

**Mark Study**  
**Week Seventeen**  
**Mark 11:27 – 12:27**

**Day One**

27 They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. 28 "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?" 29 Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 30 John's baptism—was it from heaven, or from men? Tell me!"

v. 27 – Jesus kept coming back to Jerusalem, even though He knew what would happen to Him there. After all, He had predicted it to His disciples on many occasions. Jesus was a man of courage. **Are you a person of courage, too?**

When Jesus was in the Temple, a delegation of leaders sought Him out to confront Him, not to learn from Him. When you think you already know it all, you don't search for new insight. You simply hold onto what you have and resist anyone who can challenge your world, just like those leaders were doing. That is why we can never allow ourselves to believe that we have "arrived," and know everything we need to know. That is a dangerous mentality—for those who hold it and for those around those who hold it.

v. 28 – The Jews wanted to know by what authority Jesus was turning over tables and teaching against the Temple lifestyle and business. They had not issued the authority for such action as the owners or at least the caretakers of the Temple area in which Jesus was walking. They demanded an explanation.

It's amazing that those leaders had a private audience with God, yet asked Him for so little. When you think you already have what you need, however, there is no need to seek anything else:

The poor man utters supplications, but the rich man answers roughly (Proverbs 18:23).

v. 29 – Jesus never felt any pressure to answer His critics on their terms. He always skillfully shifted the advantage to Himself in the debate. He answered their question by posing a question. Jesus never stopped doing what He did to answer His critics. He never ignored them, He just didn't submit to their terms for discussion and debate. It reminds me of Nehemiah and his response to his accusers and critics:

Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono." But they were scheming to harm me; so I sent messengers to them with this reply: "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:2-3).

**Are you giving undue attention to your critics?** Don't! It's not worth it and will distract you from the work that God has given you to do.

## Day Two

31 They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' 32 But if we say, 'From men'..." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) 33 So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

vs. 31&32 – Just a simple question, but it stumped the experts. By what authority did John do what he had done? If they said by heaven's authority, then they were condemning themselves for disobedience. If they answered that John did what he did from the authority of men, then the people would rise up against them.

Here again we see that the people were more spiritual than their so-called leaders! They knew John was a prophet, while the leaders held that he was not. **Why do we continually maintain that somehow our leaders are automatically more spiritual, intelligent or insightful than those who follow?** When I was on church staff, I told people that I was a member who happened to be employed by the church. I was not on staff because I was somehow superior in any way to those who were not.

Leaders serve because it is a calling, not because they are better than others. The calling equips them to do their work, not their inherent talent or insight. I am sitting right now in a restaurant, and one of the women who works here keeps telling me she wants to quit. Why doesn't she? One of her pastors doesn't want her to, doesn't believe it's the will of God for her. **Does that pastor know her heart and what she is feeling? Does that pastor know her family situation, or her children's needs?** I think not.

**How in the world can any leader know the will of God for her life, or yours?** The only reason we would even entertain that possibility is that we want our leaders to be more spiritual than we are so we don't have to seek the Lord on our own behalf. We can delegate that duty to them! This goes back to Israel's desire for a king to "fight our battles." (see 1 Samuel 8.) This desire was still alive centuries later, and it caused the leaders we are looking at now not to recognize Jesus. They had a preconceived notion of what their Messiah King should be like and Jesus didn't fit the mold. Neither did John the Baptist, so they rejected him, too.

But the people accepted both John and Jesus. **So who was the more insightful, the more spiritual, the leaders or the people?** It was the people! So please, oh please, don't surrender the leadership in your life that belongs to God to any leader, no matter how spiritual, charismatic or dynamic.

v. 33 – The leaders decided not to respond because either answer would have incriminated them. When they refused, Jesus refused to answer as well. Don't ever be pressured into answering a question that you don't want to, or aren't ready to answer.

### **Day Three**

1 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.

v. 1 – Jesus was a great teacher, but He didn't always teach for clarity. He taught so that those who had ears to hear spiritual things would hear and those that didn't would not. As stated in an earlier study, this seems a bit harsh. Shouldn't Jesus have worked hard to allow everyone to understand? Obviously not, and who am I to judge God's motives?

Jesus' images for His stories were all drawn from daily life. He connected with His listeners while teaching, but that did not necessarily mean that they understood the spiritual lesson of the parables. Yet people would walk for days to listen for days only to walk back home for days just to hear Jesus teach. I want to be that kind of teacher!

If we interpret this parable in light of the context, it will help us identify the main lesson that Jesus was trying to impart. Since He had been talking about John the Baptist and His own ministry, it would seem that the implication was that Israel had consistently rejected God's servants whom He sent to minister to them. Why should they treat John or Jesus any differently?

As usual, we must be careful here not to make too much of the details in the parable. A parable is story with a lesson, and the lesson is the important aspect, not the details – unless of course Jesus explained the details for us.

**Do you teach in any capacity? Are you taking the truths and lessons that you have learned and impart them to others?** I think we sometimes underestimate today the spiritual need for teachers, for God puts a high priority on those who can teach His truth:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).

And to some extent, those who are mature are expected to do some teaching of the truth, whether they are a gifted and called teacher or not.

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil (Hebrews 5:12-14).

Writing is also a form of teaching, if you write topically or to impart some lesson or truth. For that matter, any media can be used as a teaching vehicle. **So are you ready to do some teaching? Who would you teach? What would you teach? Where would you teach? What tools would you use to help you teach? Do you want to write? When will you start? What will you write? To whom?**

#### Day Four

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. 9 "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. Haven't you read this scripture: " 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

Jesus tied a passage to this parable to frame it and summarize the lesson He wanted them to remember. These verses are found in Psalm 118:22-23. I would not have thought that these verses were in a psalm, but rather in Isaiah or one of the prophets. Don't ask me why.

Israel was to reject Jesus, yet He was and is the very cornerstone upon which the weight of the Church rests. He is the main Man, in modern terms. He is not *one* of the main men, sharing His glory with others like Mohammed, Buddha or Krishna. Jesus is the One whom the Father sent to open the way to Him and to build the Church.

There are two responses to this truth, and two only. Either people will reject this, some nicely and others violently. Or they will accept it and it will be marvelous in their eyes. I for one don't oppose Jesus' supremacy. It is the wisdom of God, as Paul wrote:

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength (1 Corinthians 1:20-25).

It always comes down to this for anyone's faith: **Who is Jesus and what do you think His role is in the economy of God? Is He supreme or just one of a number of good, holy teachers?** Of course, Jesus is God, so that makes Him more than just a good man or moral leader.

### Day Five

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. 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.

v. 12 – The meaning of this parable wasn't hidden from those who heard it. Jesus was indicating the God was going to do something different, and eliminate the spiritual exclusivity that the Jews maintained. They were enraged and looked for a way to arrest Him, but once again their weakness as leaders was exposed.

You must serve the people you lead, but you cannot be afraid of them. If you take your identify from the people you lead, then you will try to maintain their loyalty at all costs. That means you may not make the difficult choices that may cost you their affection for a season. **Do you see how fear of the people affected their judgment in this case?** If they truly felt that Jesus was a threat or subversive, they had an obligation as leaders to do something about it. Yet they were cowards and did nothing. This isn't leadership; the leaders were actually following the people while looking like they were tough and in charge.

The title of one of my books is *So Many Leaders, So Little Leadership*. That was the state of affairs at that time in Israel.

v. 13 – The leaders were shrewd and thought they would trap Jesus in some political misstatement that would then allow the leaders to arrest Him without the risk of a riot on the part of the people. The Herodians were those who were loyal to Herod, who was the appointed king that Rome had installed over Palestine. You know who the Pharisees were—they were the ones who felt God had installed them to protect God's spiritual interests in Palestine. So we have a merger of religion and politics trying to catch Jesus. This alliance would continue right through to His death.

Usually when politics and religion join forces, it is usually to promote the agenda of one or the other and not to advance God's agenda. This was certainly the case here.

v. 14 – Their introductory statement was remarkable in its accuracy. Their summary of Jesus integrity was accurate, but they were saying it to lull Him into a false sense of security and trust. They were not honoring Jesus but flattering Him, and people who flatter always have another agenda other than the one they are saying.

After their introductory flattery, they sprang the trap: Was it right to pay taxes, since they were Jews? If Jesus said yes, then they could accuse Him of being a traitor to Israel. If He said no, then He could be a traitor to Rome. They thought they had devised the perfect trap.

It is amazing that men could think they could outsmart God. Yet we should not be surprised, for this was predicted in Psalm 2:

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill" (Psalm 2:1-6).

v. 15 – Jesus told them right away that He knew what they were up to. He asked that He be given the coin in use at that time. What wisdom Jesus had and He had it when He needed it. He didn't go home and say, "Gosh, that's what I should or could have said in that situation!" No, He was ready. How do you get this ready? One way is to study Proverbs so that you have wisdom! Another is to study what you've said after you've said it so you can be better prepared the next time.

The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer (Proverbs 15:28 NASU).

vs. 16&17 – Jesus then uttered one of His most quoted and famous statements: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." How simple yet profound! And as a result, we have a *wow 14*. The people were amazed at His response. I listen to some supposed gurus and wise men and read their literature from time to time. I have *no* idea, in most cases, what they are trying to say. They sound deep and profound but they are clouds without rain. They may look the part but they don't sound very good. Jesus was clear, simple, profound and wise.

Godly wisdom isn't someone pontificating, it's someone helping others with the practical needs of daily life. **What kind of wisdom do you have? Are you using it to help others?**

## Day Six

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?"

v. 19 – I don't think the Sadducees were trying to trap Jesus as the Pharisees had tried to do. I think they had a legitimate question, although it was one that was stemmed from their worldview that there was no resurrection (The Pharisees held that there was.). They could have been attempting to pin Jesus down on His view concerning the afterlife.

The tone of their question was less combative and hypocritical than the question about Caesar that the Pharisees had posed. **What question about the Word do you have that you are asking God? What understanding do you need on some biblical doctrine? What are you reading that will help you grow in your understanding of God's word?**

While it is good to seek the Lord for insight, posing nonsensical hypothetical questions is a stupid exercise. If you're going to seek God, seek Him about issues that matter. The questioners weren't asking about the quality of marriage or how a husband and wife can function in a more godly way. They were interested in some morbid, useless scenario that had no relevance at all. God is practical and relevant. You need to be the same.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (James 3:17).

### **Day Seven**

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!"

v. 24 – Wow! Jesus gave them a point-blank answer. They were in error for two reasons: they didn't know the Bible *or* the power of God! This indicates that to be spiritual doesn't require one or the other, it's both. In most cases, individuals or churches emphasize either the Word or the power of God. Seldom do they find a way to combine them both. But it's possible, as these men showed, that you can try to serve God with good intentions and not have either the Word or the power!

v. 25 – Jesus once again showed that He was and is God. Why do I say that? Because He had knowledge of the future, knowledge that only God could have. Jesus knew what

state men would be in during the resurrection. There is no human that could possibly have that knowledge, only God. Jesus knew that resurrected beings would be like the angels. Who knows what the angels are like except God Himself?

First, Jesus gave them an example of the power of God that they had misunderstood. Resurrected beings would not be in the same state as they were on earth. They would be transformed by the power of God. Now that's power! God is able to exert that power toward all His creation and transform them into new beings!

v. 26 – Then Jesus gave them an example of how they did not understand the word of God. The Sadducees held that the first five books of the Old Testament were the word of God, while the Pharisees accepted more of the books. So Jesus went to one of their own books and showed them a proof that the resurrection would indeed take place.

v. 27 – God is not referred to there as, “I *was* the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” like they were dead and gone forever. God *is* their God, and that proves that there is life after death. I am sure any Pharisees who were listening were rejoicing that Jesus was siding with them in regards to the resurrection.

God is a generational God. That is, He is the God of Abraham the father, Isaac the son and Jacob the grandson. He revealed Himself to three separate generations. None of those three served God only because their father or grandfather did. They served God because He was their God, too. I can lead my children to God, but He must show Himself to them the way He did to me. I can't impart my revelation; I can familiarize them with my God, but I can't give them my God. Only He can give Himself to others.