

12. Jesus Teaches in Jerusalem

Jesus starts in chapter 12 to teach in Jerusalem, beginning with parables that illustrate the nature of the messiah and men's reaction to him.

Teaching with Parables in Jerusalem

Mark 12:1-8

12 He then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. 2 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. 3 But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. 5 He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.

6 "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

7 "But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 8 So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

The parable of the vineyard illustrates the Jews' rejection of the son of God. God has prepared everything for the coming of the Lord. He has entrusted his plan to Jews. However, those originally chosen and placed in charge rejected God's servants, the prophets, and killed them. Finally, God sent his son whom the men also killed that they might receive the inheritance unto themselves.

Mark 12:9-12

9 "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. 10 Haven't you read this scripture:

"The stone the builders rejected

has become the capstone;

11 the Lord has done this,

and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

12 Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

Jesus used the parable of the vineyard to teach what will happen to Jews when they kill him. He asks a rhetorical question, and then answers: What will God—the owner of the vineyard—do? He will kill the Jews who killed the son and give his vineyard to others—Disciples of Christ or Christians. The lord compares their impending rejection of him to the teaching of David in Ps 118:22-23. Regardless of the wonders of the Lord, these Jews would reject him as the capstone—chief cornerstone. Peter will continue this teaching in Acts 4:10-12:

It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 He is

"the stone you builders rejected,

which has become the capstone.'

12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to

men by which we must be saved."

In 1 Peter 2:7-8, Peter contrasts the believers and unbelievers, using this same passage:

7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

"The stone the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone,"

8 and,

"A stone that causes men to stumble

and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for.

The Jews who heard this teaching once again sought to seize him; but being afraid, they went away.

Render to Caesar

Mark 12:13-17

13 Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 14 They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? 15 Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

17 Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

And they were amazed at him.

Hypocrisy is "a feigning to be what one is not or feigning to believe what one does not; especially: the false assumption of an appearance of virtue or religion. "We know you are a man of integrity," they said while trying to catch him in his words. "You are swayed by men; you don't pay attention to who men are," they added. You teach the way of God, the truth. Immediately after the flattery came the deceitful trap: should they pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus used the dilemma to state a principle that has governed religious/political relationship even to our times. The statement itself has become a part of modern vocabulary: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Of course, they left amazed. Paul and Peter also dealt with this situation. Paul taught in Rom 13:1-3: Rom 13:1-2:

13 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

Peter also taught the same principle in 1 Peter 2:13-17:

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him

to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. 16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. 17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

Once again, they had nothing else to say.

The Dilemma Presented by the Sadducees on the Resurrection

Mark 12:18-23

18 Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. 19 "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. 20 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. 21 The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. 22 In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. 23 At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

Having failed to catch the Lord with the dilemma of divine versus human government, the Sadducees, who do not believe in a resurrection, created a hypothetical situation of a woman with many husband. "At the resurrection, whose wife will she be?"

Mark 12:24-27

24 Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? 25 When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. 26 Now about the dead rising – have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!"

Jesus claimed them in error because they did not know the scriptures or the power of God. There will not be marriage in heaven. We will be like the angels in heaven. The Hebrew writer describes angels as spirits in Heb 1:14: "14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" However, the Lord's disciples will be higher than the angels, according to Heb 2:5-6: "5 It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking." As spirits, angels are sexless. Angels as women or girls come from artists depictions and false teaching

The Most Important Commandment

Mark 12:28-31

28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

Jesus had gained the attention of one of the teachers of the law who wanted to know what the most important commandment was. This man seemed sincere and lacked the deceit of the others.

Mark 12:29-31

29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 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: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no

commandment greater than these."

These teaching are from the Old Testament, but they are not explicitly stated in the Ten Commandments. Deut 6:4-6 teaches: "4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Lev 19:18 further teaches: "18 Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."

Mark 12:32-34

32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Underlying this discourse is the relative importance of the law of the letter and the law of the spirit. The Lord's new order was to be ruled by a law of the spirit. Paul explained in 2 Cor 3:4-6:

4 Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. 5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant- — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Christ the Son of David

Matt 12:35-37

35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked,

"How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? 36 David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared:

"The Lord said to my Lord:

'Sit at my right hand

until I put your enemies

under your feet.'"

37 David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"

The large crowd listened to him with delight.

In these verses, Jesus asks a question with Mark not recording the answer, if one were given. On whether Jesus was the son of David or the Lord of David, Jesus cited David in Ps 110:1. We know from our perspective that Jesus was born of the lineage of David, according to Genealogies of Matt 1. But Jesus is the Lord of all kings, including David. The Revelation teaches in Rev 1:4-5:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

In addition, he is Lord of lord and King of kings. Rev 17:14 teaches: "

"14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because

he is Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

Rev 19:15-16 teaches that he is KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS:

15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

The Teachers of the Law

Mark 12:38

38 As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, 39 and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 40 They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."

Matthew records Jesus' condemnation of the teachers of the law in more detail in Matt 23 (the entire chapter). In that passage, Jesus concludes his teaching with this statement in Matt 23:37-39:

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. 38 Look, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

The Widow's Contribution

Mark 12:41-44

41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on."

This teaching is so explicit that one can add little without diminishing it. Suffice it to say that the early church offers many examples where the Christians gave out of their poverty. The example of the Macedonian churches recorded in 2 Cor 8:1-4 will suffice here:

8 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

This widow and the rich young ruler offer striking contrast in liberality and generosity.