark, Session 18, Temple Cursing, Fig Tree, Tenants (Mark 11:12-12:12), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

Dr. Mark Jennings' lecture analyzes Mark 11:12-12:12, focusing on the cursing of the fig tree, the disruption in the temple, and the parable of the tenants. The lecture posits that the seemingly negative act of cursing the fig tree serves as a prophetic parallel to Jesus' judgment on the temple, which he views not as needing cleansing but as being fundamentally corrupt. **Jennings highlights Jesus' authoritative actions in the temple, interpreting them as a symbolic end to its current practices due to its failure to be a house of prayer for all nations.** He emphasizes the connection between Jesus' pronouncements and Old Testament prophecies of judgment. **The parable of the tenants further illustrates the rejection of Jesus, God's son, by the religious leaders, who recognize the allegory's condemnation.** Finally, Jennings notes the subsequent question of Jesus' authority and his response, setting the stage for further conflict with the temple establishment.

**2. 11 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Jennings, Mark, Session 18 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels → Mark).**



**Jennings\_Mark\_Ses  
sion18.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Jennings, Session 18, Temple Cursing, Fig Tree, Tenants (Mark 11:12-12:12)

#### Briefing Document: Mark 11:12-12:12 - Temple Cursing, Fig Tree, and Tenants

**Overview:** This briefing document summarizes Dr. Mark Jennings' lecture on Mark 11:12-12:12, focusing on the interconnected themes of the cursing of the fig tree, Jesus' actions in the temple (referred to as "temple cursing" rather than "cleansing"), and the parable of the wicked tenants. Jennings argues that these episodes are not isolated events but are structurally and thematically linked, revealing Jesus' judgment on the temple and its leadership and foreshadowing a shift in God's relationship with his people.

#### Main Themes and Important Ideas:

##### 1. Interconnectedness of the Fig Tree and the Temple:

- Jennings emphasizes the structural placement of the temple incident being "sandwiched between a miracle story, a cursing of a fig tree, and some comments on prayer." He argues that the fig tree incident is not merely a display of Jesus' anger but a "prophetic picture" and a "visual display, a parable" illustrating his judgment on the temple.
- The leafy but fruitless fig tree symbolizes the temple, which appears outwardly devout but lacks true spiritual fruitfulness. As Jennings states, "the leafy fig tree is a symbol of the temple, healthy in appearance, but bearing no true fruit."
- The cursing of the fig tree, therefore, prefigures Jesus' actions and pronouncements against the temple.

##### 1. Rethinking the "Cleansing" of the Temple as a "Cursing":

- Jennings challenges the traditional title of "cleansing of the temple," suggesting that "cursing" is a more accurate description. He argues that a cleansing implies purification and correction, whereas Jesus' actions point towards a declaration of the temple's end.
- Jesus' actions in the temple – expelling buyers and sellers, overturning tables, and preventing the carrying of vessels – effectively halt the temple's activities. Jennings notes, "In other words, he is, in essence, putting a prophetic stop, a symbolic stop to the activity of the temple."

- The expulsion of both buyers and sellers is significant, as the buying of unblemished sacrificial animals was essential for the temple cult. Stopping this, along with the prevention of carrying anything through the temple, signifies a complete cessation of normal temple operations in that area.

#### 1. **Jesus' Authority and the Purpose of the Temple:**

- Jesus' statement in Mark 11:17, quoting Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11, reveals his understanding of the temple's true purpose and its current state: "'Is it not written, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but you have made it a den of robbers.'"
- Jennings highlights Jesus' use of "my house," suggesting he is acting with profound authority as the representative (or even owner) of the temple.
- He explains that the phrase "den of robbers" from Jeremiah doesn't necessarily mean literal robbery was occurring but that the temple was characterized by those who were like brigands, "violent offender[s], of one who's in revolt" against God's purposes. This contrasts with the temple's intended purpose as a "house of prayer for all the nations," emphasizing the inclusivity that the temple leadership had seemingly abandoned. Mark's inclusion of "for all the nations" is particularly emphasized as aligning with the Gospel's theme of the Gentile mission.

#### 1. **Judgment and Rejection by the Religious Leaders:**

- The religious leaders' response to Jesus' actions and teaching is one of seeking to destroy him: "The chief priests and scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy Him, for they feared Him because of all the crowd and were astonished at His teaching." This demonstrates their understanding of Jesus' challenge to their authority and the temple establishment.
- The withering of the fig tree serves as a confirmation of Jesus' words and a foreshadowing of the temple's fate. Peter's remark, "'Rabbi, look, the fig tree that you cursed has withered,'" highlights the tangible consequence of Jesus' pronouncement.

#### 1. **Prayer and the Future of God's Presence:**

- The seemingly abrupt verses on prayer (Mark 11:22-25) are not an afterthought but provide a crucial insight. In the context of the temple's impending end, Jesus assures his disciples that prayer will continue and be efficacious: "'Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and all will be yours.'"

- Jennings suggests that this implicitly points towards the church as the new center of interaction with God, where prayer will be central even after the temple's destruction. The reference to moving mountains could even allude to the upheaval of the existing order.

#### 1. **Challenge to Authority and the Parable of the Wicked Tenants:**

- The questioning of Jesus' authority by the chief priests, scribes, and elders in Mark 11:27-33 sets the stage for the parable of the wicked tenants in Mark 12:1-12. Their question, "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?" directly addresses the core of Jesus' conflict with the religious establishment.
- Jesus' counter-question about John the Baptist's authority is a strategic move to expose the leaders' hypocrisy and their fear of public opinion. Their inability to answer reveals their unwillingness to acknowledge divine authority when it challenges their own power.
- The parable of the wicked tenants, drawing on Old Testament imagery of Israel as God's vineyard (Isaiah 5), depicts God as the absentee landowner and the religious leaders as the tenants who mistreat and kill the servants (prophets) and ultimately reject and kill the son (Jesus). Jennings points out the unusual reversal where the landowner is not the villain, highlighting the tenants' culpability.
- The parable directly answers the question of Jesus' authority, implicitly identifying him as the beloved son sent by the landowner.
- The inclusion of Psalm 118:22-23 ("The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone") signifies the vindication of the rejected son and his crucial role in God's plan, shifting the imagery from agriculture to the building of a new temple or spiritual structure.
- The religious leaders understand that the parable is directed at them: "They perceived that he told the parable against them." Their subsequent desire to arrest Jesus, tempered by their fear of the people, further solidifies their rejection of him.

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Jennings' lecture provides a detailed analysis of Mark 11:12-12:12, arguing for a strong thematic and structural unity between the cursing of the fig tree, Jesus' actions in the temple (which he interprets as a symbolic cursing), and the parable of the wicked tenants. These interconnected episodes reveal Jesus' judgment on the fruitless and corrupt temple establishment, his assertion of divine authority, and a foreshadowing of a new era centered on prayer and faith beyond the physical temple. The rejection by the religious leaders is a direct consequence of Jesus' actions and teachings, setting the stage for the events leading to his crucifixion.

## 4. Study Guide: Jennings, Session 18, Temple Cursing, Fig Tree, Tenants (Mark 11:12-12:12)

### Study Guide: Mark 11:12-12:12 - Temple Cursing, Fig Tree, Tenants

#### Key Themes:

- The relationship between Jesus' actions towards the fig tree and the temple.
- Jesus' authority and the challenge posed by the religious leaders.
- The purpose and state of the Jerusalem Temple.
- The imagery and significance of the parable of the tenants.
- The transition from the physical temple to a new understanding of prayer and faith.

#### Detailed Review Points:

- **The Fig Tree Incident (Mark 11:12-14, 20-21):**Note the timing of this event, following the triumphal entry.
- Understand the agricultural context of fig tree budding and fruiting in the spring.
- Analyze why Jesus expected to find edible buds even though it wasn't the main fig season.
- Consider why Mark highlights that the disciples heard Jesus' curse.
- Explore the symbolic interpretation of the leafy but fruitless fig tree.
- Connect the withering of the fig tree to Jesus' actions and pronouncements regarding the temple.
- **The Temple Incident (Mark 11:15-19):**Examine the specific actions Jesus takes in the temple: expelling buyers and sellers, overturning tables and seats, and preventing carrying through the temple.
- Analyze the potential implications of each of these actions for the temple's functioning.
- Understand the scriptural basis for Jesus' teaching in the temple (Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11).
- Explain the significance of Jesus referring to the temple as "my house."

- Differentiate between the idea of "cleansing" and "cursing" the temple in this context.
- Analyze why the chief priests and scribes sought to destroy Jesus after this event.
- **Teaching on Prayer and Faith (Mark 11:22-25):** Understand the context of this teaching, following the disciples' observation of the withered fig tree.
- Analyze the meaning of having faith and the power of prayer described by Jesus.
- Consider the potential connection of the "mountain" imagery to the Temple Mount or a broader symbol of resistance.
- Explain how this teaching on prayer might relate to the future of worship after the perceived "cursing" of the temple.
- Note the emphasis on forgiveness in the context of prayer.
- **The Challenge to Jesus' Authority (Mark 11:27-33):** Identify the groups that question Jesus' authority and where this confrontation takes place.
- Analyze the nature of their question and what they are seeking to understand.
- Explain Jesus' strategy of responding with a counter-question about John the Baptist.
- Understand the dilemma faced by the religious leaders in answering Jesus' question.
- Analyze the significance of their inability to answer and Jesus' subsequent refusal to state his authority directly.
- **The Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12:1-12):** Recognize the Old Testament imagery of the vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-2) and its representation of Israel.
- Understand the social context of absentee land ownership in that time.
- Identify the symbolic representation of the landowner, the vineyard, the tenants, the servants, and the son in the parable.
- Analyze the actions of the tenants and their motivations.
- Explain the significance of the landowner sending his "beloved son."
- Understand how Jesus connects this parable to the chief priests, scribes, and elders.

- Analyze the inclusion of Psalm 118:22-23 and its meaning in the context of the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone.
- Understand the reaction of the religious leaders to the parable.

### **Quiz: Mark 11:12-12:12**

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. Why did Jesus expect to find something to eat on the fig tree even though it was not the typical season for figs?
2. Describe two specific actions Jesus took in the temple that disrupted its normal operations.
3. According to Jesus' teaching in the temple, what two Old Testament passages did he combine, and what was the significance of this combination?
4. Explain the symbolic meaning of the fig tree in relation to the Jerusalem Temple, as suggested in the lecture.
5. What was the counter-question Jesus posed to the chief priests, scribes, and elders when they challenged his authority? Why was this question effective?
6. In the parable of the tenants, who or what do the vineyard, the landowner, and the tenants typically represent?
7. What motivates the tenants in the parable to mistreat and ultimately kill the servants and the landowner's son?
8. How does Jesus connect the parable of the tenants to his own identity and the actions of the religious leaders?
9. Explain the significance of the quotation from Psalm 118:22-23 ("The stone that the builders rejected...") at the end of the parable.
10. According to Jesus' teaching following the withering of the fig tree, what is the new focus for interacting with God in the absence of a fully functioning temple?

### **Quiz Answer Key: Mark 11:12-12:12**

1. Jesus expected to find edible buds on the fig tree because it was already in leaf. Fig trees typically produce buds before or alongside their leaves in the spring, and these buds could be eaten even if the mature fruit was not yet in season.



2. Jesus expelled those selling and buying in the temple, effectively stopping the trade necessary for sacrifices. He also overturned the tables of the money changers, disrupting the process of exchanging currency for the temple tax.
3. Jesus combined Isaiah 56:7 ("My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations") and Jeremiah 7:11 ("But you have made it a den of robbers"). This combination highlighted that the temple, meant for universal prayer and communion with God, had become a place of corruption and self-interest.
4. The leafy but fruitless fig tree is presented as a symbol of the Jerusalem Temple. It appeared outwardly healthy and functional (in leaf), but it was not producing true spiritual fruit, leading Jesus to pronounce judgment upon it, mirroring his judgment on the temple.
5. Jesus asked them whether John the Baptist's baptism was "from heaven or from man." This question was effective because if they said it was from heaven, they would have to acknowledge John's testimony about Jesus, and if they said it was from man, they would fear the reaction of the people who believed John was a prophet.
6. In the parable of the tenants, the vineyard represents Israel, the landowner represents God, and the tenants represent the religious leaders and those entrusted with the care of God's people.
7. The tenants are motivated by greed and a desire to seize the inheritance for themselves. They reject the authority of the landowner and his representatives to maintain their own power and control over the vineyard's produce.
8. Jesus implicitly identifies himself as the beloved son sent by the landowner, who will be rejected and killed by the tenants (the religious leaders). The parable serves as a condemnation of their actions and a prediction of their rejection of him.
9. The quotation from Psalm 118:22-23 signifies that although Jesus (the stone) will be rejected by the religious leaders (the builders), he will ultimately become the crucial foundation (cornerstone) of God's new work, a marvelous act of the Lord.
10. Jesus' teaching on prayer and faith suggests that even if the physical temple faces judgment, prayer will continue to be the means of interacting with God. Faith and believing in prayer become central to this new relationship, implying a shift beyond the temple structure.

## Essay Format Questions: Mark 11:12-12:12

1. Analyze the relationship between the cursing of the fig tree and Jesus' actions and teaching within the Jerusalem Temple in Mark 11:12-19. How does Mark structure these events to convey a particular message?
2. Discuss the significance of Jesus' challenge to the authority of the temple establishment (Mark 11:15-18, 27-33). What claims is he making implicitly and explicitly, and what are the responses of the religious leaders?
3. Explore the meaning and purpose of the parable of the tenants (Mark 12:1-12) within the broader context of Jesus' confrontation with the religious authorities in Jerusalem. How does this parable contribute to Mark's narrative and theological aims?
4. Examine Jesus' teaching on prayer and faith in Mark 11:22-25. How does this teaching relate to the events surrounding the temple incident and the perceived judgment upon it? What might this imply about the future of the relationship between humanity and God?
5. Consider the various Old Testament passages referenced or alluded to in Mark 11:12-12:12 (e.g., Isaiah on the vineyard and the house of prayer, Jeremiah on the den of robbers, Psalm on the rejected stone). How do these scriptural connections enhance our understanding of Jesus' actions and their significance in Mark's Gospel?

## Glossary of Key Terms: Mark 11:12-12:12

- **Bethany:** A village on the Mount of Olives, located east of Jerusalem, often associated with Jesus and his disciples.
- **Temple:** In this context, referring to the Second Temple in Jerusalem, the central place of worship for the Jewish people.
- **Cleansing of the Temple:** The traditional term for Jesus' actions in the temple, though the lecture suggests "cursing" might be a more accurate description in Mark's narrative.
- **Fig Tree:** Used symbolically in this passage, representing something outwardly promising but inwardly lacking fruitfulness.

- **Money Changers:** Individuals who exchanged common currency for the specific Temple currency required for taxes and offerings.
- **Den of Robbers:** A phrase from Jeremiah 7:11 used by Jesus to describe the state of the Temple, implying it had become a hideout for those acting against God's purposes.
- **House of Prayer for All Nations:** A quote from Isaiah 56:7, highlighting the intended inclusive purpose of the Temple.
- **Sanhedrin:** The highest Jewish council and tribunal in the time of Jesus, composed of chief priests, elders, and scribes.
- **Authority:** The right or power to give orders, make decisions, or take action. The religious leaders challenge the basis of Jesus' actions in the Temple.
- **Parable:** A simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. The parable of the tenants is a key example in this section.
- **Tenants:** In the parable, those entrusted with the care of the vineyard (representing Israel).
- **Beloved Son:** A term used to describe the landowner's son in the parable, echoing descriptions of Jesus by God in Mark's Gospel.
- **Cornerstone:** The first and most important stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation, used to align the entire structure. In Psalm 118:22-23, it symbolizes the rejected but ultimately vital role of Jesus.
- **Eschatological:** Relating to the end times or the final destiny of humanity and the world. Isaiah 56 has eschatological undertones.

## 5. FAQs on Jennings, Mark, Session 18, Temple Cursing, Fig Tree, Tenants (Mark 11:12-12:12), Biblealearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions: Mark 11:12-12:12 - Temple Cursing, Fig Tree, and Tenants

**1. Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?** Jesus cursed the fig tree not simply because it lacked fruit, but because it was in leaf out of the typical fig season. A leafy fig tree at that time would normally indicate the presence of edible buds (early figs). The tree presented an appearance of fruitfulness but was actually barren. This act was not out of personal frustration due to hunger, but rather served as a visual parable or prophetic picture for the disciples, illustrating the condition of the Jerusalem temple.

**2. What is the significance of the fig tree being linked to the Jerusalem temple?** The fig tree, healthy in outward appearance (leafy) but bearing no edible fruit, symbolizes the Jerusalem temple and its leadership. While the temple was the center of religious life, Jesus viewed it as having become devoid of its true purpose. The cursing of the fig tree foreshadows Jesus' judgment on the temple and the cessation of its current form of activity. Old Testament prophets also used the fig tree as a symbol of judgment upon Israel for disobedience.

**3. What actions did Jesus take in the temple, and why are they described as more of a "cursing" than a "cleansing"?** Jesus expelled buyers and sellers, overturned the tables of money changers and the seats of dove sellers, and prevented anyone from carrying anything through the temple. These actions had the practical effect of halting the normal operations of the temple, including the buying of sacrificial animals and the payment of the temple tax. The term "cursing" is more appropriate than "cleansing" because Jesus wasn't just purifying or reforming the temple; his actions and subsequent words declared an end to its current state, signifying judgment rather than correction.

**4. What Old Testament passages did Jesus quote in the temple, and what was the significance of combining them?** Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 ("My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations") and Jeremiah 7:11 ("But you have made it a den of robbers"). By combining these, Jesus asserted that the temple, intended to be a place of communion with God for all people (including Gentiles), had instead become a hideout for those who, in their actions and attitudes, were contrary to God's purposes. This was a strong prophetic indictment, similar to Jeremiah's warnings about the temple's destruction.

**5. How does Jesus' reference to the temple as "my house" in his quotation of Isaiah 56:7 highlight his authority?** In Isaiah 56:7, the passage refers to the Lord's house. By stating "my house," Jesus takes a position of profound authority, essentially claiming ownership or acting as the direct representative of the owner (God) of the temple. This underscores his divine authority to judge and act in relation to the temple.

**6. What is the meaning of Jesus' parable of the tenants in the vineyard, and how does it relate to the question of his authority?** The parable of the tenants depicts a landowner (God) who leases his vineyard (Israel) to tenants (religious leaders) and sends servants (prophets) to collect his share of the fruit. The tenants mistreat and kill the servants. Finally, the landowner sends his beloved son (Jesus), whom the tenants also kill, hoping to seize the inheritance. The parable illustrates Israel's history of rejecting God's messengers and culminates in the rejection of Jesus, the Son. By telling this parable in response to the question of his authority, Jesus implicitly declares that his authority comes from God, the owner of the vineyard, and exposes the wickedness of the religious leaders who have rejected that authority.

**7. How does Psalm 118:22-23 ("The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone") relate to the parable of the tenants?** The quotation from Psalm 118 follows the parable and provides a sense of vindication for the rejected son. The "stone that the builders rejected" represents Jesus, who was rejected by the religious leaders (the builders). However, this rejected stone has become the "cornerstone," the most crucial part of the new structure (potentially referring to the new covenant community or a spiritual temple). This highlights that despite their rejection, Jesus' role and significance are divinely ordained and will ultimately be triumphant.

**8. What is the significance of Jesus' teaching on prayer and forgiveness immediately after the withering of the fig tree?** Following Peter's observation about the withered fig tree (symbolizing the judged temple), Jesus' teaching on the power of prayer, faith, and forgiveness offers a contrast and a new direction. While the temple's role as a central place of interaction with God is coming to an end, Jesus emphasizes that prayer and faith in God will continue to be the means of connection. The mention of moving mountains could symbolize overcoming significant obstacles through faith and prayer, perhaps even the perceived loss of the temple. The emphasis on forgiveness suggests a key characteristic of this new relationship with God, contrasting with the actions Jesus condemned in the temple.