

The Gospel of *Mark*

The Servant Leadership of Jesus

The Servant's Ministry in Jerusalem (11 – 16)

Public Teaching and Controversy: *Yielding to the Appropriate Image* (12:13-17)

13-15a Following His stern words to the Jewish leaders in teaching the parable of the tenants ^{v.1-11}, Jesus was questioned by some of the Pharisees and Herodians ^{Mark 3:6}, in order to try to catch Him saying something against the Law. They started by telling Jesus He was a “man of integrity”, and then asked Him their well-thought-out, divisive question: “Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

Herodians (secular liberals) were a Jewish political party who backed the Herods and Rome. Pharisees (nationalistic legalists) were Jewish leaders who claimed to believe in the oral Law. In general, Herodians and Pharisees were enemies, but united their efforts to get rid of Jesus.

The Jewish leaders spoke the truth about Jesus, but stated it with obvious insincerity, hoping to trap Jesus ^{Matthew 12:10} into insulting the Roman governor ^{Luke 20:20} or the Jewish people.

The Greek word for “taxes” (*kēnsos*) actually came from a Latin word indicating a census and the resulting poll tax. Early in the first century, the Roman annual poll tax for each citizen was one denarius (the normal day's wages for a Roman soldier or a common laborer).

15b-17 Jesus responded by first telling them He knew they were “trying to trap [Him]”; however, since that was impossible ^{John 1:1,14}, Jesus had them bring him a denarius for Him to look at. Jesus' answer started with a question ^{Mark 11:29-30}: Whose “inscription” (image) was on the coin? They responded: “Caesar's”, and so Jesus said to yield to Caesar and to God what belongs to them.

Jesus immediately knew ^{Mark 2:8} and exposed their true motive for asking Him the question.

Since the coin had Caesar's picture/name/title, giving it to him to pay the poll tax was proper. However, the complete meaning of Jesus' answer is often misunderstood. Since humans are made in God's image ^{Genesis 1:26-27}, they should give themselves totally to God ^{James 4:7a}.

Christians belong to Him ^{Galatians 5:24}, because they “were bought at a price” ^{1 Corinthians 6:19-20} and have Jesus' name “will be on their foreheads” ^{Revelation 22:4}.

Public Teaching and Controversy: *Marriage at the Resurrection* (12:18-27)

18-23 Another group of Jewish leaders, the Sadducees, came and used the levirate marriage custom to show a woman could legally have multiple marriages. In their example, the woman had seven husbands. Their question was: Which one of the seven would be her husband at the “resurrection”?

Sadducees (religious liberals) were wealthy, aristocratic Jewish leaders, comprising most of the Sanhedrin and all high priests. Their beliefs focused on Moses' Law (written Torah = Pentateuch). The Sadducees did not believe in angels, spirits or the resurrection ^{Acts 23:8}, because they believed Moses did not teach about them. So, the Sadducees' inquiry about the resurrection was a clear indication their question to Jesus was not legitimate, but contentious.

A Hebrew custom that later became part of the Mosaic Law ^{Deuteronomy 25:5-10} was the levirate marriage (Latin *levir*, meaning "brother-in-law") (i.e., marriage to a dead husband's brother).

24-27 Jesus responded by questioning their understanding of Scripture. He said the resurrected dead will be like angels ^{Luke 20:36} (spiritual/eternal ^{1 Corinthians 15:41-44}) and not marry. Jesus then proved the truth of the resurrection by quoting God, who spoke to Moses in front of the burning bush ^{Exodus 3:6}.

If the Sadducees understood/trusted-in the Scriptures ^{2 Timothy 3:15-17} (or in the power of God), as they said they did, they would have believed in God's ability to raise the dead ^{1 Peter 1:17-21}.

Jesus indicated marriage was created on earth for companionship & procreation. ^{Genesis 2:18-24}

Jesus point was that Abraham/Isaac/Jacob were dead physically, but alive spiritually. ^{Exodus 3:6}

Public Teaching and Controversy: *The Greatest Commandment* (12:28-34)

28-31 A scribe (who was a Pharisee ^{Matthew 22:34-35}) asked Jesus for the most important commandment. Jesus responded by quoting the verses commonly considered as the most important ^{Deuteronomy 6:4-5}; however, Jesus added another verse on loving neighbors ^{Leviticus 19:18} that was probably unexpected.

The Pharisees had determined there were 613 commandments (248 positive, 365 negative).

Jesus quoted the first part of the Shema (*sh'ma* : hear) ^{Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21, Numbers 15:37-41}.

A genuine love for people ^{Luke 10:25-37, 1 John 4:19-21} must accompany a sincere love for God.

After Jesus quoted from the Mosaic Law, He proclaimed: "**All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.**", indicating the two statements summed up all of Scripture.

32-34 The scribe praised Jesus' answer, adding that the principles of love described in the verses are "more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices" ^{Isaiah 1:11-15, Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:6-8, Hebrews 10:8-10}.

Jesus responded by telling the scribe his answers revealed he was close to God's Kingdom ^{Matthew 3:2}.

When Jesus declared that the scribe was "**not far from the kingdom of God**", He was implying the man had both great knowledge of truth and a sincere acceptance of that truth. However, the scribe lacked the willingness to fully apply his understanding of Biblical truth and accept Jesus as the promised Messiah – only then would his entrance into the Kingdom be complete.

Public Teaching and Controversy: *The Sonship of Jesus Christ* (12:35-40)

35-37 After finishing with the questions from the Jewish leaders, Jesus posed a question of his own. He rhetorically asked how the Christ/Messiah could be both a descendant of David and David's Lord. Jesus exposed the incompetence of the Jewish leaders in teaching about the true nature of the Messiah. For example, they taught the Messiah would be no more than a man in the line of David (hence the Messianic title ^{Matthew 22:42-44}: "Son of David" ^{Matthew 1:1, 21:9,15, Mark 10:47-48}). Jesus used David's own reliable words in Scripture: "**The LORD said to my Lord...**" ^{Psalms 110:1}. The first word for "LORD" was the Hebrew word, *Yhwh*, referring to God the Father, and the second Hebrew word for "Lord" was *'ādôn*, referring to God the Son (the Messiah). The word "my" referred to David, and therefore the phrase "my Lord" indicated the Lord/Messiah preceded David. Jesus also pointed out the "**teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David**" (for example, from Matthew's genealogy ^{Matthew 1:6,16}). The main point Jesus made was that the only way both could be true would be if the Messiah (Christ) was God ^{John 1:1,14}.

38-40 Jesus continued teaching with a stern warning about the pompous, hypocritical Jewish leaders. Jesus was not condemning all scribes ^{v.28, 34}, just those who lived lives as He described. The characteristics of the hypocritical scribes included "**flowing robes**" (clothing announcing the wearer as a devout and noted scholar), being "**greeted**" (constant recognition and accolades), having "**the most important seats**" ^{Luke 11:43} (up front near the sacred scrolls), devouring "**widow's houses**" (often estate planners for widows; giving the widows little and keeping most themselves) and saying "**lengthy prayers**" (praying for long periods to impress).

Public Teaching and Controversy: *A Lesson in Sacrificial Giving* (12:41-44)

41-42 Jesus sat down where He could observe people as they came to give their temple offerings. During this time, He saw a poor widow woman come in and give two coins equal to less than a cent. Jesus sat opposite the "treasury". The treasury was where the people deposited their temple offerings, and consisted of 13 trumpet-shaped metal receptacles in the court of women. The money given was literally copper coins. When the rich people 'threw' in their abundance of coins, it made a loud noise, so everyone would look up and see who was giving so much. The widow woman gave 2 small copper coins (*lepta*), each equal to about 1/64 of a denarius.

43-44 Jesus told His disciples the woman gave more than anyone, because she gave "**all she had**". "**I tell you the truth**" is a phrase used many times by Jesus to introduce authoritative truth. Mark cited Jesus saying the phrase 14 times ^{3:28, 6:11, 8:12, 9:1,41, 10:15,29, 11:23, 12:43, 13:30, 14:9,18,25,30}. The hypocritical rich gave loudly "**out of their wealth**"; the sincere "**poor widow**" gave quietly "**out of her poverty**" (sacrificial faith/trust) ^{2 Corinthians 8:12}. Money is a good servant, but a poor master ^{Matthew 6:24}. A person's use of money reveals their true heart ^{Matthew 6:21, 1 Corinthians 13:3}.

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