

The Gospel According To Mark

Part Seventeen

Mark 12:1-9 [New King James] *“Then He began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, “They will respect my son.” But those vinedressers said among themselves, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.” So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others.’”*

The story in this Parable was what could very easily happen in Palestine in the time of Jesus Christ.

The owner of the vineyard could be an absentee Jew who had sought a more comfortable life outside of Palestine.

Or the owner could be a Roman who regarded the vineyard as an investment for his money.

If the owner followed the law, the first time for collecting the rental was five years after the planting of the vineyard and was paid in kind, an agreed percentage of the crop, [Leviticus 19:23-25].

The owner of the vineyard in this Parable is God and the vineyard itself is the people of Israel.

This was a picture with which the Jews were perfectly familiar.

In the Old Testament it is vividly used in **Isaiah 5:1-7**.

The vineyard was fully equipped with all that was needed for its protection and fruitfulness.

The vine dressers were the rulers of Israel throughout the history of the nation.

The servants whom the owner sent were the prophets and the priests who remained faithful to God.

The Son is Jesus Christ Himself, the Messiah.

The hearers would have made these identifications as Jesus Christ spoke because the thoughts and pictures were so familiar to them.

The Parable tells us certain things about God the Father –

It tells us of the generosity of God, He provided all that was necessary for His workers to have an easy and profitable life.

It tells us of the trust of God, He as the Owner went away and left the cultivators to run the vineyard themselves.

It tells us of the patience of God, many times He gave the cultivators the chance to pay the debt they owed.

It tells us of the ultimate justice of God.

People may take advantage of the patience of God, but in the end there comes justice and judgement, [Ecclesiastes 8:11].

This Parable tells us something about Jesus Christ –

Jesus deliberately removes Himself from the prophets by the unmistakable claim to be the Son of God, the Messiah, **not** just a servant of God.

This passage tells us that Jesus Christ knew He was going to die, it did **not** come as a surprise, this would happen while still a young man.

The Parable tells us that Jesus Christ knew that He would, in the end, be vindicated and triumphant.

Mark 12:10-12 [New King James] *“Have you not even read this Scripture: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes”?’ And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.”*

The Parable ends with a quotation from the Old Testament that is referred to often in the early Christian Church, [**Psalms 118:22-23**].

The stone that was rejected became the “*corner stone*” that held the whole building in place or the keystone that held an arch together, [**Acts 4:11; Romans 9:32-33; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4-7**].

The religious leaders clearly saw that this Parable was referring to them and they sought to silence Jesus Christ.

Mark 12:13-17 [New King James] *“Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?’ But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, ‘Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.’ So they brought it. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription is this?’ They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’ And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ And they marvelled at Him.”*

The Pharisees and Herodians thought they had the perfect question to trap Jesus Christ.

But Jesus Christ exposed their self-interest and wrong motives.

The coin that bears the emperor’s image should be given to the emperor.

But our personal lives that bear God’s image [Genesis 1:26-27] should be given to God because it belongs to God, [Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20].

Mark 12:18-27 [New King James] *“Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: ‘Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man’s brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,*

and the God of Jacob”? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.’”

The Sadducees then asked a question which had stumped the Pharisees and thought it would also be successful against Jesus Christ.

The Sadducees did **not** believe in life after death because Genesis – Deuteronomy had no direct teaching about it, and this was the only part of the Old Testament that they followed.

Jesus pointed out that they **did** support the idea of eternal life by quoting **Exodus 3:6, 15**. He also gave them an insight into what eternal life would be like, this was expanded in His final prayer for His disciples and all Christians.

John 17:1-3 [New King James] *“Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’”*

The Greek word translated “know” is “ginōskō” meaning an intimate personal relationship, used by Mary in **Luke 1:34**, referring to the intimate relationship between a man and a woman within marriage.

The apostle John received additional understanding of this future eternal relationship from Jesus Christ.

Revelation 19:7-9 [New King James] *“‘Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.’ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God.’”*

Where the relationship between Jesus Christ and all true Christians is likened to a marriage, a spiritual union, that is without physical sex because the present physical human beings will have new spiritual bodies, [1 Corinthians 15:35-44].

Mark 12:28-34 [New King James] *“Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, ‘Which is the first commandment of all?’ Jesus answered him, ‘The first of all the commandments is: “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’ So the scribe said to Him, ‘Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbour as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ But after that no one dared question Him.”*

By Jesus Christ’s time the Jews had accumulated hundreds of laws seeking to cover every aspect of life.

Some religious leaders tried to distinguish between major and minor laws.

This teacher’s question could have provoked controversy among the teachers of the law and the people who followed different teachers.

Jesus Christ’s reply summarised all of God’s laws, love God with all our heart, body and mind and other human beings as much as we love ourselves.

Matthew's account of this adds that these two commandments complete ["make"] all the law and the prophets that included the promises of the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

This answer made by this teacher revealed that he had understood the intent of God's law, that true obedience comes from the heart, and the law and prophets lead us to Jesus Christ, his next step was to have faith in the Person of Jesus Christ, hence near to Kingdom of God.

This however is often the most difficult step to take, our total dependency on our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark 12:35-37 [New King James] *"Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, 'How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: "The LORD said to my Lord, sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."' Therefore David himself calls Him "Lord"; how is He then his Son?"' And the common people heard Him gladly."*

Jesus Christ quoted Psalms 110:1 to show that King David considered the Messiah to be his Lord, not just his Son.

The religious authorities did not understand that the Messiah would be far more than a human descendent of King David, He would be God Himself in human form, [John 1:1-5, 14].

Mark 12:38-40 [New King James] *"Then He said to them in His teaching, 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.'"*

Jesus Christ again exposed the religious leaders' impure motives. Long prayers that were made more to impress other "lesser" human beings rather than bring honour and glory to God.

"Devour widows' houses" – this was a savage charge yet true of some Pharisees.

The idea behind this seems to be that an expert in the law could take no pay for his teaching. Jesus Christ followed this when He sent out His disciples [**Mark 6:7-10**]. Paul worked so as **not** to be a burden to those he taught [**2 Thessalonians 3:8**], but also that teaching elders should be worthy of being well supported by those they teach, [**1 Timothy 5:17-18**].

Some Pharisees considered they were so important that they expected to be well supported even to the extent of causing widows to be forced to live in poverty.

The Greek word translated "houses" is "oikia" which means abode but also refers to family, so this could mean the children would also be living in poverty.

These religious leaders had convinced people that to support them in a generous manner would ensure them of higher position in an afterlife.

Sad to say this same tactic is used by some false religious leaders in certain false "Christian" churches today. Too often it is those who can ill afford to support them who are duped in this way.

The punishment of such teachers would be especially severe because as teachers they were responsible for shaping the faith of the people.

Instead they saddled people with petty rules while they lived greedily and deceitfully.

Their personal behaviour oppressed and misled the very people they were supposed to lead.

This is why Jesus Christ warned the people against their example.

Mark 12:41-44 [New King James] *“Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.’”*

In Jesus Christ’s eyes this poor widow gave more than all the other rich people who were making a show of their giving, even though her gift was by far the smallest.

The value of a gift is not determined by its amount but by the spirit in which it is given, out of thankfulness and by making a real sacrifice.

This widow had just two coins left, she could have given just one, but she gave all she had.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

It is out of thankfulness of what God the Father has done for all humanity that we should offer our lives as a total sacrifice for Him to use.

The Greek word translated “*bodies*” is “*soma*” meaning the whole life, physical body, mind and human spirit, [**Job 32:8; 1 Corinthians 2:11**].

This is how we truly worship our Creator God.

Such an offering shows complete faith and trust in God which this widow was showing.