

Mark 12:1 ¶ And he began to speak unto them by parables. A *certain man* planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about *it*, and digged a *place* for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

Mark 12:2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

Mark 12:3 And they caught *him*, and beat him, and sent *him* away empty.

Mark 12:4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded *him* in the head, and sent *him* away shamefully handled.

Mark 12:5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.

Mark 12:6 Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

Mark 12:7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

Mark 12:8 And they took him, and killed *him*, and cast *him* out of the vineyard.

Mark 12:9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

Mark 12:10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

Mark 12:11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Mark 12:12 And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

“And” – continuing the narrative from the last chapter...

Jesus began teaching using a parable. He tells the story of a man that plants a vineyard, puts a fence around it, dug a pit for the winepress, and built a tower, a building to house the tenant keeper(s) of the vineyard I assume. He leased the vineyard to some men to care for it and then journeyed to a distant country. At the right time after the harvest, the owner sent a servant to collect what he was due from the harvest of the fruit of the vineyard. The men refused to pay; they beat up the servant and sent him away empty-handed. The owner sent another servant to collect what he was owed. This servant was stoned and wounded in the head before they sent him away. The owner sent servant after servant; some were beaten, and some were killed—but none were ever given what was due the owner of the vineyard. The owner had an only son that he loved very much; and he decided to send him, thinking that they would surely respect him. When the evil men realized that the owner had sent his heir, they plotted to kill him and steal his inheritance. So they killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

Jesus concluded His parable by asking what the owner of the vineyard should do. He answered His own question by declaring that he would come and destroy the husbandmen and give the vineyard to others. Jesus then reminded them of a quote from scripture.

Psalms 118:22–23 “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD’S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.”

The response of the religious leaders is very telling. They wanted to take Him prisoner because they knew He was talking about them! The only reason they didn't is because they were afraid of the response of the people, so they just went away.

The religious leaders couldn't help but make a connection with the words of the prophet Isaiah.

*Isaiah 5:1–7 “Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. **For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.**”*

Jesus was making a comparison with the condition of Israel in the times of Isaiah and that of His day. The key to Isaiah's prophecy: Israel is God's vineyard. Even though God had done everything possible to promote spiritual growth among His people, their spiritual leaders had turned their positions into a business for personal profit. They certainly weren't serving God; they were practicing religious rituals. God had sent many prophets to declare His truth and record it in scripture, but they had not heeded their message and even killed some of His prophets. Finally, He sent His own Son, Jesus, hoping they would respond to Him in repentance and obedience; but they plotted to kill Him as well. Because they rejected His Son, God was going to judge His people and remove the hedge of protection around them and bring about their destruction.

These men knew that Jesus was declaring Himself to be God's Son. Because their hearts were so hard, they just couldn't accept that truth—in spite of all the evidence from scripture and the miracles He performed that affirmed it.

Jesus emphasized His claim by using the quote from Psalms regarding “the stone that the builders rejected”—connecting the rejected Son to the stone. He was basically saying that in spite of their rejection, He would become the chief cornerstone upon which God would rebuild and restore the nation of Israel. This would be the LORD's doings and a wondrous thing to behold.

The Jewish people thought that they were guaranteed entrance into the kingdom just because they were the sons of Abraham. They were wrong. Jesus is declaring that those who rejected Him would never enter the kingdom of God.

Mark 12:13 ¶ And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in *his* words.

Mark 12:14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?

Mark 12:15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see *it*.

Mark 12:16 And they brought *it*. And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.

Mark 12:17 And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

The next group to confront Jesus and try to use His words against Him was a group of Pharisees and Herodians. It is interesting to note that these two groups were on different sides of the political equation. The Pharisees wanted independence from Rome; the Herodians willingly submitted to Rome.

First, they tried to flatter Jesus by addressing Him as Teacher (from the Greek) and declaring that they knew Him to be one that told the truth without regard to what others would think. They knew that He taught the truth about God's way (a reference to God's law). Their question: Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?

Seems like a lose-lose situation doesn't it? If Jesus gave an answer supporting submission to Rome, the Pharisees could drum up support against Him for denying God's authority. If His answer denoted disobedience to Caesar, the Herodians could charge Him with promoting rebellion against Rome. Isn't it interesting, and it still holds true today, that when focused on a common cause, the enemy of my enemy is my friend?

Jesus knew their hypocrisy and what they were trying to do and said so. He told them to bring Him a penny, a coin. The NIV Commentary makes a good observation: "By using Caesar's coinage they were tacitly acknowledging Caesar's authority and thus their obligation to pay the tax."

When they brought it to Him, He asked them whose image and inscription was on it. The answer was obvious; they said Caesar's. Jesus then told them to give to Caesar what belonged to Him and to God the things that belong to Him.

Hidden in Jesus' answer is a beautiful truth. Just as the Roman coin was imprinted with the image and inscription of Caesar, so man is imprinted with the image of God and the inscription of God on his heart. In light of that truth, we owe God our lives.

Genesis 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him;

male and female created he them."

Romans 1:19 "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them."

The men were amazed at how Jesus was able to avoid their trap.

Guzik provides a historical note about the taxes: "There were three taxes imposed by the Romans on Judea. The first was the *ground tax*, which was 10% of all grain and 20% of all wine and fruit. The second was the *income tax*, which amounted to 1% of a man's income. The third was the poll tax, paid by men aged from 12 to 65 and women from 14 to 65. This was one denarius a year, about a day's wage for a working man."

Mark 12:18 ¶ Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

Mark 12:19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

Mark 12:20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

Mark 12:21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.

Mark 12:22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.

Mark 12:23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.

Mark 12:24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?

Mark 12:25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

Mark 12:26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

Mark 12:27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

The next group to confront Jesus was the Sadducees, a group that did not believe in the resurrection. They first established that Moses wrote that if a man's brother died and left a wife behind but no children, his brother should take the wife and raise up a son in his brother's name.

Deuteronomy 25:5-6 "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel."

They then proposed a scenario in which there were seven brothers. The first

took a wife and died without an heir. The second took her and the same thing happened; this continued until all seven brothers and the woman died without any children.

Their question is very interesting in light of their belief that there was no such thing as resurrection. They asked Jesus whose wife she would be in the resurrection.

Jesus chided them for not knowing the scripture or recognizing the power of God. In the resurrection one is neither married nor given in marriage; they are as the angels in heaven—devoted servants of God. (With this answer Jesus identifies another truth in which the Sadducees did not believe—the existence of angels.)

Jesus then addressed their disbelief in the resurrection by quoting what God had said to Moses from the burning bush.

Exodus 3:6 "Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

God said, "I am the God," not "I was the God." Jesus explained that God declared Himself the God of the living—not of the dead. He told them they were wrong not to believe in the resurrection.

I think there is another good application to be made. Though the Sadducees were among the leaders of the people, Jesus declared that they did not understand the scripture correctly nor did they truly understand the power of God. This is an important truth that believers need to understand today. The fact that someone represents himself as one with biblical understanding is not proof that he/she actually possesses biblical understanding. God has made His word available to each one of us. We are accountable before Him according to that revelation—not according to some person's interpretation of it. We are to consider everything we are taught just as did the Bereans whom Paul commended in Acts.

Acts 17:10–11 "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

Mark 12:28 ¶ And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

Mark 12:29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

Mark 12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

Mark 12:31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour

as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

One of the scribes that heard the conversation between Jesus and the Sadducees was the next to question Jesus. Somehow, I don't think his motive was to entrap Jesus. Matthew tells us that the scribe was a Pharisee and a lawyer. The scribe recognized that Jesus had answered the Sadducees well. His question: "What is the most important commandment of all?"

Jesus didn't hesitate; He quoted scripture.

Deuteronomy 6:4–5 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

This essentially sums up all the commandments concerning man's relationship to God. Jesus then gave him more than he asked, He added that the second was to "love thy neighbor as thyself," essentially summing up the commandments dealing with man's relationship to man.

Leviticus 19:18 "...thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."

Jesus confidently declared that there were no other commandments greater than these two. Many commentators rightly point out that unless we obey the first commandment, we will never be able to obey the second.

Mark 12:32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

Mark 12:33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Mark 12:34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him *any* question.

The scribe affirmed the truth of what Jesus said, declaring that those two laws were more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices one could make. Maybe he was thinking of the words of Samuel.

1 Samuel 15:22 "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice...."

Jesus saw that the man had answered with discernment and told him that he was not far from the kingdom of God. In other words, you are so close to recognizing the whole truth.

Mark tells us that no one questioned Jesus after that.

Mark 12:35 ¶ And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple,

How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?

Mark 12:36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Mark 12:37 David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he *then* his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

Jesus continued teaching in the temple and next posed a question of His own, quoting from a psalm that was recognized as referencing the Messiah. He asked, "How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the Son of David? Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, David said,"

Psalms 110:1 "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

He continued (my paraphrase), "If David called the Messiah his Lord, how can He be his son?" The inference is that David recognized that Messiah would hold the position of honor at the right hand of God in authority over him.

Only as the man Jesus was He David's son; but as the Messiah, He was David's Lord and the Son of God. This truth comes through loud and clear in the writings of the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 9:6-7 "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Isaiah 11:1-5 "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."

Mark notes that the people listened to Him with pleasure.

Mark 12:38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and *love* salutations in the marketplaces,
Mark 12:39 And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

Mark 12:40 Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

In this next snapshot, Jesus warns against following the example of certain (if not

most) scribes. They walk about in their long robes and enjoy getting noticed by the people in the marketplace. They like the most important seats in the synagogue and to sit in the places of honor at feasts. Yet, they take advantage of widows that could be easily pressured to give what they could not afford, while making long prayers to show how pious they are. His surprising indictment against these religious leaders: They will receive greater damnation. This seems to be another reference to degrees of punishment in hell.

One can't help but make a comparison to the false teachers of today that take advantage of the mostly poorer masses with their ruses of seed money, prayer hankies and such.

Mark 12:41 ¶ And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

Mark 12:42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

Mark 12:43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

Mark 12:44 For all *they* did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living.

Mark closes this chapter with a snapshot of Jesus sitting beside the treasury and watching the people as they came to give. He saw some give a little and some that were rich give a lot. A certain poor widow showed up that gave two mites, a farthing. According to the Greek, this widow was a pauper, a beggar (probably reflected in her appearance). According to Easton's Dictionary, a mite was the very smallest copper coin.

Jesus called His disciples over so He could teach them. He told them that the poor widow had given more than anyone else had given to the treasury. Others had given of their abundance; she, however, had given all that she had without regard to her own needs.

Principle: God doesn't look at the amount we give; He looks at the heart and the sacrifice we are willing to make as we give.

This is one thing I appreciate at our church. There are tithe and offering boxes placed around the church and lobby to facilitate giving. There are no offering plates passed that lead to pressure or provide a temptation to give to impress. They are just there for people to give discreetly as they are led.