

# THE WITHERING OF THE OLD WAYS

SCANDALOUS JESUS :THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW, PART 9 · MATTHEW 21:12-27 · MARCH 13, 2022 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

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*"Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, 'May you never bear fruit again!' Immediately the tree withered." (Matthew 21:19)*

## **Jesus Overturning Tables** (21:12-17)

- Jesus enacts a symbolic purification of the Temple
- Jesus heals and is acclaimed as the Son of David
- Jesus is a prophet but, even more, the Messiah

## **Jesus Condemning a Fruitless Tree** (21:18-22)

- The fig tree with abundant foliage
- The fruitless fig tree and the desire of God
- Jesus reveals the death of fruitless religion

## **Jesus Poses a Question** (21:23-27)

- Jesus questioned in the Temple Courts
- Jesus' question of the questioners
- Jesus is a prophet with authority and honor beyond their expectation

## **Entering the Doorway Jesus Opens**

- From cluttered religion to true prayer
- From fruitless religion to fruitful faith
- From self-protective questions to heartfelt worship

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What is one of the most shocking things you have ever experienced in your life? What happened?
2. This week we continue our series "Scandalous Jesus" by exploring three episodes from Jesus' life in and around Jerusalem. Each of these episodes speaks of Jesus' identity and

authority. Begin your study in prayer by asking God to speak to you through His Word, then read Matthew 21:12-27 aloud.

3. The first episode, Matthew 21:12-17, takes place in the outer courts of the Temple in what is often referred to as 'the Court of the Gentiles.' What does Jesus do there and why might this be important?
4. What is Jesus' main concern according to verse 13?
5. When the blind and lame are healed by Jesus, what do they say about Jesus (21:15)? What is the response of the chief priests and teachers of the law to this (21:15-16)?
6. The second episode, 21:18-22, takes place on the way from Bethany to Jerusalem. What is the central activity or event of this episode?
7. What does Jesus say here about faith and prayer (21:21-22)?
8. Many Bible scholars see Jesus' triumphal entry (21:1-11), His cleansing of the Temple (21:12-17), and His cursing of the fig tree (21:18-22) as three parts of one critique of what had become a dead-end within the Jerusalem Temple. What do you think? How might these three stories fit together?
9. The third episode, 21:23-27, takes place back in the Temple courts with an exchange between Jesus and the chief priests and elders of the people. What is their question? Why have they really come to Jesus?
10. Why does Jesus' response to them in verses 24-25 put them in troubling situation?
11. How does Jesus use this exchange to reveal something about Himself?
12. What is one thing God is revealing to you about Jesus through this study? If you're on your own, write that down, pray over it, and share it with someone this week. If you are with a small group, share your answers with one another before closing in prayer.

## **DIG DEEPER:**

This week dig deeper in one or more of the following ways:

- Memorize Matthew 21:13 or 21:21
- Draw, ink, or paint all or part of Matthew 21:12-27. As you depict these scenes or episodes in your own way, take time to talk with God about what He is speaking to you.
- Consider watching some version of the life of Jesus on film, such as The Jesus Film or The Chosen, as a means for putting visuals to the stories of this passage. What did you learn through seeing and hearing these passages?