

**Mark 11:27-12:12, The Lord's Authority**  
**January 18, 1997**  
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**Overview**

1. The setting: Jesus has returned to the temple he cleansed the day before, and is walking in it. The synoptics show that this is a teaching activity.
2. The confronters: three classes of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court.
  - a) Chief priests: mostly Sadducees.
  - b) Scribes: Pharisees
  - c) Elders: lay members

These three groups appear repeatedly in Mark:

- a) 8:31, first passion announcement
  - b) 14:43, those who send forth Judas
  - c) 14:53; 15:1, those who sat in judgment on the Lord.
3. The bracket: they come in 11:27, and leave in 12:12.
  4. So the point here is that those responsible for the temple are challenging the Lord's actions there. His entry, cleansing, and now unhindered walking about represent his claim to be the "Lord ... come to his temple," and constitute a challenge to their stewardship that they cannot let pass unquestioned.
  5. Structure:
    - a) 11:27-33, they ask the Lord what his authority is.
    - b) 12:1-12, he indirectly answers by challenging theirs.
    - c) Both sections end by noting their fear of the people (11:31; 12:12)

1) Examples

- a> Exod 32:22, Aaron was motivated by this to build the gold calf
- b> 1 Sam 15:24, Saul was motivated by this to withhold the Lord's ban on Amalek.
- c> Matt 26:69ff, Peter denied the Lord through fear

2) Principles:

- a> Prov 29:25, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe."
- b> Mt 10:28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
- c> Summary: the great weakness of democracy is that it fosters in leaders a fear of man rather than the fear of God. Yet even the self-perpetuating Sanhedrin was not

immune.

**A. 11:27-33, The Sanhedrin Challenges Jesus**

The questions are posed publicly, to embarrass the Lord among the crowds where he is teaching.

1. 28, their two questions:

- a) What authority? There were three anointed authorities in Israel: prophet, priest, and king. The chief priests were the continuation of the priest; the scribes no doubt felt that they represented the prophets, and the elders were the ancient civil rulers who instigated the kingship (1 Sam. 8:4,5). They think that they cover all the bases, and they come together to challenge his legitimacy on any of these grounds.
- b) Who gave it? All authority in ancient Israel was delegated, as the notion of anointing shows. God never authorized his people to take power into their own hands by their own initiative. So their questions in themselves are not out of order.

2. 29-30, the Lord's one answer.

- a) He responds to their double question with a single one. They cannot stump him with two; he silences them with one.
- b) The relevance of the question: as the very beginning of Mark makes clear, the Lord's authority was Messianic, the giver of the Spirit, and it was given by divine attestation by the hand of John the Baptist. The Lord derives his credentials from John, and so he asks them their opinion of John.

3. 31-33a, their dilemma.

- a) If they acknowledge John's divine authority, they should also believe him; that is, believe what he had to say about Jesus. Recall that this teaching was in the region of Judaea (1:4,5), where they would have ready access to it.
- b) They would no doubt like to challenge John's authority, but then they will have to answer to the crowds of pilgrims, whose simple piety in this case is more accurate than their sophisticated learning. They do not have the courage of their own convictions, however incorrect. In fact, one suspects they have no convictions of their own, only political skill.
- c) Thus they must answer simply, "We do not know."

4. 33b, the Lord's response. He can refuse to answer, because they refuse to take a position on the one who ordained him to his ministry.

**B. 12:1-12, Jesus Challenges the Sanhedrin**

Acc. to v.1, there are "parables" (plural). We can identify two, the

Vineyard and the Building Stone. Yet they are really one, since both speak of the rejection of the promised Messiah by those who ought to have known better.

1. 1-9, The Parable of the Vineyard

a) Preparation

1) Horticultural background (with slides)

- a> Hedge: to keep out the wild animals, and to keep people from wandering through it and kicking up the plants, which lie close to the ground. Also a place to put the stones gathered out of the ground.
- b> Winefat: a basin in the rock where the grapes could be trodden to extract the juice.
- c> Tower: to watch over the ripening crop and guard against theft. Again, a place for the stones.
- d> Summary: establishing such a vineyard was a lot of work.

2) OT Background: the parallel to Isa 5:1-7 is inescapable. The metaphor of Israel as a vineyard is a common one, to describe both the nation's failure (Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; Ps 80:8-13) and the Lord's future restoration of her (Ps 80:14-19; Isa 27:2-6). The Lord's parable to the Sanhedrin (Mark 12 and parallels) reflects the first theme; John 15:1-8, at the Last Supper, reflects the second.

3) Distinctive features in this development of the metaphor:

- a> The absentee nature of the Lord of the vineyard. Through most of Israel's history, God is not immediately present with his people. No continuing presence of the HS such as we have.
- b> The sharecroppers or tenant farmers whom he leaves in charge of the vineyard. Clearly the religious leaders (as they realize, 12:12).
- c> The Lord's representatives, sent periodically to assert his claim; the series of prophets.

b) 2-5, The Lord's queries.

- 1) 2, his purpose: to receive the fruit of the vineyard. Cf. Isa 5:7, judgment and righteousness.
- 2) 3-5, an increasingly severe rejection of his successive messengers. Beaten, hit upon the head, killed. The plurals in v.5 mean there were at least four in v.5, plus the previous three. What incredible patience is shown by the

Lord.

- 3) Interpretation: the caretakers to whom the Lord entrusted his people Israel were generally at odds with the prophets. Cf. the experience of Jeremiah with the temple hierarchy (ch. 20, 26), the sermons of both Jer (23) and Ezekiel (34) against the destructive pastors, and Isaiah's constant rejection of the cult (1:10-15). We know more about Jeremiah's experience than the others', but clearly those in authority would not encourage such calling to account.
- c) 6-8, Final query
- 1) 6a, The messenger this time is not a servant, but a son, identified both as unique and beloved. In effect, the Lord here answers the questions the Sanhedrin posed him. His authority is that of the Son of God; the one who gave it to him is God himself.
  - 2) 6b, The Lord's motive: "They will reverence my son." He gives them the benefit of every doubt; perhaps they simply did not recognize the authority behind the servants. No human lord would be so patient.
  - 3) 7, The farmers' motive:
    - a> "This is the heir." Implies that they in fact recognize the Lord Jesus, which only makes their guilt worse. They are not ignorant but well-meaning protectors of the people against imposters.
    - b> "The inheritance shall be ours." They wish to take for their own what the Lord intended for his pleasure. The inevitable result of linking personal gain with the service of God's people. This was the position of the wicked shepherds in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, eating the sheep for themselves rather than tending them for God.
    - c> "Come, let us kill him." Shows that the Lord fully understands their explicit intent. They cannot surprise him; if they take him, it is only because he lets them.
- d) 9, Judgment  
Usually understood of the replacement of Israel by the Church.  
But:
- 1) "He will come." Seems to distinguish this judgment from the fall of Jerusalem under Titus in A.D.70, and looks forward to the return of the Lord Jesus in his full divine glory in Rev. 19.
  - 2) "Destroy the husbandmen." If the reference is to the second coming of our Lord, then the husbandmen include not only the Sanhedrin, but subsequent practitioners of priestcraft

and clerisy in every age, down through the denominationalism and professionalism of our own day. The Jewish priesthood may be gone, but liberal "Christian" clergy certainly are no better, and they have not been judged.

- 3) "Give the vineyard unto others." Cf. Matt. 19:28, the role of the Twelve in the coming kingdom. Cf. emphasis in Rev. 20:4 on the ruling position of the martyrs.

## 2. 10, The Parable of the Stone

Quoted from Ps 118:22-23, a Messianic Psalm that is one of the most commonly quoted in the NT. See slide showing how the stones for a new house are cut in advance, according to the architect's plan, and then assembled by the builders.

- a) Rejected stone: Literally, an odd-shaped stone for which the builders can find no place. Figuratively, the Lord Jesus, rejected by the Jewish leaders, the "builders" of God's people, just as the son of the vineyard owner is rejected by the sharecroppers.
- b) Head of the corner: turns out to be the capstone, finished on three sides rather than just one (like a wall stone) or two (a corner or roof edge). Different not because it doesn't fit, but because it has a unique role.
- c) The Lord's doing: Just as the Lord of the Vineyard sent his Son, so the presence of this strange stone is the Lord's doing. He is the architect who has specified all the stones for their place in the building, and has among them called out this one.
- d) Summary: Another example of those who ought to know better, rejecting one who really deserves their special attention.

## 3. 12, the Sanhedrin's response

Mingles two reactions:

- a) Desire to put the Lord out of circulation, because they see that he is up to their game.
- b) Fear of the people, cf. 11:18, 31. They challenged him publicly, to embarrass them; now they are the ones who are embarrassed before the crowds.

## Analysis

### A. 11:27-33, The Sanhedrin Challenges Jesus

1. \*27 Kai\ e)/rxontai pa/lin ei)s (Ieroso/luma.
2. kai\ e)n tw^| i(erw^| peripatou^ntos au)tou^ e)/rxontai pro\s au)to\n oi( a)rxierei^s kai\ oi( grammatei^s kai\ oi( presbu/teroi
3. \*28 kai\ e)/legon au)tw^|,

- a) )En poi/a| e)cousi/a| tau^ta poiei^s;
- b) h)\ ti/s soi e)/dwken th\n e)cousi/an tau/thn i(/na tau^ta poi^h^|s;
- 4. \*29 o( de\ )Ihsou^s ei)^pen au)toi^s,
  - a) )Eperwth/sw u(ma^s e(/na lo/gon,
  - b) kai\ a)pokri/qhte/ moi,
  - c) kai\ e)rw^ u(mi^n e)n poi/a| e)cousi/a| tau^ta poiw^:
  - d) 30 to\ ba/ptisma to\ )Iwa/nnou e)c ou)ranou^ h)^n h)\ e)c a)nqrw/pwn;
  - e) a)pokri/qhte/ moi.
- 5. \*31 kai\ dielogi/zonto pro\s e(autou\s le/gontes,
  - a) )Ea\n ei)/pwmn, )Ec ou)ranou^,
  - b) e)rei^, Dia\ ti/ [ou)^n] ou)k e)pisteu/sate au)tw^|;
  - c) 32 a)lla\ ei)/pwmn, )Ec a)nqrw/pwn;
- 6. --e)fobou^nto to\n o)/xlon,
  - \*\*\* cf. 11:18; 12:12
- 7. a(/pantes ga\r ei)^xon to\n )Iwa/nnhn o)/ntws o(/ti profh/thsh)^n.
- 8. 33 kai\ a)pokriqe/ntes tw^| )Ihsou^ le/gousin,
  - a) Ou)k oi)/damen.
- 9. kai\ o( )Ihsou^s le/gei au)toi^s,
  - a) Ou)de\ e)gw\ le/gw u(mi^n e)n poi/a| e)cousi/a| tau^ta poiw^.

**B. 12:1-12, Jesus Challenges the Sanhedrin**

- 1. \* 12:1 Kai\ h)/rcato au)toi^s e)n parabolai^s lalei^n,
  - a) Preparation
    - 1) )Ampelw^na a)/nqrwpos e)fu/teusen,
    - 2) kai\ perie/qhken fragmo\n
    - 3) kai\ w)/rucen u(polh/nion
    - 4) kai\ w)|kodo/mhsen pu/rgon,
    - 5) kai\ e)ce/deto au)to\n gewrgoi^s,
    - 6) kai\ a)pedh/mhsen.
  - b) First query
    - 1) 2 kai\ a)pe/steilen pro\s tou\s gewrgou\s tw^| kairw^| dou^lon,
      - a> i(/na para\ tw^h gewrgw^h la/bh| a)po\ tw^h karpw^h tou^ a)mpelw^nos:
    - 2) 3 kai\ labo/ntes au)to\n e)/deiran
    - 3) \*kai\ a)pe/steilan keno/n.
  - c) Second query
    - 1) 4 kai\ pa/lin a)pe/steilen pro\s au)to\s a)/llon dou^lon:
    - 2) ka)kei^non e)kefali/wsan
    - 3) kai\ h)ti/masan.
  - d) Third query
    - 1) 5 kai\ a)/llon a)pe/steilen,
    - 2) ka)kei^non a)pe/kteinan,
  - e) Later queries
    - 1) kai\ pollou\s a)/llous,
    - 2) ou(\s me\n de/rontes
    - 3) ou(\s de\ a)pokte/nnontes.
  - f) Final query
    - 1) 6 e)/ti e(/na ei)^xen, ui(o\n a)gaphto/n:
    - 2) a)pe/steilen au)to\n e)/sxaton pro\s au)to\s le/gwn o(/ti a> )Entraph/sontai to\n ui(o/n mou.

- 3) 7 e)kei^noi de\ oi( gewrgoi\ pro\s e(autou\s ei)^pan o(/ti  
 a> Ou(^to/s e)stin o( klhrono/mos:  
 b> deu^te a)poktei/nwmen au)to/n,  
 c> kai\ h(mw^n e)/stai h( klhronomi/a.
- 4) 8 kai\ labo/ntes a)pe/kteinan au)to/n,  
 5) kai\ e)ce/balon au)to\n e)/cw tou^ a)mpelw^nos.
- g) Judgment
- 1) 9 ti/ [ou)^n] poih/sei o( ku/rios tou^ a)mpelw^nos;  
 2) e)leu/setai  
 3) kai\ a)pole/sei tou\s gewrgou/s,  
 4) kai\ dw/sei to\n a)mpelw^na a)/llois.  
 5) 10 ou)de\ th\n grafh\n tau/thn a)ne/gnwte,  
 a> Li/qon o(\n a)pedoki/masan oi( oi)kodomou^ntes, ou(^tos  
 e)genh/qh ei)s kefalh\n gwni/as:  
 b> 11 para\ kuri/ou e)ge/neto au(/th,  
 c> kai\ e)/stin qaumasth\ e)n o)fqalmoi^s h(mw^n;
2. \* 12 Kai\ e)zh/toun au)to\n krath^sai,  
 3. \* kai\ e)fobh/qhsan to\n o)/xlon,  
 \*\*\* cf 11:18, 31.
4. e)/gnwsan ga\r o(/ti pro\s au)tou\s th\n parabolh\n ei)^pen.  
 5. kai\ a)fe/ntes au)to\n a)ph^lqon.