

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 11: 11-14

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We'll continue to read Mark chapter 11, verses 11 to 14.

Jesus Christ's final week on earth as a servant was incredibly busy and eventful. All four Gospels dedicate significant portions to recounting the events of this week. Because each Gospel writer had a specific burden to depict Christ from a particular angle, according to the trust given to him by God, the same event is sometimes placed in different positions to emphasize the spiritual perspective the author intends to convey.

Often times at first glance, we may perceive discrepancies in the accounts of the four Gospels, especially the Gospel of John. This is because the Gospel of John was written at least 30 years later than the other three Gospels, and John certainly read the other three Gospels. The task assigned to John by God was to mend the nets; he specifically emphasizes things not mentioned in the other three Gospels or provides additional details on similar events. Therefore, when we read the four Gospels, we should adopt a puzzle-solving mindset, believing that the Bible's accounts are accurate. Our task is to try to fit all the information together appropriately, piecing together a complete picture.

The most fundamental and perhaps the most challenging task is the chronological arrangement of events. In this regard, we must express gratitude to Brother Christian, who not only carefully studied the Scriptures but also consulted a vast amount of previous works by other brothers, arranging all the events mentioned in the four Gospels during the last week in chronological order. I will post the table compiled by Brother Chen in the comments section for the saints to download and reference. This will be helpful in understanding the events of Jesus Christ's final week, which is crucial in His ministry. Considering how to appropriately piece together these events may offer additional assistance. Some of the information

may differ from your previous understanding, so I urge the saints to meditate on it repeatedly, trusting that God will guide them and provide them with the most suitable understanding and comprehension.

Let's use Mark 11:1-10, the event we read about yesterday, as an example to examine the differences in the accounts of the four Gospels and how to reconcile them. This event likely occurred on the 9th of January in the Jewish calendar, which was a Sunday. Jesus had just come from Jericho to Bethphage. He rode a colt down the Mount of Olives, and at that time, the crowd spread their clothes and palm branches on the road to welcome Him. This time, Jesus did not ride the colt into the city but descended the Mount of Olives on it. The synoptic Gospels, namely Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all record this event. However, Mark's account is more unique as it mentions that on that day, Jesus entered the temple, examined the various items in the temple, and then returned to Bethany. The next day, He returned to Jerusalem and cleansed the temple. Matthew and Luke's accounts omit Mark's details and directly record Jesus cleansing the temple. The apparent inconsistencies here were clarified when John wrote the Gospel of John over thirty years later, adding details to help us understand what exactly happened.

John's account in John 12:1-15 begins by stating that six days before the Passover feast... We know that the Passover falls on the 14th day of the first month in the Jewish calendar, and six days prior to that would be the 8th day of the month, which is a Saturday, consistent with Mark's account. On that day, after Jesus entered the temple, it became dark, and He returned to Bethany for the night. That evening, at the home of Simon, a leper whom Jesus had healed, a dinner was prepared for Jesus. During the meal, Mary broke a flask of costly fragrant oil and anointed Jesus. Just before this event, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead in Bethany, which is near Jerusalem. This miracle caused a stir in Jerusalem, leading many to believe in Jesus. However, the chief priests, because of this event, not only plotted to kill Jesus but also Lazarus.

On the next day, which was January 10th, a Monday, Jesus set out from Bethany to enter Jerusalem. When the people heard about it, they took palm branches and went out to meet Him. Jesus also obtained a young donkey and rode it into the city

of Jerusalem, receiving the people's welcome. While the day before, on the Mount of Olives, the crowd had spread their clothes and branches on the ground, now as Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people were waving palm branches to welcome Him. This event was not fully understood by the disciples at the time, perhaps explaining why Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not record it. John specifically comments on this in John 12:16, stating, "His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him."

I specifically detail this example to remind the saints that when reading the Scriptures, they must be diligent and not assume that similar events are the same; many times, the details recorded in the Bible are different.

Returning to the passage we are reading today, this event occurred on January 9th, which was a Sunday. Jesus rode a donkey down the Mount of Olives, passed through the Kidron Valley, and arrived at the Pool of Siloam. Afterward, He likely walked up the steps, step by step, and entered the city of Jerusalem.

Verse 11: "And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve."

Yesterday, we read about Jesus humbly entering Jerusalem riding on a donkey, while many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread branches they had cut in the fields. They shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" This marks the final week of Jesus's earthly ministry, where He entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. Jerusalem was His city, and the temple was His house. As stated in John 1:11, "He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him." It is believed that during this entry into the city and the temple, Jesus was filled with sorrow in His heart.

Although some people welcomed Him into Jerusalem because of His reputation and the miracles He performed, their expectations were not aligned with what

Jesus was actually about to do. Throughout the entire city of Jerusalem, including the priests, elders, and Pharisees—the elite of Israel's society—they were opposed to and hostile towards Jesus Christ. Therefore, we believe His heart was filled with a sense of sorrow.

Verse 11 says that He entered the temple and looked around at everything. The various items in the temple are essentially all types of foreshadowing of Jesus Christ. On the bronze altar, various sacrifices were to be offered, and Jesus Himself is the atoning sacrifice, the sin offering, the peace offering, the grain offering, and the burnt offering. Moving forward, there is the basin for washing, symbolizing the cleansing required before the priests could enter the Holy Place. John's Gospel also records Jesus personally washing the disciples' feet. Then inside the temple, there is the table of showbread, signifying Jesus as the bread of life, coming down from heaven to satisfy all human needs. Then, on the other side, there is the golden lampstand, with Jesus declaring himself as the light of life, stating, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (John 1:5) Continuing forward, there is the golden altar of incense, signifying that saints must work with Christ and offer prayers as sacrifices. Of course, in the Holy of Holies, there is the ark, also known as the ark of the testimony, bearing witness to Jesus Christ. As Jesus carefully observed each of these items in the temple, which were all spiritually significant, their spiritual significance was completely lost upon Him.

The Bible records, "as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany..." Here, the Son of God, coming to His own city, returning to His own home, yet unable to find rest in His own home. As night fell, He had to leave the city and go to Bethany. Bethany was incomparable to Jerusalem; one a small town, the other the grand capital of kings. But in the glorious city of Jerusalem, there was nothing to satisfy Jesus Christ. Conversely, in Bethany, there was a household, with Mary who loved the Lord, Martha who was willing to serve, and Lazarus who bore witness to His resurrection. There, Jesus found His home. Hence, during His final week, each day He entered the city during the day, went to the temple, and when it was time to rest in the evening, He left the temple and returned to Bethany, to those who loved Him, where He could find rest. What a contrast this is!

Verses 12-13: "Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs."

Having spent the night in Bethany, the next day, likely in the morning, they set out from Bethany, and Jesus was to enter the temple once again. As they approached Jerusalem, still at the foot of the Mount of Olives, Jesus, according to Mark, was hungry. We know that Martha was very good at serving, and as they left their house in the morning to go to Jerusalem, Jesus should have been well fed. Therefore, the hunger mentioned here might not be that Jesus's stomach was genuinely hungry, not a physical hunger, but a spiritual hunger.

He looked at a fig tree from a distance. In the Middle East, fig trees are often a symbol of Israel. Seeing it, He went to it, hoping to find some fruit on it, but when He got to the tree, He found nothing but leaves, full of leaves, yet not a single fruit. Mark adds, "for it was not the season for figs." Fig trees bear fruit twice a year, one in winter and one in summer. Winter fruit buds during the winter and begins to sprout leaves and bear young fruit in the spring, lasting until June, when winter fruit can be harvested. This time should be around March or April, and the tree should have a few immature fruits that, while not ripe and tasty, could still satisfy hunger. If at this time, not a single fruit is found on the entire tree, it indicates that summer has come, and there will be no harvest in June.

Verse 14: "In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.' And His disciples heard it."

Jesus, during His ministry on earth, primarily focused on healing, casting out demons, helping people, and speaking very few curses. Yet, towards this fig tree that bore only leaves but no fruit, symbolizing Israel, Jesus uttered a curse, saying, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." The purpose of a fig tree is to bear fruit, just as an olive tree is for oil and a grape vine is for wine. A fig tree full of leaves but barren of fruit is useless in God's hands. The Israelites were supposed to be God's

chosen people, originally knowing God's intentions, yet when Jesus returned to His own people, He was completely rejected.

On the contrary, there's another occasion recorded in the Gospel of John chapter 4 where Jesus was hungry, this time at a well in Samaria. It mentions Jesus being hungry and sending His disciples to buy food. As they departed, Jesus encountered a Samaritan woman. He initiated a conversation with her by asking for water, and through this interaction, He began sharing the Gospel with her. Despite her immoral past, having had five husbands and currently not married to the man she was with, she came to know and believe in Jesus through His preaching. Joyfully, she left her water jar behind, returned to the city, and shared the Gospel message Jesus had told her. As a result, the whole city sought Jesus. In this context, when His disciples returned with food, Jesus said He was no longer hungry because He had food they knew nothing about—His nourishment was to do the will of the Father and fulfill His work. What a contrast!

To an immoral Samaritan woman, her repentance satisfied Jesus's spiritual hunger; yet when He returned to His own capital, back to His own temple, He found no fruit on this leafy fruitless tree—what a contrast! We should ask ourselves.

Are we, who are saved today, we are the true Israelites today. When Jesus comes into our lives today, will He find no fruit of the Spirit like on this tree? Or are all of our ministries, various church services, flourishing abundantly with leaves, but bear no fruit of the Spirit? This is a great reminder for us: fig trees are meant to bear fruit, what kind of fruit? Galatians 5:22-23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." May the Lord help us to bear the fruit of life while we are busy in various ministries, to satisfy Jesus.

Let's pray together: Lord, we ask for Your help to make our lives a testimony like that of Bethany, where You can dwell and find rest. May our daily lives bear the fruit of the Spirit, satisfying Your hunger. Do not let us fall into the busyness of external ministries and various services, but let You come to us and find rest, finding

the fruit of the Spirit in us. Thank You, Lord, for Your reminder and help in aligning my life with Your will. In Jesus Christ's holy name, we pray. Amen!