

## DAY 7: JESUS MEETS INCREASING HOSTILITY

Mark 11:27–12:44

**BY WHAT AUTHORITY? (MARK 11:27-33)** A delegation from the Sanhedrin confronts Jesus about His behavior. What right does Jesus have to disregard the Sabbath, to dismiss the elder's teaching, to reinterpret the meaning of the Law, and to disrupt the operation of the merchants and moneylenders at the temple? Jesus poses a question in return: "*Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?*" (11:30). If God sent John, and John baptized Jesus, then Jesus acts with God's authority! The delegation, of course, senses the dilemma. A decision for John means a decision for Jesus, whereas a decision against John will alienate the people, to whom John is a highly respected prophet. So they answer, "*We do not know.*" To those unwilling to commit themselves, Jesus replies, "*Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.*"

**THE SENDING OF THE SON (MARK 12:1-12)** This parable predicts that Israel will reject and kill God's Son, and that rejection spells her judgment. In the story, a landowner leases property to tenant farmers to work in his absence. At harvest season, he sends a hired hand to collect his share of the produce. But the tenants, in the words of C. H. Dodd, "pay their rent in blows." Other hands are sent, receiving the same or worse treatment. Finally, he sends "*a beloved son*" (12:6).

But the farmers reason that if they kill the heir, then they will become the heirs. If man can kill God, then man can become his own god. The vineyard, however, is not man's possession but God's. God has every right to "*come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others*" (12:9). This verse seems to suggest that the focus of God's work would shift to the Gentiles. Jesus concludes with a quotation from Psalm 118:22-23 that refers to a stone rejected in Solomon's Temple that became the cornerstone. For centuries, Jewish rabbis had taught that the builders were scribes and the rejected stone the Messiah! These leaders "*perceived that [Jesus] had told the parable against them,*" so "*they were seeking to arrest Him but feared the people*" (12:12).

**THINK ABOUT** how this parable teaches about both God's patient persistence and His righteous wrath. No earthly landowner would send servant after servant to such wicked tenants—and then finally send his only son. The teaching about divine patience is clear. But God's wrath toward stubborn sinners is also made plain.

**IN WHOSE IMAGE? (MARK 12:13-17)** The Pharisees and Herodians (sympathizers of the Herod dynasty) approach Jesus with a trick question. Hoping to entangle Jesus in a dilemma, they ask, "*Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?*" If Jesus says "Yes," He will be discredited by the people who are wincing under Roman oppression; if He says "No," He could be accused of sedition. However, Jesus responds with a counter-question: "*Bring Me a denarius ... Whose likeness and inscription is this?*" Since the image is Caesar's, says Jesus, it belongs to Caesar; give it to him. And give God the things that belong to God. This brilliant reply acknowledges the legitimacy of human government as well as man's responsibility to God. A coin that bears Caesar's image belongs to Caesar, but man bears God's image and belongs wholly to God.

**THE PROMISE AND POWER OF THE RESURRECTION (MARK 12:18-27)** In order to discredit the idea of life after death—and discredit Jesus, who has spoken of His own resurrection—some Sadducees devised a hypothetical question. If a woman was widowed seven times by seven brothers without producing an heir, whose wife will she be "*in the resurrection?*" Jesus gives evidence for the resurrection by quoting a Scripture accepted by the Sadducees—"*I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*" (Exodus 3:6). If these Patriarchs are dead, then God's promise to them is limited to the duration of their earthly lives—or God makes promises to dead men, which is absurd. The truth is that God would not pledge Himself to the dead unless the dead are raised to life.



**THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT (MARK 12:28-34)** Another scribe approaches Jesus with a different attitude. Impressed with Jesus' wisdom, the scribe asks, "*Which commandment is the most important of all?*" (12:28). Jesus is ready with an answer. "*Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.*"

*And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart ... soul ... mind ... strength*” (12:29-30, from Deuteronomy 6:4-5). Pious Jews recited this passage twice daily. Jesus adds a second commandment: *“Love your neighbor as yourself”* (12:31, from Leviticus 19:18). The scribe agrees with Jesus because he knows the Law. *“You are not far from the kingdom of God,”* says Jesus. Who would dare make such a judgment except God Himself?!

**THE QUESTION OF THE DAY (MARK 12:35-37)** For the first time, Jesus begins a discussion with a question. He quotes Psalm 110:1, *“The LORD [God] said to My Lord [Messiah]: Sit at My right hand,”* then asks, *“So how is He [Messiah] his [David’s] son?”* (12:37). The Messiah was to be descended from David, but He cannot be merely *“the son of David”* if David calls Him *Lord*. The answer, of course, is that He is not only David’s “son”; He is God’s Son!

**A WIDOW’S TWO CENTS’ WORTH (MARK 12:38-44)** In this final episode of Jesus’ public ministry, as recorded by Mark, Jesus is in the temple, where He spotlights two types of people. One is the scribes, who seek honor from people and make long prayers for show—while they *“devour widows’ houses.”* As He speaks, Jesus sees a widow deposit two *lepta* (the smallest coin in circulation, equaling 1/64th of a *denarius*, or a day’s wage) into an offering box. He tells His disciples, *“Truly ... this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on”* (12:43-44). The value of a gift lies not in the amount given, but in the cost to the giver. The widow gave all she had to God, just as Jesus gave His all—His very life—on the cross on behalf of mankind.

**PERSONALIZE** this lesson. These final events of Jesus’ public ministry highlight the increasing hostility of the religious leaders and Jesus’ undaunted attempts to open their blind eyes. In each of these conflicts, they had a chance for them to change their attitudes toward Jesus. But they could not see the truth through the veil of their unbelief. Jesus came, He said, to bring recovery of sight to the blind (Luke 4:18). Conversion is a matter of having our eyes opened to the truth of the gospel. Christian growth is learning to see as God sees—to look at people and events from the divine viewpoint. Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”* (John 8:12). What truth are you learning? Or how are you learning to see as God sees? Pray and ask God to help you live in the light of these truths He is giving you this week.

#### **REVIEW: JESUS MEETS INCREASING HOSTILITY**

13. What is the most personally significant thing you gained from this study last week?