

The Gospel of Mark

Lesson 17

Mark 11:27 – 12:44

Review

- Baptism and Temptation (1:1-13)
- Year-Long Ministry in Judea (John 1:19-4:45)
- Galilean Ministry (1:14-7:23)
- Withdrawal with Disciples into Various Gentile Regions (7:24-8:26)
- The Road to Jerusalem (8:27-10:52)
 - The First Passion Prediction Unit (8:27-9:29)
 - The Second Passion Prediction Unit (9:30-10:31)
 - The Third Passion Prediction Unit (10:32-52)
- The Passion Week (11:1-15:47)
 - The Date of the Triumphal Entry
 - Sunday – The Triumphal Entry
 - Monday – Cursing the Fig Tree
 - Monday – Driving Out Money Changers from the Temple
 - Tuesday – Teaching on Faith and Forgiveness
- The Resurrection (16:1-20)

Jesus' Authority Questioned

²⁷They came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him, ²⁸and *began* saying to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?” ²⁹And Jesus said to them, “**I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things.**” ³⁰“Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me.” ³¹They *began* reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’” ³²“But shall we say, ‘From men?’”—they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet. ³³Answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “**Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things.**”

- After seeing the cursed fig tree on Tuesday morning Jesus and His disciples continued into Jerusalem and came into the temple again. Here the chief priests, scribes, and elders (representatives of the Sanhedrin) came to question Him. They asked Jesus about the nature of His authority to teach, confirm His message with miracles, and purge the temple the day before. They were looking for some way to trap Him in His response and not for the truth.
- Jesus answers with a counter question which made His answer to them dependent on their answer to Him. Jesus' question implied that His authority came from the same source as John.
- **Answer me** – Jesus challenged the Jewish religious leaders since they did not have the courage to answer honestly.
- There were two possible answers to Jesus' question: 1) heaven – this would mean that they did not accept John (and Jesus as well) so they would stand condemned, and 2) men – John was considered to be a true prophet, by saying from men they would discredit themselves before the people.
- By suspending judgment, these religious leaders showed that they really rejected John and Jesus as God's messengers. Throughout their history most leaders of Israel repeatedly rejected God's messengers, a point Jesus made in the following parable (12:1-12). The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament

Parable of the Vine-growers

¹And He began to speak to them in parables: “**A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey.**” ²“At the *harvest* time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to

receive *some* of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. ³“They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴“Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. ⁵“And he sent another, and that one they killed; and *so with* many others, beating some and killing others. ⁶“He had one more *to send*, a beloved son; he sent him last *of all* to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ⁷“But those vine-growers said to one another, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!’ ⁸“They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹“What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰“Have you not even read this Scripture:

‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,

THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*;

¹¹ THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD,
AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES’?”

¹²They were seeking to seize Him, and *yet* they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And *so* they left Him and went away.

- Jesus spoke this parable directly to the Sanhedrin representatives exposing their hypocrisy and absolute failure as those entrusted with the spiritual wellbeing of Israel. This parable also has elements of allegory in that several of the details have specific meanings.
- This parable reflects the social situation of first-century Palestine, especially Galilee. Wealthy foreign landlords owned large land estates which they leased to tenant farmers. The tenants agreed to cultivate the land and care for the vineyards when the landlords were away. A contract between them designated that a portion of the crop was to be paid as rent. At harvest time the owners sent agents to collect the rent. Inevitably tension arose between the absentee owners and the tenants. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament
- The owner – the Father; Vineyard – Israel (a familiar OT figure, cf Isa 5:7); Vinegrowers – Jewish leaders; Servants – Prophets; The beloved son – Jesus
- God patiently continued to send prophet after prophet to Israel preaching repentance from dead works. Yet the prophets were mistreated and even killed like John the Baptist.
- Finally the Father sent the Son. Because the people turned to the Messiah instead of the religious leaders, the Sanhedrin sought to kill Jesus. Jesus here foretells His own death at their hands and the impending judgement on Israel that was alluded to earlier with the withered fig tree.
- “What will the owner of the vineyard do? – Matthew’s account has the leaders answering first.
They said to Him, “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the *proper* seasons.” Matt. 21:41
- In typical rabbinical fashion, Jesus led His hearers to finish the story themselves, asking, “What will he do to those vine-growers?” The chief priests and elders readily replied with moral indignation, “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons.” They no doubt were highly pleased with this unusual opportunity to parade their self-righteousness before Jesus. They rightly assessed the proper ending of the parable, that the irate owner would first severely punish the wicked growers and then replace them with others who were reliable. They were completely unaware that, as they fed their pride on Jesus’ baited question, they sprang the trap of their own condemnation. MacArthur’s New Testament Commentary: Matthew 16-23
- The Stone – Jesus moves to a new parable featuring Himself quoting Psa 118:22-23 LXX. The builders (Jewish leaders) rejected (crucified) the stone (Jesus) who then became the chief cornerstone in God’s plan of redemption.
- The religious leaders understood these parables. Jesus graciously gave them a chance to understand and repent, but they would have nothing of it and were seeking to seize Him.

Jesus Answers the Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes – Priorities

¹³Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement.

¹⁴They came and said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?”

¹⁵“Shall we pay or shall we not pay?” But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, “**Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at.**” ¹⁶They brought *one*. And He said to them, “**Whose likeness and inscription is this?**” And they said to Him, “Caesar’s.” ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “**Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.**” And they were amazed at Him.

- Despite Jesus’ condemnation of the religious leaders, they continued their attack. They were attempting to trap Jesus in an unguarded statement that they could use against Him.
- The Pharisees and Herodians (who were enemies) joined forces in their attack on Jesus. They used flattery and feigned interest in His teaching to attempt to gain an advantage of Jesus. Yet Jesus “knew their hypocrisy.”
- Shall we pay or shall we not pay? – A yes answer would antagonize the people and discredit Him as God’s Spokesman. No messianic claimant could sanction willing submission to pagan rulers. A no answer would invite retaliation from Rome. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament
- The denarius was a small silver coin bearing Caesar’s likeness that was used for the Roman tax payments. This coin had “Tiberius Caesar Augustus, the son of the Divine Augustus” on one side and “Chief Priest” on the other.
- Render – Meaning “to pay or give back.”
- All who lived within the realm of Caesar were obligated to return to him the tax that was owed him. It was not optional. Thus Jesus declared that all citizens are under divine obligation to pay taxes to whatever government is over them. MacArthur’s Study Bible Page 1488
- The coin also represented Caesar as divine and his subjects would owe him worship. The Jews owed allegiance and worship to God alone. The other side of the coin showed that they owed worship only to God.
- The Pharisees and Herodians were amazed at Jesus. They came to Him with what they thought was perfect logic, but the Perfect One saw through their fallible thinking and put them to shame. Mark’ Roman readers would be particularly interested how to be a believer in an emperor worship empire.

Jesus Answers the Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes – The Resurrection

¹⁸Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and *began* questioning Him, saying, ¹⁹“Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES and leaves behind a wife AND LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER. ²⁰“There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. ²¹“The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; ²²and *so* all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also. ²³“In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one’s wife will she be? For all seven had married her.” ²⁴Jesus said to them, “**Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God?** ²⁵“For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶“But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *passage* about *the burning bush*, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, and the God of Jacob?’ ²⁷“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken.”

- The Sadducees ... were the Jewish aristocratic party whose members came largely from the priesthood and the upper classes. Though less numerous and popular than the Pharisees, they occupied influential positions on the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court and generally cooperated with the Roman authorities. They denied the truths of the resurrection, future judgment, and the existence of angels and spirits (cf. Acts 23:6-8). They accepted only the Books of Moses (the Pentateuch) as authoritative and rejected the oral traditions observed as binding by the Pharisees. This is Mark’s only reference to the Sadducees. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament
- The Sadducees presented a case to Jesus that would supposedly embarrass Him with an apparent unanswerable question. The question came from the levirate marriage (meaning marriage to a dead husband’s brother) described in Deuteronomy 25. The purpose of this practice was to prevent the extinction of a family line.

⁵“When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be *married* outside *the family* to a strange man. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. ⁶“It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. Deut 25:5-6

- It is not difficult to imagine the glint in the eyes and the smirks on the faces of the Sadducees as they looked at Jesus and propounded their supposedly unanswerable question... If all eight would appear in the resurrection exactly in the condition and circumstances in which they had died—as the Pharisees, and presumably Jesus, maintained—how could their marriage relationships possibly be reconciled? That dilemma proved the idea of resurrection to be patently absurd, as Jesus now would be forced to admit, by His silence if not His words. MacArthur’s New Testament Commentary: Matthew 16-23
- The Sadducees did “**not understand the Scriptures or the power of God.**” The power of God could raise someone from the dead and give them a new existence in His presence in which one is “like the angels in heaven.” Resurrection-life is different from this temporal-life in which marriage is meant for companionship and reproduction. Resurrection-life consists of continual fellowship with God. Jesus here mentions angels as well countering the Sadducees’ idea that angels did not exist.
- The Sadducees believed that the resurrection was not taught in the Pentateuch (I.e. they did not understand the scriptures). Jesus here presents an argument based on the tense of a verb. ...All Scripture is inspired.
- ...since Jehovah is the God of the living, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were alive. There is life after death and therefore a hope of future resurrection. Wiersbes Expository Outlines on the New Testament
- The Sadducees were completely mistaken. They believed themselves instead of the Scriptures.

Jesus Answers the Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes – The Greatest Commandment

²⁸One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?” ²⁹Jesus answered, “**The foremost is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; ³⁰AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’ ³¹‘The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.**” ³²The scribe said to Him, “Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; ³³AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE’S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” ³⁴When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, “**You are not far from the kingdom of God.**” After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

- A scribe (a lawyer) was listening to this confrontation with the Sadducees. He was probably a Pharisee since he believed that Jesus “answered the Sadducees well.” This scribe too came to test Him.

³⁴But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together.

³⁵One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” Matt. 22:34-36

- What commandment is the foremost of all? – Jesus quoted passages from Deuteronomy and Leviticus then says “**There is no other commandment greater than these.**” and “**On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.**” (Matt 22:40)

⁴“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Deut 6:4-6

¹⁷“You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. ¹⁸“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD. Lev 19:17-18

- The Hebrew text does not mention “mind”; the Septuagint omits “heart”; but Jesus included both terms, stressing the comprehensive nature of the command. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament
- This scribe’s ulterior motive seems to fade away as he hears Jesus’ answer and agrees with Him. The scribe had been taught that he needed to keep many commands (613 of them), yet apparently he believed that there was more to a relationship with God than external religion – a dedication of the heart.
- A heart that is changed by God’s love to love God and other people is “much more” than all the external sacrifice. Because this heart “believes God and it is reckoned to him as righteousness.

²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Rom 4:2-3 (c.f. Gen 15:5-6)

²²Samuel said,

“Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices

As in obeying the voice of the LORD?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to heed than the fat of rams.

²³“For rebellion is as the sin of divination,

And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,

He has also rejected you from *being* king.” 1 Sam. 15:22-23

- Jesus had so humbled the intellectual elite that “no one dared ask him any more questions” (NIV).

Jesus Questions the Jewish Leaders

³⁵And Jesus *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, “How *is it that* the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?” ³⁶“David himself said in the Holy Spirit,

“THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,

“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.”

³⁷“David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; so in what sense is He his son?” And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.

- The religious elite of Israel were questioning Jesus, now the Messiah will question them. In doing so He also claims Himself to be God.
- How is it that the scribes say that the Messiah will be only a man (I.e. the Son of David)? The answer is that the Scriptures declare that the Messiah is David’s son and David’s Lord. Jesus is both God (David’s Lord) and man (David’s son).

Hypocrisy Condemned

³⁸In His teaching He was saying: “Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and *like respectful greetings in the market places,* ³⁹and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, ⁴⁰who devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation.”

- Jesus here condemns pride and hypocrisy.
- Beware of scribes (teachers of the Law) who
 - Walk around in long robes – singled the wearer out as especially devout and a scholar.
 - Like respectful greetings in the market places – receiving honorific titles by the common people who respected them.
 - Like chief seats in the synagogues – singled out in the synagogue by sitting on a bench near where the scrolls were kept.
 - Like places of honor at banquets – receiving honor and preferential treatment.
 - Devour widow’s houses – Greedily living off the hospitality of widows.
 - For appearance’s sake offer long prayers – to impress people with their piety they would offer long and elaborate prayers. (c.f. Luke 18:9-14)
- Jesus condemned their ostentatious conduct, greed, and hypocrisy. Instead of pointing people’s attention to God they claimed it for themselves under the pretense of piety. Teachers such as these will be punished most severely (lit., “will receive greater condemnation”; James 3:1) at God’s final judgment. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament

The Widow’s Mite

⁴¹And He sat down opposite the treasury, and *began* observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. ⁴²A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. ⁴³Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, “*Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury;* ⁴⁴*for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.*”

- From the court of the Gentiles (cf. 11:15) where He conducted His public teaching, Jesus entered the court of the women. Against the wall of this court were 13 trumpet-shaped collection receptacles for receiving worshipers’ freewill offerings and contributions. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament
- The woman gave sacrificially – completely entrusting herself to God. She put in all she had which was 1/64 of a day laborer’s wage (denarius). This woman’s heart was fully committed to God. She wasn’t holding anything back.