

Mark 12

Read Mark 12:1-12: Jesus is judging his enemies publicly. He is illustrating their squandered opportunity to bless their people. He ingeniously spoke to mixed crowds with multiple heart conditions with the same message. This is one reason that the scriptures are called the living word. It lands differently depending on the condition of the hearer.

Jesus began to speak in code (parables) once the religious leaders felt threatened, and planned to do away with him. The natural mind does not really tune in too effectively to spiritual language. He was speaking to mixed multitudes of believers, deceivers and assassins who were looking to set him up.

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the understanding of those who have understanding, I will confound." ²⁰ Where is the wise person? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. (1 Corinthians 1)

In addition, God does not want for sinful man to subject to higher scrutiny and judgement than necessary. That is why we have a progressive revelation, based on our obedience.

but the one who did not know it, and committed acts deserving of a beating, will receive only a few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. (Luke 12)

In addition, it takes time to obtain spiritual eyes, and displace our carnal patterns. We need bridges of logic from the known to the new.

And I, brothers and sisters, could not speak to you as spiritual people, but only as fleshly, as to infants in Christ. ² I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to consume it. But even now you are not yet able, ³ for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like ordinary people? (1 Corinthians 3)

Parables use common themes to illustrate comparable spiritual realities. Here we have a story about a vineyard owner and his employees. Anyone would agree that his rightful expectation would be to receive productive work for wages paid. Any situation where the grower's wishes were disobeyed would unanimously receive

the same public reaction. You must fire those worthless workers! If these evil workers tried to kill the owner's son and steal the land, they should be dealt with harshly and quickly. The comparisons are that God (the owner) sent prophets and messengers to the occupants of his land (Israel). They needed to follow God's instructions (scripture) or be removed. When God sent his son, Jesus, they killed him. This puts the listener in God's shoes. What would you do?

Jesus is also compared to a cornerstone for multiple reasons. Psalm 118 describes Jesus as the central controlling feature delineating the church's construction. He (the blueprint) was rejected. He will return as the rejected cornerstone. Any lack of conformity to the vertical and horizontal controls will have to adjust.

Therefore, hear the word of the Lord, you scoffers, Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem, ¹⁵ Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, And with Sheol we have made a pact. The gushing flood will not reach us when it passes by, Because we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception." ¹⁶ Therefore this is what the Lord God says: "Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion, a tested stone, A precious cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. The one who believes in it will not be disturbed. ¹⁷ I will make justice the measuring line And righteousness the level; Then hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, And the waters will overflow the secret place. (Isiah 28)

Read Mark 12:13-39: Jesus was telling the town's people that their religious leaders were frauds. They are using them as pawns to hold power. Religion is often used to hold power over people. That misuse is the opposite of faith and God's Kingdom. These Rabbis and priests and scribes are not correctly representing themselves as any kind of godly servant. They are looking to be admired and served.

Instead of repenting, these religious elitists are going to assassinate the character of their critic. The attorneys and political chameleons are going to try to get Jesus to quote something making him unpopular. Taxes paid to Rome was a point of contention. Any advocate of paying taxes would make the people angry. Any speech about not paying taxes to Cesear would get him thrown in jail. Jesus wisely turns around their trap on them. He tells the people to obey the law of Rome, but more importantly, honor the God who made you in his image. Jesus foiled their plans and used their trap as a teaching point to the locals in earshot.

Divorce was another hotspot. There were two rabbinical schools of thought. One was that you could divorce for any reason.. The other was for more limited reasons. Neither was God's plan for mankind. The Sadducees tried to trap him in

the Mosaic laws regarding divorce. Moreover the oral traditions that were not sanctioned by God. The rabbis spent way too much time teaching from the Midrash, or the Mishna. This errant teaching overtook the bible and created untold confusion. Jesus continuously spoke about how the oral traditions worked against the bible. The liberal Sadducees were using a ridiculous example with a no-win answer. This is an illustration of how much time was spent *majoring in the minors*. Jesus again uses this trap to show their ignorance to God's intentions, as well as Moses' reasoning.

Jesus takes it a step further, and he teaches us a little about heaven. Nobody is married to anyone other than God in heaven. He also teaches us that angels cannot reproduce. Surely the demons would spawn an army if they could with each other or with people. This puts to rest the idea that angels had children with men before Noah.

When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, ² the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. ³ Then the Lord said, "My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years." ⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown (Genesis 6)

The wholesome family of Seth crossed with the unwholesome family of Cain; and wrecked mankind. Men can only reproduce with other men.

God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds

All flesh is not the same. There is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies [sun, moon and stars] and earthly bodies [humans, animals, and plants], but the glory and beauty of the heavenly is one kind, and the glory of the earthly is another. ⁴¹ There is a glory and beauty of the sun, another glory of the moon, and yet another [distinctive] glory of the stars; and one star differs from another in glory and brilliance. (1 Corinthians 15)

God speaks of Moses and Abraham in the present tense as still being alive in heaven.

The next question may have been a gotcha or a legit question. Which commandment is the most important? Jesus does not discount any of the 10. He adds an overall, that applies to the first 4 about loving God; and a second about the

remaining 6 (loving your neighbor). Jesus basically schooled all of his critics on the spot. They were speechless.

Jesus then begins to tie himself to the Old Testament. He talks about David's Lord being his great grandson. How could he be his boss? It reads that God the Father tells Jesus to sit at his right side until his enemies are put under his feet. The Messiah is supposed to be the Son (grandson) of David. How could a child be the boss of his grandpa? He is pointing out that these rabbis are clueless and blind bookworms who are thieves. They are using religion to milk and manipulate the people.

Read Mark 12:40-44: Jesus contrasts the lowly-regarded broke widow who put in a fraction of a penny. She was doing more than the Pharisees in her level of sacrifice. These religious leaders were making no sacrifices. They were telling everybody else to sacrifice to their interests.