

## **MARK 11:27 to 12:40 – ON A COLLISION COURSE W/CHRIST**

Confrontations with Jesus were not unusual, if you read the Gospels. Throughout His 3-year ministry Jesus constantly clashed with the religious establishment. Clearly, they did NOT view Jesus as the divine Son of God. He certainly was NOT, in their minds, the Christ, the Messiah that the nation had been waiting for. Early in Jesus's ministry the religious leaders, having listened to His claims and seen His miraculous works, concluded – this is from Mark Chapter 3 (we covered it): "He is possessed by Satan, the prince of demons. That is where He gets the power to cast out demons." (Mark 3:22). Their assessment of Jesus was that He was a blasphemer. All of those amazing signs and miracles He did were done, they said, by the power of Satan. We are approaching the end of Jesus's ministry. Here in Mark Chapter 11 the Jewish religious leaders are on a final collision course with Jesus. That is the focus of today's lesson as we enter Day Three of Passion Week.

READ Mark 11:27-28

The "elders" refers to the Sanhedrin, the ruling body made up of the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees. They confront Jesus about something that He had done the previous day in the temple – if you look at the previous verses, what we studied last time. Q1 asks, what were the religious leaders referring to by "these things"? Cleansing the temple. If you recall from last time, Jesus went into the temple and He cast out the merchants and the money-changers from the temple complex. So, that is fresh on their minds. They ask Jesus, "By what authority did You do that? Who gave You that authority?" They are hoping that Jesus will say something like, "I did it by God's authority." That way they can arrest Him for blasphemy. They do not believe that He is from God and they want to get rid of Him. So, that is their motive.

Let me pause right here and let me ask you a question: By whose authority HAD Jesus cleansed the temple? By whose authority had He done it? God, right? He had done it by the Father's authority – God the Father,

right? In fact, everything Jesus did was in submission to His Father's will and directed by Him. If you go back to v 17, after Jesus threw the money-changers out of the temple, Jesus said, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." What Jesus did was He quoted scripture. He quoted Isaiah and Jeremiah – God's messages to the nation of Israel hundreds of years before. And Jesus applied that same message from those prophets to what He observed in His own day. There were things going on in the temple that should not have been. Jesus merely "cleaned" things up. You would think that these religious leaders would have been thankful to Jesus for doing what THEY should have already done. But instead, they are not very happy about it at all. Notice how Jesus answers their question. He answers it with a question of His own.

READ Mark 11:29-30

John the Baptist's ministry (we talked about this back at the beginning of our study) involved preaching repentance of sin and baptizing the people in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. That was his whole ministry. Then, when Jesus arrived, it was John who pointed Him out to the people. John said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The people believed John was a prophet of God. But the religious leaders, they had their doubts about John.

READ Mark 11:31-32

Now, the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus are intertwined. John prepared the people for and pointed them TO the Messiah. Then Jesus showed that HE was the Messiah that John talked about. The dilemma the religious leaders face here is that if they say that John was from heaven, that he indeed was a prophet of God (like the people believe), then that would mean that his message was true and that Jesus really was the Messiah. That is what they would have to conclude if he is speaking truth, if he is from God. On the other hand, if they say John was from man and he was NOT a prophet of God, the people are going to turn on them.

READ Mark 11:33a

That must have really hurt for them to say that because they were so prideful about their knowledge. So, that is the answer to Q2, what answer did the religious leaders give Jesus? "We don't know."

READ Mark 11:33b

Well, this little run-in with the religious leaders prompts Jesus to present a parable of judgment. As we come to Mark Chapter 12, Jesus continues talking to the Jewish leaders and as He is talking to them this large crowd of people begins to gather and they are all standing there listening to Jesus as He starts this parable.

READ Mark 12:1-5

Q3, in this parable, which character represents the religious leaders? The tenants. In fact, the title of this parable is the Parable of the Wicked Tenants. OK, let me skip to Q5 and ask you, true or false? In this parable the owner represents God the Father. That is true. The owner represents God and the vineyard he owns represents Israel. Now, what do the tenants do? They beat up and even kill the owner's servants. That was not very nice! The servants represent the prophets and priests who brought God's message to the nation of Israel. But the religious leaders did not want to hear what they had to say. So, they mistreated them and, in some cases, they actually killed God's prophets. Many of the prophets we read about in the Old Testament ended up being killed.

Jesus continues...

READ Mark 12:6-8

Q4, in this parable, which character represents Jesus? The son, right? Since the owner represents God, it follows that the owner's son represents Jesus. He is the Son of God, right? The owner in this parable reasons that the tenants will respect the son more than they did the servants. But they kill the son also.

Let me skip ahead to Q7. What did the tenants think would happen if they killed the owner's son? They foolishly, v 8, thought that they would get the inheritance! You talk about totally misjudging the situation!

In this parable Jesus exposes the murderous plot of the Jewish religious leaders. They want to kill Jesus (we have read about that) and Jesus knows it. None of the events that will soon take place (that we will be reading in the next few chapters of Mark) are going to take Jesus by surprise. He is fully aware of everything that will happen over the next few days.

OK, now for Jesus's application...

READ Mark 12:9-11

Here Jesus is quoting from Psalm 118.

The result of the tenants' rejection of the son is that the owner gets new tenants. They do not get the inheritance. They get replaced. These new tenants are the disciples, later known as The Apostles. By extension these new tenants also represent those of us who make up Jesus's church. "The stone that the builders rejected," of course, speaks about Jesus who becomes the cornerstone of the church. Peter later uses this same quote from Psalm 118 to apply to Jesus. That is when he is standing before the Sanhedrin in Acts Chapter 4. He is giving a defense and he uses this verse (Acts 4:11). And then in his epistle of First Peter, in Chapter 2, he uses this verse. He quotes from it (1 Peter 2:7). In both cases, he is connecting the stone that the builder's rejected, the cornerstone, with Jesus. That is how we know that Jesus is talking about Himself here when He quotes this verse.

Well, does this parable hit home with the religious leaders? Do you think they get the point Jesus is making? Do they understand that Jesus is talking about them? Absolutely! Just look v 12...

READ Mark 12:12

So, they knew. Matthew's account says, "And although they were seeking to arrest Him, they feared the crowds, because they [the people] held Him to be a prophet" (Matthew 21:46). That leads to Q6, true or false? The people viewed Jesus as the Son of God? False. They viewed Jesus as a prophet. The religious leaders are so blinded by hate that they do not even see Jesus the way the people see Him, as a prophet sent by God. The people were wrong, but they were a lot closer than the religious leaders were. At least they saw Jesus as being from God, even if they did not totally understand that He was the Son of God. But the religious leaders, they were not even that close. That is really amazing to think about!

At this point the Jewish leaders change strategies. Instead of ganging up on Jesus all at once, they take turns. One by one they engage Jesus in conversation. And first up to speak to Jesus are the Pharisees.

READ Mark 12:13

The Herodians mentioned here are more of a political group than a religious group. They are loyal to Rome. But they are united with the Pharisees here. These two opposing groups philosophically actually come together for the same purpose, which is, to get Jesus. The Romans are suspicious of Jesus because a couple of days earlier large crowds had proclaimed Jesus as their Messiah as He entered Jerusalem. It was the common belief that the Jewish Messiah would overthrow the Romans. So, their intention here is to trap Jesus.

READ Mark 12:14a

They are buttering up Jesus They pretend they want to know the truth. But they don't want to know the truth. Their goal is to discredit Jesus.

READ Mark 12:14b

Q8, what question do the Pharisees and the Herodians ask Jesus in an attempt to trap Him? "Should we pay taxes to Caesar?" "Should we pay

taxes to this evil idolatrous government (Rome)?” The opinion by most Jews at that time is “No, we should NOT. It is not fair. We should not have to do that.” No matter how Jesus answers this question He is going to be in trouble – either with the Roman government represented here by the Herodians (if He says NO) or by the people who oppose Rome (if He says YES). So, how does Jesus answer?

READ Mark 12:15

Matthew says that, “He perceived their wickedness.” Jesus knows what they are trying to do. So, they locate a denarius somewhere in the crowd – by the way, this is a day’s wage so it is not like they carried it around with them, it is a lot of money – and v 16 says they bring it to Jesus.

READ Mark 12:16-17

Jesus says, “pay the tax.” Civil government, good or bad, serves a positive role in a civilized society. In Romans Chapter 13 Paul (inspired by the Holy Spirit) says this: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment (Romans 13:1-2). You have to understand that Paul is talking under the authority of a Roman government, a pagan government when he says this. So, yes, the IRS is instituted by God!

God’s will is that we be good citizens and pay our taxes, whether we want to or not; whether we think they are too high or not. Jesus says, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.” I like what John MacArthur said about this passage in his commentary. He said, “The coin belongs to Caesar, but YOU belong to God.”

Luke in his account of this passage says, “So they failed to trap Jesus by what He said in front of the people. Instead, they were amazed by His answer, and they became silent” (Luke 20:26 NLT).

I want to just point something out to you just to show you what liars and hypocrites the Pharisees are. Listen to what they say in Luke Chapter 23. This is going to happen when Jesus is standing in front of Pilate later in the week. Jesus is standing there... "And they [the entire Sanhedrin] began to accuse [Jesus], saying" – here is their accusation: "'We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar...'" Well, we just saw that is not true, right? "... and saying that He Himself is Christ, a king." (Luke 23:2). That is not true either. Jesus did talk about His kingdom, but never once did He actually say in public, in front of the crowds, "I am the King, the Christ, the Messiah." Now, He certainly implied that and says that to Pilate later, "I am a king" (John 18:36-37). But at this point Jesus had never said that. So, I guess, if you can't beat'em, lie about'em!

Well, almost as soon as the Pharisees leave, here comes the Sadducees...

READ Mark 12:18

Q9, what did the Sadducees NOT believe in, which set them apart from most other Jews? The resurrection of the dead. The majority of Jews believed in a physical bodily resurrection. You can read about that all throughout the Old Testament (in Psalms, Isaiah, Job, Hosea among others). So, why didn't the Sadducees believe in the resurrection of the dead? Because they only believed in the first five books of the Bible. They only believed in the Pentateuch, the books of Moses. According to them the resurrection is not mentioned by Moses. They did NOT believe in the resurrection. They denied the existence of angels and the spiritual realm. They did not believe in any future existence after death. In other words, no afterlife. Their goal in coming to Jesus is to make Him look foolish in front of the people. So, they are going to present this scenario to Him.

READ Mark 12:19-23

The Sadducees present this silly hypothetical question (based on Deuteronomy Chapter 25). This practice that they are talking about was

actually made famous in the book of Ruth. So, Jesus uses this as an opportunity to tell the Sadducees that their theology is wrong.

READ Mark 12:24

The Sadducees are wrong for two reasons. First, they have misinterpreted scripture. And they have also underestimated the power of God. That is what Jesus is saying. But He goes on to answer their question. They have asked Him a question. Now He is going to answer it.

READ Mark 12:25

There will be no marriage in the next life. That is Jesus's answer. He also says that we are going to be LIKE angels, not that we are going to BE angels. There is a difference and I am going to talk about that.

Why is there no marriage in heaven? Well, there is no birth or death. And we are perfectly complete. So, marriage is unnecessary.

About the angels, we do not become angels. There are actually people that will teach that, but it is not scriptural. Jesus says we will become like angels. Well, how will we become like angels? They are glorious. They are eternal. In Philippians Chapter 3 when Paul is talking about our bodies after the resurrection, he says, "we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body [the bodies that we have now] to be like His glorious body..." (Philippians 3:20-21). So, we are going to have glorious, heavenly bodies.

READ Mark 12:26

In Exodus Chapter 3 God speaks to Moses out of the burning bush. When He speaks about His covenant relationship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He speaks about it in the PRESENT tense – even though those three guys had been dead for, in the case of Abraham, 500 years; in the case of Isaac and Jacob, over 400 years. They had been dead a long time. And yet God is speaking about them in the present tense (as though they were all still alive). Why does God speak of them like that? Because in God's eyes, they were still alive! So, there has to be an afterlife, right? That is what



Jesus's point here is. Why would God say that in the present tense if they had died and there was no afterlife?

READ Mark 12:27

He points out that they are wrong again! Jesus tells the Sadducees that their theology about there being no resurrection and no afterlife is wrong. There WILL be a resurrection. "You are quite wrong. Sadducees."

These first two encounters with the Pharisees and Sadducees as they have come to Jesus have not gone as they had hoped. Matthew Chapter 22 tells us that, at this point, the Sanhedrin reconvenes. They go back to the drawing board. Out of this meeting a lone scribe is sent to talk to Jesus. Matthew tells us something about the scribe, that he is also a Pharisee. He is a "lawyer." He is a student of the law. So, he is one of their top guys, knowledge-wise, well-respected among the group. They're going to send him, this one guy, to Jesus. It says, "and he asked Jesus a question to test Him" (Matthew 22:35). That is how Matthew puts it.

READ Mark 12:28

The question seems innocent enough. The Jews view Moses's writings very highly. By asking Jesus to pick out the number one law, the scribe is putting Jesus on the spot. But Jesus does not come up with some brand-new teaching of His own. He goes directly to the books that the Sadducees themselves held highly, the books of Moses. He quotes from the Law of Moses (from Deuteronomy and Leviticus).

READ Mark 12:29-31

So, Q10, what did Jesus say was the most important commandment of all? Did He say that it was "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain"? Was it that one? Was it "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy"? Those are pretty good commandments. "Honor your father and your mother." Hey, that should have been number one, right? "You shall not commit murder, or adultery or any of those." It wasn't any of those, was it? What was it? None of the above. It was, "You shall love the Lord

your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” That is a quote, not from the Ten Commandments. It is from Deuteronomy. Jesus actually takes two passages in Deuteronomy and connects them together (Deuteronomy 10:12 and 30:6).

And not only does Jesus state what He believes is the most important commandment, He gives them extra. He tells them what the second most important commandment is as well. So, he gets more than he asked for.

Q11, true or false? The scribe was pleased with Jesus’s answer to him. The answer comes in the next verse.

READ Mark 12:32a

So, yes. It is true! He goes on to say...

READ Mark 12:32b-33

I told you this guy was sharp. The scribe is impressed with Jesus’s answer. Even though his goal was to trap Jesus, even though that goal was unsuccessful, he is impressed with what Jesus said. The scribe actually demonstrates that he has a good understanding of scripture. He gets the point of what Jesus is saying.

READ Mark 12:34

Q12, how did Jesus respond after listening to the scribe’s analysis of His answer? He said, “You are not far from the kingdom.” Now, the scribe is close to the kingdom. That is the good news. But the bad news is that he is not close enough. Close is not close enough, is it? When Jesus says this, the scribe should have asked the obvious follow-up question – “OK, Jesus, I am close, but what do I have to do to enter the kingdom?” That is the question that Nicodemus asked. He doesn’t ask that question. He doesn’t ask any question at all. You know, a person can have the right theology and still not be saved, because it requires more than knowledge. Salvation requires faith in the living Lord.

Did this man ever come to Christ? He was close. Sadly, we don't know. I like to think that possibly he is one of those Pharisees that we see in Acts in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). I like to think that he is possibly one of those because there were a bunch of Pharisees that later got saved. Maybe he is one of them. We don't know.

Jesus continues to teach the people in the temple. He is now the One, though, that is asking the questions. The Jews of that day, in Jesus's day, believed that the Messiah would be a human being, a man who descended from King David's line; the "seed of the woman." They saw their future Messiah as being the savior of the nation of Israel; as being heroic like King David. But the Jews never viewed Messiah as being God. Now, if you read the Old Testament, it gets hinted at little by little. But they did not actually see it that way. They saw him as human. Jesus now is going to correct that wrong theology. That is the point of these next verses.

READ Mark 12:35-37

I don't think they totally understood what Jesus was saying. It was over their heads.

These are quotes here in this passage from Psalm 110, which was recognized as a Messianic psalm. Q13, according to Jesus, who did the scribes say is the son of David? V 35, "the Christ." The Messiah. The Messiah is the Son of David. Q14, then, according to David, what did the Lord God (Yahweh) say to David's Lord (the Messiah)? "Sit at My right hand." Here is Jesus's point. If the Messiah was only a man, as they believed, how then could David (a man) call him (one of his own descendants) "Lord." Lord is the Hebrew word Adonai. It is a title for God. What does the Father, Yahweh, say to His Son, the Messiah? "Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies under Your feet." So, the Father places His Son in a position of power and authority. The Father's Son is the Messiah. Those are the dots Jesus is connecting through this whole passage that He is teaching.

That was a deep theological statement and the people, of course, would not have fully comprehended what He was saying. It is pretty deep. You actually have to take this apart and analyze it and look at some commentaries to understand what Jesus is saying. So, Jesus is driving home the point that the Messiah is not merely a man, but is actually God. The theological term that we would use today (understanding that Jesus and the Messiah was fully God and fully man) is "the God-man." They thought that he was merely a man, but He is God AND man!

This truth puts the religious establishment on a collision course with Jesus and face-to-face with who Jesus REALLY IS. Matthew adds that "no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask Him any more questions." So, this is His last confrontation with them before the arrest.

Jesus's closing remarks in our lesson today are an indictment on the Jewish leadership of His day.

READ Mark 12:38-40

Q15, who did Jesus warn the people to watch out for? The scribes. Now, this is really an indictment on ALL of the religious leaders, not just the scribes. In other places Jesus will condemn the Pharisees and others. So, He does come down hard on all the Jewish religious leaders. Why do they receive the greater condemnation? Why is that? Because they received the greater evidence, the most overwhelming evidence. For three years they have been hearing Jesus Himself, God's Son. They have been listening to Him and seen what He has done. With all that evidence and with all of their knowledge of scripture combined together, they should have known that He was the Messiah, right? That His claims were true. They should have known, but they rejected Jesus. In just a few days from now they will deliver their own Messiah over to the Romans to be killed. How unbelievably tragic this is! But this is not just some terrible miscarriage of justice. Now from a human standpoint it certainly is. It is all part of God's sovereign plan.