

Gospel of Mark Chapter 12 - John Karmelich

1. Let me open with a question: Who's authority are you under? This question has nothing to do with your job or the question of who is the head of your household. The question has to do with the ultimate authority of our lives. At any given moment, we need to decide in effect, "Do I want to do something God's way or my way? Let me explain further:
 - a) In Chapter 12, Jesus was asked a series of questions mainly to challenge His authority. Jesus answers those questions in a way to teach that God is in charge of our lives, and it is our goal to please Him in all that we do. OK, I believe that. What should I do about that?
 - b) With every decision we make, we need to ponder in effect, "Am I going to do "this" God's way or my way?" In other words we are asking "who's authority" are we under? That does not mean we have to pray over every little decision. It does mean we have to make a conscious effort to seek God regularly to make decisions that are pleasing to Him. When we come to moments in our lives where we are confused as to what decision to make, we need to seek God and ask in effect, "What would God want me to do this in situation"?
 - i) Which reminds me, I've never really liked the bracelets that say, "What would Jesus do?" I always thought a more accurate phrase would be "What would Jesus want me to do"? How we respond in any given situation may not be the same way Jesus would respond. Often we are just to go forward, trusting that God is somehow working the situation out for His glory.
2. At this point, let me go over the main points of this chapter. Then I'll try to explain how this chapter ties to my lesson theme of explaining authority issues for our lives.
 - a) The first part of the chapter is Jesus teaching a parable. A parable is a made-up story designed to make a point. In this parable there are some people renting a grape-growing farm. When the owner sends people at harvest time to collect a portion of the harvest as a rent payment, the tenants beat up the owner's messengers. Finally, the owner sends his only son (note that) to collect his payment, and the tenants kill the son figuring "that's it, now we own the land that grows the grapes". The owner then sends in effect a "small army" to go kill the tenants who run the farm.
 - i) The underlying point of that parable is that even though the tenants kill the son, that son (a picture of Jesus) is still in authority as the "only son of the father" and the farm workers have to pay the ultimate price for the damage they have done.
 - ii) What does that have to do with you and me? In a sense, every time we decide to do things "our way" as opposed to God's way, we are rejecting the Son that God sent. In other words, God created the "land" that we are living on and He is in charge of our lives. When we do things in a way that is displeasing to Him, we are rejecting His desire for our lives at that moment in time.
 - iii) Jesus ends this parable with a quote of a Psalm that says in effect, "The stone that you have rejected is the chief cornerstone of something new." The point of that quote is the person that the Jewish leadership (and in effect all nonbelievers) reject is the foundation of how God desires to work in our lives.
 - b) The next story is about Jesus being asked whether or not the Israelites should pay taxes to the Roman government. This group asking the question was a mixture of "Pro-Rome" and "Anti-Rome" people. If Jesus says one should not pay taxes, he could be killed for starting a rebellion. If Jesus says one should pay their taxes, He would lose popularity as most of the Jewish population hated the fact that they were subject to the Romans.
 - i) Jesus answered in effect that "what belongs to Rome should be given to Rome and whatever belongs to God should be given to God."

- ii) The point of Jesus' answer is that He is not saying that the Roman Government is either good or bad. His point is the Roman government is in charge whether the Israelites liked it or not and they should give to the Romans what belongs to the Romans and give to God what belongs to God, which is "their lives".
 - iii) Again, the underlying point is about authority. God wants (or allows) human government to rule over our lives. (See Romans 13:1 on this point.) The purpose of government is to protect those that live under that government from harm.
 - a) Whether we like it or not, we all live under a human government authority just as we as Christians live under God's authority. We should do our best to make decisions that not only please our government (i.e., do what is legally right) but to make decisions that are pleasing to God in our lives.
 - b) Does that mean we can never rebel against government? There are times and situations where government tries to over-rule God's commands for our lives. Understand that such rebellion may be necessary but it also may cost us our lives (or jail time) for such rebellion.
 - c) In most cases, the basic idea is to respect the human government as well as respect God's authority in terms of what He desires for our lives.
 - c) The next question brought to Jesus has to do with the concept of our resurrection.
 - i) Jesus gives evidence to certain Jews who only believe in "part of the bible" (in this case the first five books) that God does resurrect people from the dead. Given that evidence, we have to accept the idea that we are accountable to God for our lives.
 - ii) The related question has to do with "marriage in heaven". Jesus says in effect that our current marriages are not an issue in heaven we have to worry about.
 - a) What we do have to worry about is living a life that is pleasing to God and in the case of marriages it would mean doing the right thing(s) to make our spouses happy. We should "shoot for" the type of marriage that God desires for us (for those who choose to be married).
 - b) I do know that my marriage has it's best moments when I and or my wife are fully trusting in God for the decisions we make in life.
 - d) The next question asked of Jesus (asked by a different person) was in effect, "What is the most important thing in the bible"?
 - i) Jesus responds in effect, "To love God as much as possible and to love others as much as possible". The underlying point is to acknowledge God exists and to seek Him for determining how He wants us to live our lives. All bible commandments in effect, hang on that principal of "loving God and loving others".
 - e) Jesus then quotes a Psalm to get the religious Jews to ponder, "Who is David (the Psalm author) talking about when that Psalm says, "The Lord said to my Lord".
 - i) In other words, David wrote that there are two separate "Lords" in one verse of a Psalm 110. Therefore, there must be two separate "authorities" in heaven. What Jesus is trying to get across is the idea that the promised "Messiah" is not only a man, but also part of "God" to be worshipped. In other words, if we are to do Jesus' will, we must accept His authority as being Lord of our lives.
 - f) The final story of this chapter is about giving of what we earn to God. The underlying point is that God is aware of how much we give and therefore, God is aware of how much we are trusting Him with our finances. It is one thing to say we trust God and another to "put our money where our mouth is". That idea of trusting God with what He has given us is a perfect ending to a topic of respecting Gods authority in all that we do in our lives.
3. If you haven't figured it out by now, the question of authority is my lesson title.
- a) OK, if I haven't given you enough detail in the last two pages, you can read further. ☺

4. Chapter 12, Verse 1: He then began to speak to them in parables:
- a) We are about to begin a parable. It might be best at this point to remember what the Gospel of Mark says about parables: Back in Chapter 4, Verse 11, Jesus made the point that the purpose of parables was in effect to hide the truth from those who don't "get it".
 - i) Translation: Those who don't care about following Jesus have no interest in unraveling a parable's meaning. Those who do care, will unravel its meaning.
 - ii) With that said, let's quickly list some of the "who, what, when and where's" of what Jesus is about to say, and then discuss the meaning of the parable.
 - b) In the last part of Chapter 11, the religious leaders (who were in charge of the Temple) were questioning Jesus. Also listening in on this discussion were Jesus' disciples.
 - i) The last part of the last chapter was when these "top rabbi's" asked Jesus in effect, "By what authority do you claim to be the Messiah?" Jesus responded with the question, "What about John the Baptist, do you people accept him or not?"
 - a) Jesus point was if the Jewish religious leaders refuse to accept the testimony of John the Baptist, it doesn't matter what Jesus says about Himself as they won't accept His authority either.
 - b) The rabbi's were too afraid to say anything negative about John the Baptist because these leaders feared an uprising, as John was popular.
 - ii) Now here in Chapter 12, Jesus is still arguing with the Jewish religious leaders. The last sentence of Chapter 11 was effectively the Jewish religious leaders saying in effect, "We don't know if John the Baptist was sent from God or not."
 - a) With that response given, Jesus now decides to tell a parable.
 - c) So why give a parable here? Again, Jesus has in effect stated (back in Chapter 4) that the purpose of a parable is to hide the truth from nonbelievers.
 - i) Therefore, Jesus gives a parable not to enlighten the Temple leaders, but to teach the disciples something about the future once Jesus has been resurrected.
 - ii) At the same time, Jesus could hide the truth to these religious leaders, as they won't be able to decipher (or won't care) what Jesus is about to say.
 - iii) It comes back to the point that Jesus is focused on teaching His followers. In effect, Jesus wants to ignore the Jewish religious leaders, as they have no interest in following Him and they only see Him as a threat to their "well-being".
 - d) Meanwhile, why don't we actually read what Jesus has to say in this parable? ☺
5. Verse 1 (cont.): "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.
- a) Let's list the key facts in this parable. There is 1) the vineyard owner, 2) the people who actually run the vineyard, 3) the people the vineyard owner send to collect his share of the crops as a rent payment and 4) the vineyard land itself.
 - b) The idea here is that there were some people who rented a vineyard. The way an owner would collect rent from the tenants is the owner would demand part of the "harvest proceeds" which in this case is some of the grapes or the wine.
 - i) The owner of the land sends people to collect some of the crop at harvest time. The people the owner sends get beaten up and sent away empty-handed.
 - c) So why does the landowner keep sending people who get beat up? If the tenants keep sending people away empty handed, the tenants are saying in effect, we own this land and are not paying rent to anyone. Notice the progression: With each successive messenger from the landowner, they treat them worse than the previous one.

6. Verse 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.
- a) This parable ends with the point that the owner of the land sends his son, hoping that the workers respect the owner's son. The tenants kill the son. This angers the landowner so much, that the landowner comes and sends enough people to kill the tenants and then the landowner is going to give the vineyard to others.
 - b) Jesus' point is that He is the "son" and despite the fact the "tenants" kill Him (a picture of the Nation of Israel), the son is still in charge and that won't stop the Father and Son from taking possession of what is rightfully theirs. (i.e., getting their will done through those who have committed their lives to following Jesus).
 - c) In the Old Testament the nation of Israel is occasionally compared to a vineyard. Isaiah Chapter 5 (Verses 1-5) is an example of that. In fact, on the door to the Temple was a large "grape vine" carved into the door.
 - d) Now wait a second John, in the last lesson you stated that the Nation of Israel was symbolically compared to a fig tree in the Old Testament. When Jesus cursed the fig tree, you said that was symbolic of the Nation of Israel. Now you are saying that Israel is in effect "Not like a fig tree but more like a vineyard". So which is it?
 - i) The answer is both. There are places in the Old Testament that compares Israel to a fig tree. Like I said last week, see Hosea 9:10; Nahum 3:12; and Zechariah 10:2.
 - ii) There are also places like Isaiah Chapter 5 that compare Israel to a vineyard.
 - iii) Therefore, Jesus could use either a fig tree or a vineyard and biblically astute Jewish people would know that Jesus is talking about the nation of Israel.
 - iv) My point here is that while the religious leaders may not fully understand the point about this parable, they would know that Jesus is speaking against them. If you have any doubts that the Jewish religious leaders didn't get the idea that Jesus was putting them down, read ahead to Verse 12.
 - v) Meanwhile, I have to work on Verses 10-11. ☺
7. Verse 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?'"
- a) This is a quote of Psalm 118, Verses 22-23. The point of those verses in Psalm 118 is that they are making a prediction. The prediction is that a particular stone that was rejected by builders would be the cornerstone (foundation) to something new.
 - i) To understand this, first know that the Psalms are not just "praise words" to God, but also contain prophecy (predictions) just like most of the bible does.
 - b) For what it is worth, Psalm 118 is considered a "Messianic" Psalm, even by the religious leaders of that day. While the religious leaders may not have understood Jesus' reference to the stone, they did know that Psalm 118 did make references to the coming Messiah.
 - i) Therefore, Jesus is telling them and us (as it is recorded in the bible) that the "stone" (i.e. Jesus) that they reject will be the "cornerstone" (i.e., the foundation) by which a whole new religion will be formed.
 - c) Let's put the whole thing together: Jesus told this story about some wicked farm workers who refused to pay rent to the owner. Jesus said those tenants who were killed for failing to pay the rent and then Jesus tells another two line story about how the stone that the builder's rejected became a "cornerstone".
 - i) The connection Jesus is trying to make is the fact that the workers in the vineyard who reject the vineyard owner are also (speaking in "pictures") the same people who reject the "cornerstone" that Jesus is God and the basis of Christianity.

- d) To sum all of this up, Jesus is saying that He understood that He was going to be rejected by the Jewish leaders and His rejection would lead to 1) the death of those "religious workers" as symbolized by the vineyard story and 2) the founding of a new religion as symbolized by the "cornerstone" prediction.
 - i) Within 40 years of this time, the nation of Israel would no longer exist. It would not exist again until almost 2,000 years later when it was formed in the 1940's.
 - ii) So if Jesus is saying in effect, that the nation of Israel would soon be dead, why does it now exist roughly 2,000 years after this event? The short answer is that Jesus never said it would be "dead forever". Jesus is just implying that the nation of Israel would no longer be the primary way that God is going to be a witness to the world of His existence.
8. Verse 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.
- a) Apparently besides Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders, there was a crowd around them that for the moment was "Pro-Jesus". These religious leaders did get the idea that Jesus spoke against them but they didn't have Jesus arrested as these religious leaders feared Jesus because He was popular with the "common people" of the Nation of Israel.
 - b) Therefore, all the religious leaders could do in effect was walk away. Unfortunately, in life, one cannot just "walk away" from Jesus. A judgment day is coming for all people and God asks us all in effect, "What have you done with My son Jesus and what have you done to make a difference for Him?"
 - i) Nonbelievers like these religious leaders will be judged for rejecting Jesus in the first place. There is no getting out of that judgment.
 - ii) The moral of this story is there is an eternal price to be paid for rejecting Jesus and there are rewards for those willing to trust in Jesus no matter what happens to such believers in their (our) lives.
9. Verse 13: Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words.
- a) Let's start with the first word "later". Remember that the last scene probably occurred on the "Tuesday" of Jesus' final week. From this point through the next few chapters, the exact day is debated. Some Christians argue that Jesus was actually crucified on Thursday and others argue Friday. There are even some who argue for a "Wednesday" crucifixion of Jesus.
 - i) I remember hearing a fairly famous radio pastor (David Hocking) say in effect, "At different points in my life, I have officially held the "Wednesday view, the Thursday view and the Friday view" about the crucifixion. Now, I don't worry about it I'll let God tell me which day it was when I get to heaven."
 - ii) My point is if the word "later" of Verse 13 could be the same day, or the next day. In the big scheme of things, it does not matter. All we know about Verse 13 is that it occurs sometime "later" than the last story in this chapter. Since we know Jesus was crucified in a matter of days, it can't be a whole lot later. ☺
 - b) The text says "they" sent them. The "they" are the religious leaders who ran the temple.
 - c) Now we get to a discussion of the "Pharisees and the Herodians". These were the two groups that were sent by the Temple priests to ask Jesus a question here.
 - i) In short, the Pharisee's were religious Jews who followed every detail of the Jewish law and had their own set of guidelines as to how to follow those laws.
 - ii) The Herodians were Jewish people who supported the Roman Government and supported the fact the Romans put the family of Herod in power.
 - iii) Understand that the Herodians were "pro-Roman" the Pharisees were anti-Roman and wanted Israel to have self-rule. We have a "mixed group" approaching Jesus.

10. Verse 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.
- a) So here is this group of people approaching Jesus, made up of both Pharisees and those who supported the Roman government called "Herodians".
 - b) They wanted to test Jesus by asking Him in effect, should we pay taxes to Rome or not?
 - i) If Jesus says, "Yes we should", then He could lose a lot of popularity among his followers because much of Israel hated the Romans and their taxation system.
 - ii) If Jesus says "No we should not pay", then the pro-Herod people would have Jesus repeat that a little louder so the Roman soldiers could have Jesus arrested.
 - iii) The goal of the question was to get Jesus to take sides and lose popularity. Remember that the religious leaders feared Jesus not because they think, "He was right" about what He said, but because He was popular with the crowd.
 - c) Jesus understood that the question was a trap (see Verse 15). Jesus asked somebody in the crowd to bring Him one of the Roman coins. (By the way if Jesus preached that it is the goal of Christians to be rich, as some Christians falsely claim, then why didn't Jesus have a bunch of those coins on Him to begin with?)
 - d) A quick lesson on Roman coins. Most, if not all of the early Roman Emperors had coins made with their image and name on those coins. Most likely, this particular coin had the image of Augustus Caesar, the current Caesar at that time. The coins are considered the property of the Roman Government.
 - i) Today, we may collect lots of coins or currency bills and they represent what we own. The actual coins and currency themselves are still considered property of the issuing government even though they are in our possession.
 - ii) With that understood, someone in the crowd handed Jesus a Roman coin to examine. Jesus asked out loud, "Who's image is on this coin?" The crowd responded "Caesar", as the image on that coin was of the current Caesar.
 - e) Then Jesus gave His famous reply, which is Verse 17:
11. Verse 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.
- a) Jesus' responded that He acknowledges that those coin belong to the Romans.
 - i) Without any commentary about whether or not the Roman government was good or bad for Israel, Jesus acknowledged the Romans are in charge and since the Romans issued the money, the Israelites are to pay the taxes to the Romans.
 - b) The New Testament teaches in effect, that we as Christians are to pray for and honor those who are in charge of our country (or our state or our city). Such comments by Paul in Romans (13:1) don't give any commentary about whether or not such governments are good or bad, just that they exist. In short, we should pay our taxes and even support (i.e. pray for) our civic leaders.
 - c) God ordained the concept of human government with the idea of having a police force to enforce laws and protect the people from harm. That goes back to Genesis Chapter 10 and the idea of the nations formed by God. This teaching does not even deal with the idea of whether or not the Romans were good or bad. Jesus simply acknowledges their existence and the fact that taxes should be paid to those who are in charge.
 - d) So are you saying we should never rebel against a government? No I am not. There are times and places in history when rebelling against the government may be necessary and it may cost a lot of lives. The point is Jesus acknowledges the need for government leaders and Christians should pay their taxes whether or not we like our leaders do.

- e) Jesus never really answers the underlying question about whether or not the Roman Government should be governing over Israel. Jesus is saying in effect, "The people should honor the government in charge and pay one's taxes".
 - i) Jesus came to teach us how to have peace no matter what is the situation. The point here is Jesus has a bigger purpose than arguing whether or not the government in charge is "just".
 - f) OK, since Jesus wouldn't fall into that trap, time for a new question. ☺
12. Verse 18: Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question.
- a) It appears that some Sadducees were in the background as the first group of people (some Pharisees and Herodians) walked away from Jesus, these Sadducees stepped forward to ask their question.
 - b) Let me explain who were the Sadducees:
 - i) They were mostly the "rich" of Israel.
 - ii) The Sadducees only believed the five books of Moses (Genesis to Deuteronomy). They did not accept any of the official "Jewish commentary" as well.
 - iii) The Sadducees did not believe in angels, demons or a resurrection. They believed that God created the world, but that when you die that was "it" and you will no longer exist.
 - iv) If you get the Pharisees and Sadducees mixed up, remember that that Sadducees didn't believe in a resurrection and therefore they were "Sad-you-see". ☺
 - v) One of the reasons that the "Sadducee" view was appealing to the rich is they believed one should enjoy this life as much as possible as that is all there is.
13. Verse 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?"
- a) The Sadducee's laid out their question to Jesus. The question was in effect, "Seven brothers all married the same woman, one at time after each of them died." Therefore, to which husband would this woman belong to in heaven? Remember that the Sadducee's didn't believe in heaven so they made up this question. They thought that this question would be their proof that there is no afterlife like other Jews claim that there is.
 - i) My favorite comment on these verses is the joke that, "If I was brother number five, or six, I would be testing the food every night to check for poison". ☺
 - b) Let me explain the bible tradition that is behind this question. The Old Testament teaches that if a man dies, his brother should marry that widow and have children "in honor of his brother". This was not considered a requirement, but considered something that a good Jew should do. (See Deuteronomy 25:5 on this issue).
14. Verse 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!"
- a) First of all, notice that Jesus ignores the illustration of the "seven men and one woman" and focuses on the underlying question about whether or not there was a resurrection. Jesus knew the story was made up. Further, the purpose of that Old Testament law was to remember the memory of the dead brother and raise up children for him.

- b) Remember that the Sadducee's did believe the first five books of the bible were the "word of God". Therefore, Jesus is going to quote from those books in order to prove that there is a resurrection of all people.
 - i) Jesus in these verses is talking about when God first spoke to Moses. One has to remember that Moses lived 400-500 years after Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 - ii) Jesus is quoting Exodus 3:15 and saying in effect, "God does not say He "was" the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but "is" the God. In other words, that quote implies the fact that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are very much "alive" in heaven.
 - iii) To put it another way, the same set of books the Sadducees' claimed to believe in, does have support that there is a resurrection of the dead based on that quote.
- c) Why does Jesus focus on that underlying topic? It is to get the Sadducee's to understand that there is a judgment day coming for all men (and women). If one does not believe in a "next life", why would one care if Jesus came to "pay the price for sins for all of mankind"?
- d) Before I move on Jesus response, let me ask, "Why don't Christians practice that law of marrying one's brother's widow?" Why don't Christians take the dead brother's wife in her memory? In short, I do believe we should support our extended family as much as possible especially when such a tragedy occurs, but it is not a requirement for Christians to marry one's brother's wife when that happens.
 - i) I don't know if there are religious Jews that practice that concept today, but I doubt it, given the fact that almost no government allows multiple wives.
- e) Let me comment about those who believe that "this life is all that there is, and there is no afterlife". My first question to ask such people is, "What about children who die young? What do you tell them, "Sorry kid, too bad for you?" This life would be "far more unfair" if there is no next life. If there is a next life and a God that fairly judges people, that would be the only way this life would be fair for those who are struck with bad tragedies in their lives.
 - i) In fact, the only thing I ask nonbelievers to accept by faith is that there is a God and He is perfect. A perfect God would require us to be "perfect" in order for us to spend eternity with Him. If "perfection" is not God's standard to spend eternity with Him, how would we ever know what is God's standard for us in order to be "good enough" to get into heaven? That is why we have to be "perfectly forgiven" of all of our sins by accepting God's payment for sin on our behalf.
- f) Now that Jesus "cleared that up", the only remaining question is what happens to our marriages in heaven? What happens if a man or woman is married more than one time? If more than one spouse is saved, how does that marriage work in heaven?
 - i) Jesus says in Verse 25 that men and women don't marry in heaven. Notice Jesus does not say men and women are no longer men and women.
 - ii) Personally, I love my wife dearly and I hope and pray that we have a long life together here on earth. I don't think that marriage continues into the next life.
 - iii) This verse does not say that men and women in heaven are no longer men and women. The verse is saying in effect, that sexual sin is not an issue in heaven as "sin" is no longer an issue for the saved believer. How God works out those details are in effect, "His problem" and not mine to worry about. If God wanted me to understand more details, they would be in His word.
 - iv) The Mormon's misinterpret this verse to say in effect we will be married to the same person forever in the next life. That is not what this verse is saying. It is saying in effect, "marriage with our spouses now will not be an issue in heaven".
- g) The bible also says that somehow all Christians are married to Jesus. The book of Revelation (19:7,9) speaks of the marriage ceremony between Jesus and "His bride" which is the Christian church.
- h) There, now that I've dug myself in a deep theological hole, ☺ it is time to move on.

15. Verse 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?"
- a) Apparently, the debate with the Sadducee's is now over. Now a new person, who teaches the Old Testament stops and asks which biblical law is the most important.
 - b) The man asking this question was impressed with Jesus as a "great teacher", but for the moment, that is all that this man thinks Jesus is. In a matter of verses Jesus "in effect" helps Him to think about just who Jesus and who (or what) the "Messiah" really is.
 - c) Remember that the "law" is not just the Ten Commandments. The five books of Moses are full of laws. Religious Jews have counted up every single law in the first five books of the bible and have come to the conclusion that there are 613 laws to be obeyed. Therefore, it would a logical question to ask, "Which law is the most important?"
 - d) The next verse is Jesus' response to this question.
16. Verse 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."
- a) The most important Jewish law (Verse 29) is what religious Jews call the "SHEMA". Those five letters are a reference to the first letter of each word of that command as spelled in Hebrew. Know that this law is commonly taught among Jews to the point where the "SHEMA" is commonly written out for Jews to remember and meditate upon.
 - b) Jesus says here the most important law is to understand that "God is one". It is in effect, the first of the Ten Commandments as listed in Exodus Chapter 20 and also listed in Deuteronomy Chapter 6. So why is that rule so important to remember?
 - i) It is to understand that God is a "single entity" outside of the world we know. God created all things, and is greater than all of creation.
 - ii) So why emphasize that law? To answer that, let's remember the classic children's question is "Who created God? The answer is if someone created God, there must be another God greater than "that God". Sooner or later we must come to an "entity" that always existed. That would be the God we worship.
 - c) So if Jesus is claiming He is part of that God, how can God be "one"? The mystery of the trinity is something Christians have to accept by faith. God manifests Himself in three "entities" of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is separate, yet each is "one". It was necessary for God to manifest Himself that way in order for "God Himself" to pay the price for sin, once and for all. The Spirit is necessary to help us to understand about God.
 - i) If Jesus is anything less than "fully God", than God Himself did not pay the price for our sins. It would be like God saying in effect, "You, John over there, go pay the price for sins for all of mankind." Well that would not be fair of God to have someone else suffer for everyone. But if God Himself paid the price for sin, then God is taking the punishment for sin "upon Himself" and not making any other person or any other created thing pay the price for someone else.
 - d) This leads us to what Jesus said is the second most important law: "To love one's neighbor as oneself". Note that this law is not part of the 10 commandments but is one of the 613 laws and this law is listed (among other places) in Leviticus 19:18.
 - i) So if this second law is so important, why is it not one of the "10 commandments"? In effect it is. To treat others as well as to treat ourselves means we would not want to murder or steal or take what is not rightfully ours. The second half of the Ten Commandments is in effect examples of "Loving one's neighbor as oneself".
 - ii) If we love God and we believe God loves us, why would we not want to share that love with others and treat others as well as we want to treat ourselves?
 - e) Meanwhile, the person who asked Jesus that question has more to say:

17. Verse 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."
- a) The man said that this "love" is more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices.
 - i) In the Old Testament, there were a lot of animals offered up, essentially as payment for sin. The idea of animal sacrifice was that God wants us to understand that sin hurts "innocent people". By slaughtering innocent animals, it was a reminder of just how much sin "hurts". That is why the Old Testament taught forgiveness through this sacrificial system. We don't do animal sacrifices anymore as Jesus paid the price for sin, once and for all.
 - ii) The man who asked the question is also right in that God cares more about a loving relationship both "vertically" (between people and God) and "horizontally" (between people and other people), than He does about sacrifices.
 - iii) In other words, God still cares about not sinning and seeking Him for forgiveness when we do sin. What is more important to God is that we have a loving relationship with Him and other people. One reason why we do confess our sins to Him is to prevent things from blocking that loving relationship.
 - b) Understand that the person asking Jesus the question calls Jesus "teacher". This person thought that Jesus was just a "smart teacher" and not necessarily God. Because this person didn't understand who Jesus was, that leads to the next set of verses.
18. Verse 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.
- a) Jesus complimented this man for understanding that these two commandments are the most important, but stops there. Jesus does not blurt out at this point, "But I am God". Now this person (and the disciples) understood that the most important idea is to accept that God is in charge of our lives and that we should seek Him and His guidance in order to love others.
 - b) That would make the next order of business to try to teach that Jesus "is God" and that is the point of the next set of verses coming up.
19. Verse 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.
- a) I want to explain this quotation from a "non-Jewish perspective" which is the audience Mark is gearing his writing toward. Jesus is quoting from somewhere in the Old Testament (the bible that the Jews accept as God's word). Jesus said there was a man named David who specifically wrote, "The Lord said to my Lord" in this quote.
 - i) In short, David is referring to two different "Lords" that are ruling over His life. Therefore, even though there is "One God", there are two different "Lord's in charge". Jesus then asks the question, how can the Messiah be a human descendant of David and still be the Lord of His life when David wrote this?
 - ii) My point here is that even a non-Jewish person would understand that whoever this David person is or was, he believed in two authorities over his life.
 - iii) In Jesus' quote (which happens to be of Psalm 110, Verse 1), David wrote in that Psalm that one Lord said to the other Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet". The underlying point is that there are two "Lords" in David's life and they both "eternally existed" to David.
 - b) It may also help to realize here that most religious Jews did consider Psalm 110 to be a "Messianic" Psalm and realized that God is talking to the "Promised Messiah".

- c) Jesus is bringing up this verse is to teach that the Messiah was not just a man. For a Jewish way of thinking, a son is always inferior to a father or ancestor in terms of authority. Therefore, if the promised future king of Israel (i.e., "The Messiah") is a son (descendant) of David, how could David consider this future son to be superior to Him?
 - d) Again, the reason Jesus is bringing this point out is because Jewish people just thought that the coming "Messiah" would be a great military and political leader like King David (who existed centuries prior to Jesus). With this quote from Psalm 110, Jesus is pointing out that the Promised Messiah is also an "eternal entity" and is superior to David Himself.
 - e) Whoever David was talking about is not just a human (like the Jews expected of the Promised Messiah), but was also some sort of eternal "entity" that David calls "Lord". The point is Jesus is trying to expand his audiences thoughts on who is the Messiah.
 - f) And now, Jesus changes the topic again. ☺
20. Verse 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."
- a) It would be best if I first explained what is a "teacher of the law". Other English translations used the word "scribe" (like someone who writes). In short, a teacher of the law or a "scribe" is someone who works to copy biblical scrolls from one set of "paper" to another. Such teachers or scribes are considered experts on biblical laws as they spend a lot of time reading and writing them.
 - b) Given that fact, let me now work on the rest of the description Jesus gives of these scribes:
 - i) Jesus says they have "flowing robes". If you think about it, those who work with animals or are storeowners in that culture would bind up their robes so they could get their jobs done easier. If a person had a "flowing robe", the implication is they don't have to work for a living like everyone else.
 - a) In "modern speech", we might say such people don't have to wear work uniforms like everybody else in our business.
 - ii) Now, let me combine the next three descriptions of these "scribes": 1) they like to be greeted in the marketplace, 2) they desire the most important seats in the synagogue (usually next to the biblical scrolls) and 3) they desire the places of honor at banquets. In summary, they like to put themselves above others.
 - iii) So what is wrong with elevating one's self in status? The problem has nothing to do with being a "scribe" or even studying biblical text. The problem is when one thinks one is superior to others due to one's job or position in life.
 - iv) In effect, this leads us back to the opening question of "authority". Let's face it, if we accept the idea of "God's in charge and we are not", then we should not think of ourselves as being superior to other people.
 - c) The final point Jesus made about them is they "devouring widow's houses". There was a strange custom at that time where scribes thought it was inappropriate to "pass the plate" to support their work, but it was acceptable to take donations. Therefore, they would prey on widows to get them to give them their savings. Further they would say big public prayers out loud in order to impress people with how "religious" they are.
 - d) Without saying much more about them, Jesus summarizes what happens to people like that when He said, "they will be punished most severely."
 - i) I don't know what Jesus meant by "punished more severely", but personally, I wouldn't want to be close enough to them to find out what it means. ☺
 - ii) I don't know enough about hell (the literal one) to understand how some will suffer more than others for eternity. I simply accept that fact as true and here Jesus says in effect, such people will suffer for how they mistreat others.
 - e) Which, thankfully, leads us to the last few verses of this chapter.

21. Verse 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."
- a) After Jesus finished this "question and answer" session, He then rested by sitting in the temple and watched people give money to the Temple.
 - b) Jesus commented on some rich people who gave lots of money and a specific poor woman who gave the last two cents she had, which was only worth a fraction of a penny.
 - i) The point is Jesus took the time to point this woman out to His disciples.
 - ii) I would be willing to bet that when that woman died, she didn't die of starvation or she wasn't kicked out of her home because she was broke. Despite the fact that she gave all that she had, I believe God made it possible to give her (or anyone) who gives to God out of all that we have. In other words, we can't out give God.
 - iii) Let me also say that I am not in favor of taking our entire life savings and dropping it in the nearest "collection plate". The point is not how much this woman gave, but "how" she gave: In other words, she gave knowing that she is now completely dependant upon God for her survival.
 - iv) That is the type of attitude God wants from us: The attitude that we are completely trusting Him, not only with our money, but with our very lives.
 - v) In other words, I don't know how God is going to get you or me out of the "jam" we are currently in at the moment. I just know that if we truly turn the entire situation over to Him, somehow, He does work it out for His glory. It may not work out the way we like it to, but it still will work out for His glory.
 - c) In a way, that is the perfect way to end this lesson. The theme of this lesson is about learning to trust God with every aspect of our lives, including our finances. God wants us to give not out of pressure or fear, but because we love God and we want to see the resources God has given us work for His glory. The idea of giving is that we are now all the more dependant upon God because we are willing to let go of what we have in order to please Him. In other words, our giving, gives us another opportunity to show how much we trust Him for our future.
 - i) Again that does not mean we should give God every last dollar in our pocket, unless of course, our money is blocking our relationship with Him. Our giving is simply about trusting God and trusting that He will work all things out, including our finances, ultimately for His glory.
22. On that upbeat note, I will end in prayer. Father, help us to trust You with every aspect of our lives. We don't know how You will work things out, we just trust that You will. Help us to remember that You are there, You are in charge, and by putting our trust in You, You will work all things out for Your glory. When we are afraid in a particular situation, help us to trust you more. Strengthen our faith so that we know You will work things out for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.