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Supernatural Power

Stories from Mark’s Gospel

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# Week 12 | Mark 12

### Chapter 12 Summary:

As we saw in Mark 11 Jesus and the disciples enter Jerusalem and go into the temple, where Jesus declares God’s judgment on the temple and shuts activities there. In chapter 12 we’ll continue to see the temple authorities react and confront Jesus. He replies with wisdom and warning.

# Day 1

## Read

### Mark 12:1–12 (NIV)

**12** Jesus 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 moved to another place. 2At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. 3But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. 5He 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.’ 8So 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. 10Haven’t you read this passage of Scripture:

“ ‘The stone the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

11the Lord has done this,

and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

12Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders 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.

## Study

Passages from the other parts of Scripture will help us interpret this parable:

* Read [Isaiah 5:1–7](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Is5.1). What does the vineyard represent?
* Read [Jeremiah 7:22–26](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Je7.22). Who are the servants who were sent by the vineyard owner and abused or killed?
* Now let’s fast-forward to the book of Acts which describes the birth of the early church after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Read [Acts 4:8–12](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Ac4.8). Who is the son who is killed by the vineyard’s tenants.

## Think about

The meaning of Jesus’ pointed allegory is not lost on the religious leaders he is confronting. They are enraged by it and are eager to enact their plan to have Jesus arrested and executed. They were acting out the parable in striking detail, yet its warning is completely lost on them.

Garland helps us think about this parable in our modern context:

“To many today, God may sometimes seem to be like an absentee landlord, and a foolish one at that—easily betrayed and cheated. The owner in the parable loses his servants, his son, and seemingly his vineyard. People in our world get away with injustice, oppression, and murder. God’s messengers continue to be rejected, mocked, beaten, and killed. There seems to be no accountability for sin.

All is not as it seems, however. God sends the servants and the Son in hopes of bringing people to repentance (Rom. 2:4). The rejections and murders reveal God as a tragic figure who suffers with humankind. They also reveal the blind folly of evil. People think that they can get away with it, but God’s judgment will inevitably come…The parable assures us that God will win even when it seems that he has lost. Those who reject God’s claims on their lives and God’s call to repentance will always be the losers even when it seems as if they have won. They sow the seeds of their own destruction.”[[1]](#footnote-2)

## Pray

Praise God for his longsuffering patience in dealing with unrepentant sinners. He gives opportunity after opportunity for people to turn to him, even when they violently reject his grace and mercy. Praise him for sending the Son he loves to die on the cross for our sins. Praise him for his justice — that every wrong will be made right.

Who do you know who needs to meet Jesus and receive his forgiveness? Pray for that person today.

# Day 2

## Read

### Mark 12:13–17 (NIV)

13Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 14They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others, 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 the imperial tax to Caesar or not? 15Should 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.” 16They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

17Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”

And they were amazed at him.

## Study

* In verse 13, notice the two groups that the Jewish leaders send to try and trick Jesus. Gombis explains how they’re points of view differed: “The Pharisees and Herodians are two groups that have already been plotting for some time to kill Jesus (cf. 3:6), and they likely represent two alternative Jewish attitudes toward the occupying Romans. The Pharisees regarded the Romans as an idolatrous people whose presence was polluting God’s holy land. The Herodians represented Jews that had accommodated to Roman rule, perhaps even finding ways to benefit from it. These alternative postures are in play in this episode that revolves around the imperial tax imposed on Judea by Rome.”[[2]](#footnote-3)
* Jesus recognized the false flattery coming from these leaders and gives an answer that will not satisfy their aims. While Jesus knew he had come to Jerusalem to die, he would not give the Pharisees a lawful reason for his arrest.
* As he had done throughout his ministry, Jesus spoke to the immediate circumstances, and also to the eternal, spiritual significance of what’s being asked. Jesus was no earthly insurrectionist, but the true Son of God who would liberate humanity from bondage to sin and death. His call to the people gathered in front of him was not to follow him into bloody conflict, but to one day accept that his shed blood on the cross would bring them peace with God.

Think about

Part of understanding what it means “to give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s” is recognizing the temporary nature of our current circumstance. As the book of James reminds us, we “are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes”(4:14) and so are the governments that preside over us. We should give them what they’re rightfully due, but no more.

Jesus isn’t making an all-inclusive, definitive statement on the relationship between his followers and their governments. But if we’re going to extrapolate from what Jesus says based on the rest of scripture, we could say something like this: as citizens of our nation, we should pay our taxes, pray for our leaders, obey our laws, and strive to live at peace with those around us.

When we have the right to vote and advocate in a democracy, we should engage in the political process in ways that honor Jesus, including obeying the greatest commandments (which Jesus will define in the next few verses). He says we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:29–31). As citizens, we demand just laws and fair treatment for all people, because they are God’s image bearers, and because that’s what we want for ourselves.

## Pray

How can you “give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s”? What does that look like in your life? Pray over your answer.

# Day 3

## Read

### Mark 12:18–27 (NIV)

18Then 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 raise up offspring for his brother. 20Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. 21The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. 22In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. 23At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?”

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

## Study

* Everybody wanted to come confront Jesus! So far we’ve seen the Pharisees, Herodians, and now the Sadducees (the scribes, or “teachers of the law” come in tomorrow’s passage). The Sadducees didn’t believe in the resurrection, which is why they were sad, you see. (Sorry, couldn’t help myself). They believed death was the end of a person’s existence. Jesus had predicted his resurrection three times in Mark’s gospel ([8:31; 9:31; 10:34](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+8%3A31%3B+9%3A31%3B+10%3A34&version=NIV)). If there is no resurrection, then Jesus will not be vindicated by God and his execution would be the final word.
* Jesus is once again being baited with the Mosaic law. Their question involved levirate marriage ([Deuteronomy 25:5–6](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Dt25.5-6)), which stated if a married man dies and has a brother, that brother will marry the widow in hopes that any resulting children would carry on the family name “This was a merciful and compassionate social arrangement that provided protection for a widow. She could keep her first husband’s land in the family, and bearing children would guarantee security and provision, since they could help to cultivate the land.” [[3]](#footnote-4)

## Think about

The important point here is not the nature of marriage, but the nature of resurrection. Jesus boldly rebukes the Sadducees, who, according to Jesus don’t really know the scriptures, or how powerful God is! He then offers a double argument against their objection.

First of all, resurrection does not mean resuscitation, nor does it mean a permanent, ephemeral state as a bodiless soul. It signals transformation. As N.T. Wright explains, resurrection “will not simply reproduce every aspect of our present humanity. It will be a recognizable and re-embodied human existence; but a great change will have taken place as well, whose precise nature we can at present only guess at.” [[4]](#footnote-5)

The second barrel of Jesus’ argument involves an example from the Pentateuch (the first five books of our Bible, and the only writings seen as authoritative by the Sadducees). When God met Moses at the burning bush, he used the present tense. He *is* the God of their forefathers because they still exist.

N.T. Wright helps us see the importance of Jesus’ words:

“‘Resurrection’, in other words, is not another, somewhat nicer, description of ‘being dead’. It is the reversal of death, the gift of a new body to enjoy life in God’s new world. We should beware of regarding death itself, the dissolution and decay of the physical body, as anything other than an enemy. That’s the first step to denying the goodness of God’s creation. Believing in the resurrection doesn’t just offer the best hope of all for our ultimate future; it gives to the present created world its full value. What God has made, he will remake.”[[5]](#footnote-6)

## Pray

Praise God for YOUR resurrection! Pray over the implications of the resurrection. What is true because Jesus was raised from the dead?

# Day 4

Hello, podcast friends! Lisa’s on vacation, so there won’t be an episode of the podcast this week. But you can check out our archives for great content that you might have missed at [*CFhome.org/pregame*](https://subsplash.com/christfellowship-tx/lb/ms/+hg732gk) or through [*Apple Podcasts*](https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/pastors-pregame/id1582563644).

## Read

### Mark 12:28–34 (NIV)

28One 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?”

29“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’  31The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’  There is no commandment greater than these.”

32“Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33To 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.”

34When 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.

## Study

* Although Jesus has had many antagonistic confrontations with the religious leaders, this one seems to have a different motivation and seems genuinely interested in Jesus’ response. “The scribe also repeats the exhortations in the Shema but follows them with a provocative comment: loving God and loving neighbor “is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices” (v. 33)… Scripture repeatedly stresses the relative importance of love, mercy, and justice over sacrifices and offerings. However, the fact is remarkable that the scribe makes this claim in the temple and on the day when Jesus has been challenged for shutting down its operations. We might expect a scribe to rebuke Jesus for disrupting the proper order of temple activities as commanded by God in the Torah. But the scribe recognizes that Jesus is faithfully capturing the heart of Torah in acting as he has, and his identification of Jesus as ‘teacher’ (v. 32) lacks the sarcasm and irony of his colleagues. He sees Jesus for who he is, the one who acts and teaches with God’s own authority.”[[6]](#footnote-7)

## Think about

“Our love for God is a response to God’s love for us. Israel confessed that the one true God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not some generic god. Christians confess that this God is also the one who meets us in Jesus Christ. It is impossible to love with all our heart some principle or cosmic force. We can, however, give our whole life to a personal God who has first loved us in such dramatic fashion as to send the beloved Son to give his life for us.

God does not love only certain portions of us, but the whole person; therefore, we are to love God with our whole selves. God does not save us by fractions, and we are not to offer to God a mere fraction of ourselves.[[7]](#footnote-8)

Flowing out of our love for God is our love for other people. We love them as we want to be loved. We pursue their good, even if it costs us something, thus emulating the love our Lord Jesus has for us.

## Pray

Love God. Love others. It’s easy to say, much harder to do! But we have the Holy Spirit empowering us! Invite the Spirit to show you an area where you are failing to love well and ask him for his guidance and power.

# Day 5

## Read

### Mark 12:35–44 (NIV)

35While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, “Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David? 36David 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.” ’

37David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?”

The large crowd listened to him with delight.

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

41Jesus 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. 42But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

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

## Study

* Read the Faithlife Study Bible [notes on Mark 12:36–37](https://biblia.com/books/fsb/Mk12.36) to understand how Jesus is asserting that he is the Messiah.
* N.T. Wright explains the significance of Jesus quoting from [Psalm 110](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Ps110). “The psalm continues, beyond the verse that Jesus has quoted, to speak of this coming King or Lord as a priest—and a priest forever. This passage is therefore pointing towards something which again has been bubbling up under the surface ever since Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, and will come to its head when Jesus confronts Caiaphas in chapter 14. Jesus is claiming authority over the Temple—claiming, indeed, the right to declare God’s judgment on it—not simply as a prophet, but as the King; not simply as the King, but as the true priest; not simply as the priest-King, but as the living embodiment of Israel’s God. This is complex, and perhaps difficult for us to grasp all at once. But these are the themes that make sense of the whole of Mark’s gospel, and in a measure of Jesus himself.”[[8]](#footnote-9)
* Consider how the story of the widow’s gift reflects the two greatest commandments that Jesus just explained ([12:29–31](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Mk12.29)). How is the women loving God with her whole self?

## Think about

Though they may seem disconnected, Wright connects Jesus’ teachings in this chapter:

“Giving up one’s life, indeed, is the theme of the final short scene, where Jesus contrasts the rich people who can afford to give plenty to the Temple treasury, and make sure others see that they’re doing it, with the poor widow who has given, literally, ‘her whole life’, the two copper coins which were all she had to live on that day. Her sacrifice, though small, was total. Once again, when we read this story in the light of Jesus’ riddle about David’s Lord and David’s son we discover a strange affinity. One might have thought she was ‘merely’ putting in two copper coins, but in fact she was putting in everything she had. One might have thought the Messiah was ‘merely’ David’s son—a human king among other human kings. But in fact, in the Messiah, Israel’s God has given himself totally, given all that he had and was.”[[9]](#footnote-10)

## Pray

What parts of your life are you holding back from God? Does your life show allegiance to Jesus as the eternal Son of God? Pray over your answers.

Go back and reflect on all of [Mark 12](https://biblia.com/books/niv2011/Mk12). What is the Spirit saying to you through Mark’s Gospel?

1. David E. Garland, [Mark](https://ref.ly/logosres/nivac62mk?ref=Bible.Mk12.1-12&off=22720&ctx=+final+destruction.%0a~When+they+kill+the+h), *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 459. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Timothy G. Gombis, [Mark](https://ref.ly/logosres/strygdcm62mk?ref=Bible.Mk12.13-17&off=3663&ctx=his+words%E2%80%9D+(v.+13).+~Mark+gives+the+sense), ed. Scot McKnight and Tremper Longman III, *The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 418–419. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Gombis, 424. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Wright, 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Wright, 168–169. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Gombis, 435. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Garland, 483. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Wright, 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Wright, 175–176. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)