

## MARK CHAPTER 12

### *Mark 12 - Overview & Key Sections*

#### **Highlighting Key Sections and Themes**

- ***The Parable Of The Tenants***
- ***Paying Taxes To Caesar***
- ***The Question About The Resurrection***
- ***The Greatest Commandment***
- ***Whose Son Is The Messiah?***
- ***Warning against The Teachers Of The Law***
- ***The Widows Offering***

#### **1. The Parable Of The Tenants (Verse 1-12)**

Jesus tells a parable about a vineyard owner whose servants, and eventually his son, are rejected and killed by the tenants.

- In this parable, the lord of the vineyard is God
- The vineyard is the nation of Israel
- The husbandmen are Israel's religious leaders
- The servants are the prophets and priests who remained faithful to God
- The son is Jesus
- The others are the Gentiles

#### **Mark 12:1-5 NIV**

**[1] 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. [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.**

**Key Point:** God's messengers have been rejected, and now His Son will be too.

### **Parable:**

- Often found in literature and religious texts like the Bible, which uses everyday scenarios and human characters to illustrate profound moral, spiritual, or ethical lessons.
- Parables teach by comparing familiar situations with unfamiliar, deeper truths. (Wikipedia)

Jesus previously used parables (4:2) in response to the Jewish teachers' original repudiation of his casting out demons. Jesus does so here in response to their final repudiation of John and himself (11:29-33). Both instances involved a clash over authority (3:22; 11:28).

### **Vineyard:**

- It closely resembles Isaiah's account of God's loving provision for his "vineyard" Israel (Isa. 5:1-2a; Ps. 80:8-9).
- Just as a faithless failure to produce the fruits of justice and righteousness became the grounds for God's judgment in the present (Isa. 5:2b-30; Jer. 2:2).

**(V.5)** The servants represent God's prophets, whom Israel regularly rejected (Chron. 36:15-16; 1Kg. 19:10)

### **(Vs.6 NIV)**

[6] "He had one left to send, a son, **whom he loved**. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.

This phrase appears only twice previously in Mark, both occurring when God declared that Jesus is his Son, (1:11; 9:7).

Both statements clearly echo:

### **Psalms 2:7 NIV**

[7] I will proclaim the Lord's decree: He said to me, "**You are my son**; today I have become your father.

Wherein God affirms the inheritance of his Messianic son.

### **Psalms 2:8 NIV**

[8] Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

### **Mark 12:7-9 NIV**

[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**.

If the tenants are the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders (v.12, 11:18), then the “others” are apparently the twelve (Mt. 19:18; Lk. 22:30).

***By telling this story, Jesus exposed the religious leaders’ plot to kill him and warned that their sins would be punished***

### **Mark 12:10-12 NIV**

[10] **Haven’t you read this passage of Scripture: “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; [11] the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’ ?”**

[12] Then 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.

Jesus refers to himself as the stone rejected by the builders. Although he would be rejected by most of the Jewish leaders, he would become the cornerstone of a new “building,” the church (Acts 4:11, 12). The cornerstone was used as a base to make sure the other stones were straight and level. Likewise, Jesus’ life and teaching would be the church’s foundation.

### **Cornerstone:**

- Probably means the “capstone,” used to complete an arch or the pinnacle of a building. In Ps. 118 it symbolizes the Davidic king vindicated by God as the nation’s rightful leader and therefore the Messiah
- In some Jewish traditions the stone also symbolizes the Messiah’s restoration of the temple in which God’s returning presence would dwell (1:11).
- Jesus, confident of God’s vindication through the resurrection (8:31b), declares the futility of the authorities’ plan.
- As the one in whom God is uniquely present to forgive, heal, and share fellowship.
- Jesus and his followers will become the new “temple” of prayer for all nations (11:17), in whom God’s Spirit dwells (2 Cor. 6:16; Eph2:21).

### **Side Bar: Mark 1:11 NIV**

[11] And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

The rare experience of God’s audible voice both attests to and identifies Jesus as God’s Son. This introduces the mystery of the incarnation: Jesus is both the Lord (vv. 2-3) and son. The voice draws on (Ps. 2:7) and (Isa. 42:1, Ps. 2:7) speaks of the hope of a **Davidic Messiah** who would rule the nations; (Isa. 42:1) speaks of a **faithful and merciful servant** who will bring salvation to Israel and be a light to the nations (Isa 42: 1-9).

Both figures were to be anointed with God’s spirit. The prophets promised the restoration of the Davidic kingdom as part of Israel’s deliverance from exile (Isa. 11:1-9; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-26; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos. 12:9; Amos 9:11; Zech. 12:7-8).

Several Jewish traditions read Ps. 2 as a promise that the Messiah would drive out the idolatrous nations and wicked Jews from Jerusalem so as to restore the purity of the temple (11:1-17).

God's personal presence in Jesus enables Jesus to deal with the issue of idolatry, wickedness and purity but in the unique and utterly unexpected merciful way of Isaiah's servant (8:22-10:52; 8:31; 9:12; 10:33, 45; 14:22,24).

## 2. Religious leaders question Jesus about paying the Imperial tax to Caesar (Vs. 13-17)

### Mark 12:13-17 NIV

[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 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? [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 image is this? And whose inscription?"** "Caesar's," they replied. [17] Then 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.

Religious leaders try to trap Jesus with a political question.

Jesus responds: **"Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."**

**Key Point:** Balance civic responsibility with spiritual devotion.

Some Pharisees and Herodians seek to trap Jesus by calling into question his loyalty: was he loyal to God or Caesar?

The **Pharisees** were primarily a religious group concerned for ritual purity; the **Herodians** were a Jewish political group that approved of Herod's compromises with Rome.

The Pharisees did not like Jesus because he exposed their hypocrisy.

The Herodians also saw Jesus as a threat, fearing that Jesus would cause instability with the Roman leaders.

**The Imperial Tax:** Anyone who avoided paying tribute faced harsh penalties.

The Jews hated paying taxes to Rome because the money supported their oppressors and symbolized their subjection.

Much of it also went towards maintaining the pagan temples and luxurious lifestyles of Rome's upper class.

Jesus rejects their either/or approach. Obligations to God and state are not necessarily in conflict (Rom.13:1-7; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Pt. 2:13-17), though obedience to God takes unquestioned priority (1 Sam. 13:13-14; 1 Kgs. 13:1-3; Acts 5:29).

Jesus might also imply, as he had earlier (Mk. 3:27), that Israel's fundamental problem is not Rome, but their own need to give God his just due, namely, **repentance**, (1: 4-5,15) coming from wholehearted love (12:30) of the one whose image they bear (in contrast to the image on the coin).

**Image & inscription:** On the one side of the denarius was an image of Caesar, and on the other side was the inscription "Son of Divine Augustus"; both offended pious Jews.

**Key Point:** Balance civic responsibility with spiritual devotion.

### **3. Religious leaders question Jesus about marriage at the resurrection (Verses 18-27)**

**Mark 12:18-27 NIV**

**[18] 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 raise up offspring 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?" [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 burning 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!"**

The Sadducees (who deny resurrection) challenge Jesus with a hypothetical scenario.

**Sadducees:** Comprised mostly of aristocrats and prominent priestly families (8:31; 11:18) who dominated Israel's ruling council, the Sanhedrin. They were religiously conservative and recognized only the five books of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy, AKA - Pentateuch) as divinely authoritative and rejected the idea of resurrection since, on their reading, it did not support resurrection.

According to Old Testament Law, when a man died without a son, his brother had to marry the widow and produce children to care for her and allow the family line to continue (known as levirate marriage, protecting a deceased brother's widow and his family line)

The first son of this marriage was considered the heir of the dead man (Deut. 25:5,6).

What life will be like after the resurrection is far beyond our ability to understand or imagine (Isa. 64:4; 1 Cor. 2:9). We need not be afraid of eternal life because of the unknowns.

Instead of wondering what God's coming Kingdom will be like, we should concentrate on our relationship with Jesus right now, because in the new kingdom, we will be with him.

If we learn to love and trust him now, we will not be afraid of what he has in store for us then.

(Vs. 25-27) Jesus' statement does not mean that people will not recognize their spouses in the coming Kingdom. It simply means that God's new order will not be an extension of this life and that the same physical and natural rules will not apply. Jesus' comment was not meant to be the final word on marriage in heaven; instead, this response was Jesus' refusal to answer the Sadducees' riddle and fall into their trap.

Sidestepping their question about the much-married woman, he gave a definitive answer to their question about the doctrine of resurrection. God's covenant with all people exists beyond death.

**Key Point:** Eternal life is real and grounded in God's power.

#### **4. Religious Leaders question Jesus about the greatest commandment (Verses 28-34)**

**Mark 12:28-34 NIV**

[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?" [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." [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." [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.

This is the last *question* asked of Jesus during his time in the temple courts.

In contrast to the preceding hostile questions, a passing teacher of the law, impressed by Jesus' response to the Sadducees, respectfully seeks Jesus' summation of the law.

By Jesus' time, the Jews had accumulated hundreds of laws, 613 by one historian's count.

- Jesus answers: Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength
- Love your neighbor as yourself

These commands are from the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:6; Leviticus 19:18).

When you love completely and care for others as you care for yourself, then you have fulfilled the intent of the Ten Commandments and the Old Testament Laws. According to Jesus, these two commandments summarize all God's laws. We should let these laws rule our thoughts, decisions, and actions. When we are uncertain what to do, we should ask ourselves which course of action best demonstrates love for God and love for others.

(V32-34) The teacher discerned the core of Jesus' teaching better than the disciples did.

Jesus has proven Israel's teacher par excellence not only by answering well but by readily discerning between hypocritical, misconceived, and genuine questions.

As the Lord of the temple (11:14) and God's "cornerstone", Jesus' claim that doing God's will means listening to him has been vindicated by God here in the temple's court before the nations and its authorities.

The lawyer is an important reminder that not every authority in Jerusalem opposed Jesus.

## 5. Whose Son is the Messiah? (Verses 35-37)

**Mark 12:35-37 NIV**

**[35] While 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? [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.**

**Challenge:** Jesus asks how the Messiah can be both David's son and Lord.

This is Jesus' final engagement with the authorities in the temple courts.

His questions challenge the assumptions of the teachers of the law that the Messiah is merely David's human son. Jesus takes the initiative by asking his own question, once again revealing the mistaken assumptions of Israel's teachers (vs. 17,26-27).

Jesus quoted (Ps. 110:1) to show that David considered the Messiah to be his Lord, not just his descendant. The religious leaders did not understand that the Messiah would be far more than a human descendant of David; he would be God himself in human form.

Because fathers do not call their sons “lord,” the Messiah must be more than merely David’s son. And since Jesus has just declared that there is only one Lord (29), the Messiah must be that very Lord among them. Jesus is both Lord and Christ (1 Cor.8:6).

**Key point:** The Messiah (Christ) is greater than David - pointing to Jesus’ divine nature.

## **6. Warning Against the Teachers of the Law (Verses 38-40)**

**Mark 12:38-40 NIV**

**[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 with respect 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. These men will be punished most severely.”**

**Jesus cautions against religious leaders who seek honor but exploit others.**

Jesus again exposed the religious leaders’ impure motives.

The scribes, or teachers of the law, received no pay, so they depended on the hospitality extended by devout Jews. Some of them used this custom to exploit people, cheating the poor out of everything they had and taking advantage of the rich. They acted piously to gain status, recognition, and respect.

Jesus warned against trying to make a good impression (for the wrong reason).

True followers of Christ are not distinguished by showy spirituality.

Reading the Bible, praying in public, or following church rituals can be phony if the motive for doing them is to be noticed or honored.

Let your actions be consistent with your beliefs. Live for Christ, even when no one is looking.

**Key point:** True faith is humble, not performative.

## 7. The Widow Offering (Verses 41-44)

**Mark 12:41-44 NIV**

[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 few cents. [43] Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, **“Truly I tell you, 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.”**

**Jesus observes people giving at the temple treasury.**

The treasury was located in the court of women and contained 13 trumpet shaped receptacles for mandatory tithes and voluntary gifts. The genuine greatness of the widow's humble devotion (yet another sign of the faithfulness of some in Jerusalem, (V. 34) contrasts with the behavior of the teachers of the law, which Jesus had just denounced.

(V.42) The smallest coin in circulation, worth less than one-hundredth of a denarius.

This widow gave all she had to live on, in contrast to the way most people handle their money. When we consider giving a certain percentage of our income, we resemble those who “gave of their abundance.”

Here, Jesus was admiring generous and sacrificial giving. As believers, we should consider increasing our giving, whether of money, time, or talents, to a point beyond convenience or calculation.

**Key Point:** God values sacrificial giving, not just quantity.

***Major contemplations in Mark 12:***

- Rejection of God's messengers
- True vs. false religions
- The nature of religion (earthly vs. divine)
- Resurrection and eternal life
- Love as the greatest command
- Sacrificial faith and humility

*Rhema Christian Center  
Weekly Bible Study Classes  
Triumphant Tuesday  
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References:

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