

## Mark 11

Written by K B Napier  
Wednesday, 25 August 2010 10:00

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Scripture is far more profound than most of us think. It is certainly above the minds of unbelievers to understand. Yet, most Christians have no idea what to believe. In particular they fall flat on their faces when it comes to prayer, even though they all tend to think they pray properly! Evidently, they do not... I say 'evidently' because the evidence is right there before them... they have no answers to prayer.

In this paper you will find deep reference to prayer and what prevents us from receiving answers. You will also see explained, very clearly, how to receive answers. As the world slips fast into sin and darkness before the end comes, let us all know how to live in Christ and how to pray! This is a very powerful chapter – read it many times.

### Verses 1-6

1.

And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

2.

And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.

3.

And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

4.

And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.

5.

And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?

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6.

And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

Jesus and the Apostles came close to Jerusalem. In accord with prophecy Jesus sent two Apostles to the nearby village to obtain a colt. He and the others waited outside the villages of Bethphage and Bethany (which must have literally been one next to the other). Bethphage ('house of unripe figs') and Bethany ('house of dates' or 'house of misery') were at the bottom of the Mount of Olives and just two miles/15 furlongs out from Jerusalem, on the main road to Jericho, or just off it. Interestingly, today Bethany is a small Arabic village whose name means 'Lazarus'. It seems the village did not survive for long and later became repopulated or rebuilt as Bethabara. The Mount of Olives was called such simply because it was filled with olive trees.

This seemingly small detail - Jesus sending His apostles to get a colt – is yet another example of predestination, as we shall see. He sent two men to Bethany or Bethphage (we cannot tell which). He told them they would see an untrained colt tied up; they were to untie it and take it to Jesus. A colt can be a young horse, or a young ass. In this text it refers to a young ass, a male (polos, a masculine noun).

Anticipating (because He is God) the owner asking the two men why they were talking the colt, they were to reply "The Lord hath need of him". The man would then simply allow the apostles to take the colt.

This is another example of predestination! Jesus foretold of the colt; the owner was ready to allow strangers to take his colt on hearing it was for the Lord. Use of the word 'Lord', with its capital 'L' is not arbitrary. Lord in this case is kyrios, meaning the master to whom all things belong, the name of God and the Messiah. The owner thus acknowledged Jesus to be Messiah, who owned the colt anyway.

The root of kyrios is kuros, meaning 'supremacy'. Kyrios/kurios is the New Testament word for the Old Testament 'Jehovah' and is used mainly as an adjective ('having power' or 'authority') reflecting Christ's lordship. The owner of the colt was compelled by the Spirit to obey Jesus, without question. The apostles did as commanded and the incident occurred as Jesus foretold.

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When scripture tells us this or that, we must accept it exactly as written, for it is the very word of God. Many try to dissuade us from accepting the Bible as it is, with the argument that it is 'just a book' and so capable of errors. This is not so. The Bible is the word of God, and nothing less. The reason we are told it is 'just a book' is that Satan does not want people to accept God's word as it stands.

### Verses 7-10

1.

And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.

2.

And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.

3.

And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

4.

Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

The Apostles took the colt to Jesus, put their coats on the colt's back, and Jesus sat on top. As Jesus made his way towards Jerusalem, the crowds were ecstatic, some casting their own cloaks before Jesus. Others cut branches from the trees, throwing them in the dusty road. Large crowds walked in front of the colt and behind it, shouting "Hosanna" – meaning 'save, I pray'. This is the Greek version of the Hebrew form: "save us". We should not assume this was a call from the people for salvation. Rather, it was a term used to praise a leader. This was a very typical form of Jewish celebration.

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The call by the people comes from Psalm 118, and was usually spoken during the Feast of Tabernacles. At that time the people waved fronds of palm trees and willow branches. The branches were called 'hosannas', and as the ceremony took place on the last day of the feast, the waving activity was called "the great Hosanna".

Obviously, the call to be saved was made to one who was perceived to be able to perform that task. The call to Jesus was genuine, and maybe some wanted personal salvation, but this was not the real reason for the celebratory shouts. Rather, the people thought Jesus was to save them as a nation, as a military or political figure. The miracles and preaching, to them, were merely an added bonus. There were already military-style 'messiahs' stirring up sedition and revolution. To the crowd, Jesus must have seemed the most probable candidate for the next Jewish king, freeing them from Roman rule. This idea can be found in the word itself, yasha, which includes the notion of being victorious in battle, or to save from moral troubles. Revenge is also part of the meaning.

The latter part of the crowd's shout seems to support the interpretation that their celebration had a military basis, with reference to the "kingdom of our father, David"; that is, a literal kingdom on earth. The crowd praised God the Father for Jesus, but only as an earthly king. They totally misinterpreted the role of Jesus as Messiah, just as many modern Christians do the same, when they teach Jesus will reign on earth for 1000 years, thus wrongly attributing an earthly reign to Jesus when He preached a spiritual one. To put it bluntly, there will be no 1000 year literal reign by Jesus on earth.

### Verses 11-14

1.

And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

2.

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

3.

And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

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4.

And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

Jesus ended His short journey by entering Jerusalem and going to the Temple. He walked around and made His way back to Bethany with His Apostles as the sun set.

Next day, they again made their way to Jerusalem. Jesus was hungry; seeing a fig tree in the distance, he went to see if it bore fruit, as it already had leaves. But, there were no figs. We might say Jesus knew that anyway, so why go to look? The most reasonable answer seems to be that the fig tree was used as a teaching aid. Jesus spoke to the tree, in the hearing of His Apostles: 'No-one will eat fruit from you for the rest of your life!' In other words, Jesus condemned the tree, just as God condemned the serpent in the Garden. Jesus need not have spoken to the tree, or do anything at all, for His power is absolute. But, this was probably part of the teaching process... words were used so that the Apostles could link the command (curse) with the result (withering).

We may not understand why God should condemn something that could not think or respond. The answer is that, as God, Jesus can command anything, from inanimate objects to plants to humans and animals; He creates them and owns them, so He can do anything He wishes – even talking to plants and destroying them. To ask 'Why?' is to not understand Who God is.

There is also a lesson in this account for us today: Christians who are useless will be cut off from God's pleasure in their lifetimes. We make ourselves useless by doing what is unworthy, believing lies and deception concerning God's word, and living for self rather than for Him. We then have nothing to say or do that will make a scrap of difference in anyone's lives, including our own. Thus, we are useless and will be cut down like dead trees.

### Verses 15-18

1.

And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

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2.

And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

3.

And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

4.

And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

It is possible that Jesus' visit to the Temple the day before was a kind of 'survey' of what was happening. This time He acted! The temple had long been used for trade (just like so many cathedrals in the UK). Jesus threw them out. He came to the tables of the moneychangers, people who tended to be dishonest and greedy, shaving-off coins to gain gold and silver, and pushed their tables over. Then he threw down the chairs used by dove-sellers (doves being used by the poor as a sacrifice). He was also angry at people carrying all kinds of containers through the Temple courtyard. This was His Father's house, for prayer and religious observances, not their personal playgrounds or profit-centres!

So-called religious leaders today are wishy-washy and try to be loved by all. Not Jesus! If something was error He said so. If people were sinning, He said so... and also unlike leaders and pastors today, He did not mince His words! As a Christian and pastor I loathe 'beating about the bush' and always speak plainly, because I believe I must do so, for the sake of people's souls. It is not my task to be the friend of all, but to be obedient to God. And if that offends others, so be it. Jesus was blunt: 'This is supposed to be my Father's house of prayer, but you are using it for thievery.' Most modern pastors would never speak like that... they are too conscious of their own living and status, so use words of kindness, free of condemnation or confrontation.

As we can expect, the scribes and Pharisees heard it all and conspired again to kill Him. This was because they were afraid of Him, knowing the people held to His teachings. Any true Bible

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teacher will have enemies within the churches. Those who are supposed brethren will want him harmed or silenced, because he shows them up. Many are spoken-against by so-called 'better' Christians whop, of course, always know better and consider themselves to be superior, or even more obedient. They fear him because he is blunt and to the point. Again – so be it.

### Verses 19-26

1.

And when even was come, he went out of the city.

2.

And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

3.

And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

4.

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

5.

For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

6.

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

7.

And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

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8.

But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

That evening Jesus and His group left Jerusalem to go back to their lodgings. Jesus knew trouble was brewing because of what He had done and said, but did and said them anyway. Today, some Christians are belittled or blamed for saying what must be said, or doing what must be done, prompted by Christian conscience. Though they have been faithful, those who look on tell them it is “your fault for doing it/saying it”, especially if there are ‘consequences’ or loss!

This appalling self-righteousness is nothing but a sign of spiritual paucity and moral cowardice. It tells us that the people who blame another for doing or saying what is right, would not do those things themselves! Yes, a man may lose his income when he stands for truth. He might lose friends and status, future job prospects and all manner of things. But, he has been true to conscience and faith, and has obeyed what he believed the Spirit was telling him.

Thus, no ‘blame’ is attached, only praise from God. Those who blame him for what happens after his stand, know nothing of spiritual reality or of God’s hand on their life and are being wicked in heart and action. The same critics do not believe God answers prayers, even though, in this very text, Jesus tells us God answers prayers!

Next day, Jesus and apostles returned to Jerusalem. On the way, the apostles noticed the fig tree Jesus had condemned previously: it was dead, withered from the roots up. Peter remembered that Jesus had cursed it and reminded Jesus that it was so. You will note that Jesus cursed the tree: He uttered an imprecatory command upon the tree. That is, He uttered a curse or prayer of condemnation upon it. This meant Jesus commanded the tree to suffer punishment and harm.

Such prayers are rarely uttered today. Instead, Christians, for unfathomable reasons, pray to God that He should protect those who do evil against God and Church! In itself this is an abomination! God does not love those who are wicked against Him and His people, but condemns them to doom in hell. Why on earth should believers, then, seek protection and help

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for the wicked? Rather, we should pray-against wicked men, whether politicians, rulers or religious fakes... and not help them. In this text Jesus imprecates a tree, but the same principle applies to people.

When Peter told Jesus the tree He cursed had withered, Jesus gave what seems to be an unrelated answer: "Have faith in God". The word 'faith', *pistis*, has several meanings; in this text it means to trust God no matter what the external appearances are, because God can only do what is in His nature to do. It also means to be absolutely sure that God can do anything He wishes. (A later use of the same word has a different meaning when applied to God).

Jesus goes on to explain His statement, with the words "For verily I say unto you". These words link the previous statement to what follows. Jesus continued by saying that no matter what we ask of God, He will do it for us, so long as we do not doubt His ability and wish to do so. The man pleading with God "shall have whatsoever he saith" if he truly believes God will do it. This does not mean a man can ask for really idiotic things, or things not in God's plan. It means we must be spiritually 'in-tune' with God before we ask. Only then will God give what is needed. (This qualification is implied and we have dealt with it elsewhere).

So – ask anything of God and He will give it, IF we have absolute trust in Him. Do you really understand this about God and prayer? I doubt it: after some time trying to understand I am still unsure at times, though it seems God is good to give me some answers along the way! Verses 23 and 24 are profound statements of God's power and about our faith (often, so-called rather than actual). The lives of most Christians would be totally changed if they understood, accepted, and put into practice, what these verses say.... "he shall have whatsoever he saith"! Ask yourself – do you have answers to your prayers? If you do not, ask yourself *why*, because God is not to blame.

Let me repeat all this by quoting verse 24, spoken by Jesus Himself: "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive (them), and ye shall have (them)." Not only may we pray for whatever we need, but we can *expect* the result to be positive. This goes against everything most Christians experience... again, I ask: "Why?" The answer is within yourselves and in these texts.

Here is another qualification for receiving answers to prayer – forgiveness. If we want God to answer our prayers we will not get answers if we have anything against another. So, not only do we need to have complete trust in God, but we must also have pure hearts, without hatred or

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bitterness towards others. In this text, to 'forgive' means to 'let go' of our emotional ties to the other person, if their memory leads us to hold grudges; Or, to send the feeling away from one's self.

Note that this is our own action: we have the power within to stop hating another. This is because people feed off their own emotions, allowing them free-run in hearts and minds, because we wish to do the other person harm, if only in their thoughts.

Our feelings of loathing are a substitute for healing, and we do not wish to let them go! But, it is essential if we are to have the answers we seek from God. Interestingly, the word 'forgive' is also used at times to speak of a man divorcing his wife... sending her away. We can thus deduce that when we have feelings against another, and then cast the feelings away, it is similar to breaking a bond within, a bond of our own making.

By throwing out our destructive feelings for others, we open up the pathway from God to give us what we desire. It leads to God forgiving us our trespasses. We can see, then, that we must be of pure mind and heart before God answers our prayers. A trespass is a deviation from truth and holiness. Though the same word is used for 'forgive' in these adjoined texts, in this case it means God can send our guilt away so that He can disregard the sins that caused it. This is the primary interpretation of 'forgive' – to send away, thus cancelling a debt. Again, the actual meaning of all this is profound and should be deeply examined as a key to receiving blessings from God.

Verse 26 says that if we will not send away our bad feelings for others, God will not remove our guilt and answer our prayers. Some might argue that the text says "And when ye stand praying, forgive...", so how do I come to the above conclusions? I can say it because of the context: Jesus Himself places His words in this order, after talking about answers to prayer. It is a logical conjunctive statement and begins with kai, a conjunction, which in certain instances has a cumulative force. The rest of the sentence, then, is part of that accumulation of the ideas and results given by Jesus.

The point is very clear: we are to clear our own life-slate of sin before daring to seek answers to our prayers. Hatred includes all kinds of unacceptable attitudes towards others that show we have not learned how to dispel sinful emotional responses. And many of us know only too well that we have sinful ideas in our hearts towards others. Even if they have done us great harm, it does not mean we are at liberty to hate them. How many Christians will not admit to this hatred?

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Very few, because it does not seem to be a thing to admit to in front of others. Yet, it is the very thing needed to get right with God! Forget others – do what God demands.

### Verses 27-33

1.

And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,

2.

And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

3.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

4.

The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.

5.

And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?

6.

But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

7.

And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

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Again, Jesus and the Apostles entered Jerusalem. As they walked in the Temple, the scribes and Pharisees approached Jesus. This time they also had the elders with them. They demanded to know by whose authority He had thrown down tables and chairs and cast out traders. Jesus, always a step ahead of His accusers, said He would answer their question if they would answer a question He wished to ask them.

He then put them on the spot, by asking if John's baptism was from God or from mankind. The critics were aware of the consequences of their answers, and quickly talked amongst themselves... if they said the John spoke from God, then Jesus would ask them why they did not believe him. But, if they said John's message came from the human mind, they knew the people would turn on them, because so many believed the message came from God! They were stuck! Realising their dilemma, they refused to answer and pretended not to know: "We cannot tell". Jesus replied that if they could not tell Him by what authority John spoke, neither would He tell them His own authority!

When faced with critics like this, whose only wish is to do you down, do not be afraid to be clever, or to use argument to your advantage! Unbelievers who hate God and us have no right to what they say and do. If they are made to look stupid by our answers, then let it be so... it is their own foolish sinfulness that makes them appear ridiculous.

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