

Commentary on Mark chapter 12 verses 1 - 25, by Chuck Smith 3.13.22

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March memory verse John 16:33 (NKJV) These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

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Now we remember that Jesus is in the temple. This is the day after He had cleansed it again. It is on Tuesday. It is His final week. Sunday He had made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem on the donkey. Monday He came in and cleansed the temple. Now Tuesday He returns to the temple with His disciples, where immediately He is challenged by the religious leaders concerning the authority by which He has done these things.

And he began to speak unto them by parables. [And He said,] A certain man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a place for the winevat, and built a tower, and [he] let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country ([Mar 12:1](#)).

Now, if you can hold your place there in Mark and turn to Isaiah, chapter 5, I think that you'll see how they were able to see exactly what Jesus was getting at. Verse 1 of [Isaiah 5](#), "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard and a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, gathered out the stones, he planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine press: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, than I have not done to it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? Now go to; I will tell you what I'm going to do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge, it will be eaten up; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: and I also will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold there was oppression; he sought righteousness, but there was a cry of those who were oppressed" ([Isaiah 5:1-7](#)).

So when Jesus said to these leaders, "There was a certain man who planted a vineyard and set a hedge about it and digged a place for the winevat and built a tower," their minds connected with Isaiah. "And he let it out to husbandmen, went to a far country."

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And at the season [at a time when he should be reaping the benefits of that vineyard] he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him [the servant], and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled [mistreated]. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? ([Mar 12:2-9](#))

The parable is very obvious. It is against the religious leaders, the husbandmen whom the Lord had set over the vineyard, the nation of Israel. And the Lord sent to them the prophets, His servants. But the prophets were mistreated; they were beaten, they were stoned, many of them were killed. Finally, the Lord said, "I will send My only Son," or, "My well-beloved Son." And so, Jesus separates Himself in a total different capacity from the servants, the prophets that had been sent. Finally, the Son has come. And the religious leaders have determined to get rid of Him in order that they might somehow take possession of the vineyard. The question, "What will the lord of the vineyard do?" Of course, God is the Lord of the vineyard.

he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others ([Mar 12:9](#)).

So, here we see as last week when Jesus cursed the fig tree and it withered and died, because it failed to bring forth fruit. The nation of Israel had failed to fulfill the purposes for which God had established them as a special people unto the Lord. They failed to bring forth that fruit that God was desiring the nation to produce. So, what will the Lord do? He will take away the privileges, the opportunities, and he will give them to others. And so, we see the door opened to the Gentiles, and Jesus here is prophesying and predicting that God is going to do His work, not among the Jews in this age, but more among the Gentiles. And thus, we see the work of God's Spirit in a powerful way among those Gentile believers in Jesus Christ. And then the Lord quoted to them the [Psalm 118](#), which is a psalm that was predicting the triumphant entry of the Messiah.

And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? ([Mar 12:10-11](#))

This particular Psalm, 118, "the stone set of not by the builders, or rejected by the builders, becoming the head cornerstone," is an often quoted Psalm in the New Testament. Peter quoted it when he was talking to the religious leaders in the fourth chapter of Acts. Paul quotes it in his epistles to the Romans and in also his epistle to the Ephesians. Jesus here makes reference to it. Obviously, it is a reference to Jesus, the

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cornerstone. Now, you remember that there was that prophecy in Daniel of the stone that would come, not cut with hands, striking the image and its feet and growing up into a mountain covering the earth. The stone being Jesus Christ, rejected by the builders, the religious leaders, and yet in reality, it's the chief cornerstone.

"The stone that was set of not by the builders has become the chief cornerstone. This was the work of the Lord, it's marvelous in our eyes." And so Jesus quotes this very familiar psalm, [Psalm 118](#) to them, a psalm by which He is asserting that He is indeed that stone, the Messiah.

And they sought to lay hold on him ([Mar 12:12](#)),

He had directed the parable against them and they recognized that. And they wanted to lay hold on Him,

but they feared the people; for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way. And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man [you don't care for man]; for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth ([Mar 12:12-14](#)):

Quite an acknowledgment. True, it was flattery to try to throw Him off guard. And then they offered their question which was designed to entrap Him.

Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? ([Mar 12:14](#))

Judah was a Roman province. As a Roman province, the governor was directly appointed by Rome, and the Roman government excised taxes from them that were paid directly to the Roman government. And there were three basic taxes. First of all, you were taxed on the land that you had. And you had to give one tenth of your crop to the government, that is your grains and all from the fields. You had to give one-fifth of the fruit, that which grew from the trees that were there on the land. Secondly, there was a straight across the board five percent income tax. And then thirdly, you had to pay each year a denarius to the government just for the right of existing. This was a tax upon everyone, a denarius because you lived. And so, the Jews hated this taxation. They did not really recognize the Roman authority over them. And this question then was a very clever question designed to entrap Jesus, for no matter how He answers, He's a loser. If He answers, "It is lawful to pay the taxes to Caesar," then all of these Jews that hate these taxes so much will turn away and not listen to Him again. If He says, "It is not lawful to pay the taxes to Caesar," then they'll run right down and report on Him and have Him arrested as a leader of sedition. So, they felt that the question was one from which He could not escape, a very cleverly designed question. It probably took them quite a long time to figure that one out.

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Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy [cunningness], said unto them, Why tempt ye me [why are you trying to tempt me]? bring me a penny [denarius], that I may see it ([Mar 12:15](#)).

Now, this was the denarius that they had to pay for existing. And of course, it had the current Roman emperor who at this time was Titus, and his little image was upon it. It's interesting to me that Jesus didn't carry a coin. He asked for one, and He held it up and He said,

Whose is this image and superscription? ([Mar 12:16](#))

And it would have the picture, and under it the superscription, "Pontifus Maximus." "Who is this?"

And they said unto him, Caesar's. [So He flipped the coin back] And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. [If it's Caesar's give it to Caesar, but give to God the things that belong to God] ([Mar 12:16-17](#)).

Now in reality, these coins were all considered to be Caesar's, the government's. The people were able to use them, but in reality, they considered that it was all the government's. Even as your money all says "Federal Reserve Note," it's really the government's loaning you this medium of exchange, or letting you use this medium of exchange. So, Jesus thoroughly escaped the trap that they were setting for Him.

And they marveled at Him. Then come unto him [some of] the Sadducees ([Mar 12:18](#)),

Now, the Sadducees were the priests, for the most part. The high priest at this time was always a Sadducee. They were the materialists. They were not really spiritual men at all, but the materialists. But they had gained control of the whole religious system. And they did not believe in spirits, they did not believe in angels, they did not believe in the resurrection from the dead. So they said,

And they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, if a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed for his brother ([Mar 12:18-19](#)).

Now this was a part of the Mosaic law. It is given to us there in Deuteronomy, and it's a very interesting law. And the purpose, of course, was that the family name not die in Israel. And basically the law is like this: if you married a woman, and before you could have children, you died, it was your brother's responsibility to marry her. And the first son that was born would be named after you, so that your name would not die in Israel.

Now, say your younger brother doesn't want to marry her. He says, "Hey, hey, no, she gave my brother such a bad time. No way. You're not going to stick me with that one."

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Then they would come to the gate of the city where judgment was always made. You read that in the gates of the city that's where they always made the judgments. The elders of the city would be there in the gates to pass judgment. So, they would come to the gate of the city before the judges, the elders there, and the fellow would say, "My brother died, didn't have any kids and I don't want to marry her." And he'd take off his sandal and hand it to her. It's sort of like saying, "Hey, woman, you're an old dirty shoe as far as I'm concerned. No way." And she would spit in his face. And he would be released from the obligation of marrying her. But he was called "the man from whom the shoe was loosed" in Israel. He got that title after that, and it was sort of a dirty title. In other words, he wouldn't fulfill the family obligation and that was a very important thing to them.

Now, in the book of Genesis, and this goes back before the law actually, in the book of Genesis we find the case of Judah, the son of Jacob, and his son married this gal Tamar. And he died not having any children, so Tamar's brother took her to wife. And he died not having any children, and so the other brother was supposed to marry her. But Judah said, "Well, no, no. I'm a little worried about that tea that gal fixes." And two sons died and he said, "This is my last son, I don't want to lose him. He's too young; wait awhile before he marries you." And this is the story of Tamar; it's an interesting story in Genesis. She put on the clothes of a prostitute and sat in the way when Judah was coming by, the old man. He says, "How much do you charge?" And so she gave the price, and he said, "I don't have it with me, but here. Take my ring." And this is where we get the idea of giving a ring; it's a pledge to guarantee that I'm going to keep the covenant..."I promise you I'll pay you this little..." And of course, she coveted for a little goat. He says, "I'll send it back to you." And she says, "Well, what pledge do you give?" "Well, take the ring." And so he gave her the ring. Then the idea is, "I'm going to keep the promise; I'll send the goat." And when the goat comes, she gives the ring back.

Well, he went in unto her. You see, she felt that she was getting cheated because he didn't give the third son. And so, she was all veiled and everything else, and had the veil of a prostitute on and all. So, he went in and then went on down, and he said to his herdsmen, "Take a goat back to the prostitute that's back there in that corner, and get my ring back." And so, the guy came back with the goat and he looked around. He said to fellows around there, "Hey, where's the prostitute that hangs out on this corner?" "There's no prostitute around here." So, he came back, and the Jew said, "I couldn't find her; they said there's no prostitute around there." So later on word came to Judah that Tamar is pregnant. He said, "Have her stoned to death!" So Tamar came in and she said, "By the man who owns this ring I'm pregnant." Judah, of course, had it. What could he do?

So, the interesting thing to me is that as the lineage of Christ is traced back, it traces back through Tamar. That's interesting, isn't it? That God would bring His Son through this lineage. He was able to identify with sinners.

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Another case of it in the Old Testament is in the book of Ruth. Elimelech, with his wife Naomi, sold their parcel and moved with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, over to Moab. And in Moab, Mahlon and Chilion married some young girls in Moab, and Elimelech died and the two sons died. And there were no children. So, the name was about ready to die. Naomi, of course, came back with Ruth. And later on, Boaz, who was a brother to Elimelech, married Ruth. He became what they called the "gaal," the family redeemer. He's the one that redeemed the family name by having a child through Ruth, whose name was Obed, whose son's name was Jesse, whose son's name was David. And in tracing the lineage of the line of Christ, it goes back through Ruth and Boaz.

So this idea of a kinsman redeemer is tied into the lineage of Jesus, which I think is significant, because that's what He became to be. He became a man that He might be kin to us, but His purpose was to redeem us. Man couldn't redeem himself. And so, He became a man that He might become our kinsman redeemer, and in two places in his lineage that particular Jewish law was kept, fulfilled.

So, here the Sadducees, they go an extra step. They create a hypothetical case,

Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed [he died without any children]. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed [without any children]: and the third likewise. And the seven had her [all seven married her], and left no seed [and died without any children]: last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife [all seven were married to her] ([Mar 12:20-23](#)).

Now you see, they were creating a hypothetical case by which they were trying to show that the idea of the resurrection from the dead could only create a lot of problems. And here is a big problem, because you see seven guys now fighting over the one woman, for she had been married to all seven, but none of them had any children. And they pictured this big confusion at the resurrection.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God [You fellows err, because you don't know the scriptures, and you don't know the power of God]? ([Mar 12:24](#))

Your mistake lies in the fact that you don't know the scriptures; you're ignorant of the scriptures, and that's where your problem is.

For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. ([Mar 12:25](#)), Now the Sadducees, being the materialists, rejected all of the Old Testament except for the five books of Moses. And they said, "There is no place where immortality or resurrection is taught in the Pentateuch. That all came along later with the prophets and all. But there's nothing in the Pentateuch." So Jesus takes them to the Pentateuch.