

2024.10.6



Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Suggested Starter Question

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why?**

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Observation—*What do I see?*

- Review the three fights Jesus' adversaries picked with him (and lost!). Choose one to discuss:
 - 1 fruitless self-centeredness (Mark 12:1-11)
 - 2 greedy dishonesty (Mark 12:13-17)
 - 3 scoffing secularism (Mark 12:18-27)
- What erroneous beliefs about Jesus lie behind their attack on him?
- What correct assessments about them lie behind Jesus' response?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- Rewrite the argument (both sides—theirs and Jesus') in your own words.
- What words or concepts do you think they were twisting?
- None of their traps worked! What does trying to trap God suggest about the human heart?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- What are some insincere questions about God that you've encountered at home or work? Did you respond? If so, how? How did the convo go?
- Have you ever been less than sincere in your questions or complaints to God (voiced or silent)? Would you tell us about it? How did God correct you?
- Choose one question or complaint someone you know has for God. Craft a "Proverbs 26:4-5 response".

Sermon Summary Mark 12:1-40

As we continue our study of Mark's gospel, Jesus and his disciples have arrived in Jerusalem for the Passover—the final week of Jesus' earthly life and ministry. Jesus had just cleansed the temple—the final straw for the temple leaders. They demanded to know on what authority he had done these things (11:15-33). Today we are looking at the follow up conversation. The Sanhedrin want to know who Jesus thinks he is. So Jesus told a parable which revealed both the source of his authority as well as the tragic consequences which were about to befall the nation for rejecting God's only begotten son (12:1-8). Jesus' parable provided a neat summary of Israel's history. The vineyard represents the nation of Israel (eg. Isaiah 5:1-7). The owner of the vineyard is God. The tenants represent the people of Israel, especially the national leadership. The slaves sent to the vineyard portray the many prophets God sent Israel over the years to warn his wayward people to repent or face judgment. And of course, the beloved Son represents Jesus. Jesus is more than just a prophet sent from God. Jesus warned them that their rejection of God's Son would lead to national judgment and a new set of tenants in God's vineyard (12:9-12).

God is about to do something new, something unforeseen! No longer will God's vineyard be equated with national Israel. In God's vineyard, there will be no distinction between Jew and Gentile. They will be bound together by their mutual faith in Messiah Jesus—the stone which the builders rejected. This is consistent with Old Testament prophecy (Genesis 12:1-3; Isaiah 49:6). Jesus' rejection by the Jewish nation and his subsequent death were all part of God's plan to reconcile mankind to himself (Isaiah 53). Jesus' atoning death initiated a New Covenant where Jew and Gentile worship God together as equal spiritual brothers and sisters. This new entity is called the church. The Church has been commissioned by God to do what Israel failed to do—to be a "light to the nations." But the Sanhedrin did not like this new arrangement! They understood clearly Jesus' threatened judgment upon their leadership and upon their nation (see Luke 20:19-20). Their personal attack had failed (Mark 12:1-12).

Thinking that perhaps they can catch him in a political error, they raise one of the more troublesome issues to a Jew—the Roman poll tax (v. 13-15). Since this tax went to a pagan king it was a hot button in Israel at the time—and the Sanhedrin knew it! If Jesus says, "No, we should not pay taxes to Rome," they will report him to the Roman authorities. But if he says, "Yes, pay the tax"—then he will alienate many of his Jewish supporters who strongly oppose paying taxes to Rome. Jesus gave a brilliant response (v. 15-17). Since using Roman coins imprinted with Caesar's image implies an obligation to Caesar, how much more of an obligation must we owe to Him whose image we bear? Boom! Round Two goes to Jesus as well.

So they regrouped and came upon a strategy which played to their strengths. They would ask Jesus a theological question (v. 18-23). According to this Old Testament law, if a childless, married man dies, his unmarried brother is to take his widow as his wife and hopefully this union will bear children. The purpose was to preserve the dead man's name and inheritance. The Sadducees used an extreme, absurd example to mock belief in an afterlife. Jesus responded by challenging their assumptions (v. 24-27). He showed that their argument failed because in the next life there will be no marriage (v. 24-25). Then he went on the offensive, demonstrating that the Hebrew Scriptures confirm the afterlife. Jesus proved the existence of the afterlife based upon a verb tense (Mark 12:26-27)!

Then, a scribe who overheard this discussion commended Jesus for answering the Sadducees well. He had a question of his own (v. 28)—but unlike the others, his question was sincere (v. 34). The rabbis recognized 613 commands in the Mosaic Law—and that they couldn't all be equally important. Unlike the rabbis, this scribe recognized that heart attitude was more important than external observance (v. 32-33). Jesus has now taken round three! So comprehensive and so wise were his answers that no one dared ask him anymore questions (v. 34)—so Jesus asked a few questions of his own! Based on 2 Samuel 7:13-14, Isaiah 11:1 and Jeremiah 23:5, the scribes believed that the promised Messiah would be a descendant of David. Jesus did not dispute this truth—he took it further, adding clarity to the identity of Messiah. "Chew on this theological puzzle—if the Messiah is David's Lord, how can he also be his human descendant?" (v. 35-35) The Scriptures portray the Messiah as being both human and divine. He is the great God-Man! That is why the virgin birth was necessary (Isaiah 9:6-7)! Jesus' identity really matters! Think about it: if there is no afterlife, as the Sadducees contended, if there is no final accountability to the God who created us and gives us life, then what does it matter how we live? If there is no future reward, then why not seek accolades and attention and prominence here? That's all we are going to get anyway. If there is no eternity, earthly acclaim and earthly rewards are all that there is. If there is no future judgment, why not take advantage of the weak, if it serves your purpose to do so? You know, the survival of the fittest and all that. But there is a God. There will be a final judgment. There is a heaven and a hell. Because these things are true, it really does matter what you believe. Was Jesus just a good and wise man who spoke on his own authority—or is he the great God-man whose authority is from heaven? Is he the Lamb of God, come to take away the sins of the world—or just a guy who made fantastic claims?

Then Jesus turned the tables, pointing out the hypocrisy of the Jewish scribes (v. 38-40). They loved the attention and respect their position as religious experts afforded them. And they liked money—and acquired it unethically. Church, we need to be careful as followers of Christ that we not sin as the scribes did, through hypocrisy, greed and pride. In our more honest moments, most of us would have to admit that there is a bit of the scribe in us too. We too are sometimes guilty of pride, greed, and self-promotion. This is dangerous (v. 40c). There is a final judgment, and although we might fool our neighbor with our false piety, we can't fool God. He sees and knows all. Religious skeptics beware: if we have learned anything the last two weeks it is that even the most persuasive answers won't satisfy a closed mind. Had the Sanhedrin come to Jesus with an open mind, honestly seeking to determine whether his claims to be the Messiah were valid, things might have turned out quite differently for them. But they didn't come with an open mind. They weren't seeking truth—please don't make that mistake. Ask your questions—but listen to the answers with an honest heart. Sometimes our theological questions come not from a sincere desire to have answers that satisfy, but rather to avoid the implications that belief in Jesus Christ might demand upon our lives. For many of us, our greatest barrier to faith isn't intellectual, but moral. Sometimes our intellectual questions are smokescreens that we hide behind, allowing us to avoid the implications of dealing with a God who is there. So cultivate a genuine, authentic faith. The showy, hypocritical variety impresses neither God nor man! Be honest about your struggles and thank God for his grace.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Job argued with God—and God argued back! How do you think it went?

(Note: Although it is translated in various ways, the Hebrew word for "argue" appears in each of the following passages.)

Monday— Read Job 5:17–27 (translated as "corrects" in v. 17)

Tuesday— Read Job 6:24–30 (translated as "prove" and "correct" in v. 24-25)

Wednesday— Read Job 9:25–35 (translated as " arbitrate" in v. 33)

Thursday— Read Job 13:1–19 (translated as "argue", "rebuke" & "defend" in v. 3, 10 & 15)

Friday— Read Job 16:18–22 (translated as "pleads" in v. 21)

Saturday— Read Job 40 (translated as "accuses" in v. 2)

Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: _____ Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]