



The Authority of Jesus | 11:27-33

- 27 – Note resistance to Jesus came from all the influential groups within Judaism. Jesus made the Temple the focal point of his ministry for the duration leading up to his death and resurrection. And that each of these three groups is represented indicates the alarm Jesus had created.
- 28 – “These things” = cleansing (defending) the temple, accepting worship and the popularity of his teaching. How could Jesus perform an official act if he possessed no official authority.
- Was his authority centered in his own person, as a prophet, or was it given by another. Remember that Jesus had never said publicly that he was the Messiah. This secrecy prompted the question.
- 29 -30 – Jesus’ question in response to a question was common of rabbis but it is unusual that he makes his answer entirely depend on theirs. Their decision about John will determine their decision about him.
- Jesus stands in solidarity with John, as both oppose those who disregard the will of God.

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- *This brings the challenge to a crescendo – the authorities have rejected both John and Jesus. And in so doing, they have rejected the will of God. Hence, only two options, “from God or from men.”*
- *31-32 – Jesus’ question embarrasses the Jewish leaders. They know they have been caught, and bettered. Not their reasoning out the second option “from men” trails off in frustration.*
- *The spokesman implies ignorance and refuses to answer the question.*
- *Jesus, therefore, refuses to answer beyond the veiled association of himself with John the Baptist.*
- *Jesus’ authority remained intact drawn from the inseparable proclamation in 1:15 that the Kingdom of God had come near in the person of Jesus Christ.*
- *The implied judgment of Christ upon these groups in response to their question is clear in light of the parable of the vineyard which immediately follows (12:1-11).*

Parable of Defiant Tenants | 12:1-12

- *Reflects social background of first century Jewish Galilee with great landed estates and tension between absentee-owners and poor tenant-farmers. Similar situations recounted in papyri of the period show this was indeed common – hence this is a parable, not an allegory.*
- *1 –Initial details of the parable are from Isaiah 5:1-7, the Song of the Vineyard. Jesus appealed to this prophecy to force his hearers to conclude the parable is about them & their abuse of position.*
- *But the parable goes further than Isaiah. Here there is a formal contract for rents, usually in the form of a share of the crops. The landowner is absent and tenant farmers are managing the farm.*
- *2-5 – Payment was due as the “fruits of the vineyard” likely different kinds of wine. The tenant farmers resist payment in a series of abuses on the agents sent. OT prophets are frequently called “the servants” of God (Jer 7:25, 25:4, Amos 3:7, Zech 1:6).*
- *6-8 – The conclusion is the murder of the heir and the presumed assumption of the inheritance.*

Parable of Defiant Tenants | 12:1-12

- *“They will respect my son” does not teach that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus kept that Messianic Secret intact. Here they thought the arrival of the son = the owner of the estate had died.*
- *To now murder the son, as heir, would mean the inheritance could be regarded as “ownerless property” which could lawfully be claimed by anyone, on a first-come basis. So murder they did and threw his body over the wall without even a proper burial.*
- *The murder of the son = outrageous defiance of the tenants. The owner was not dead as they presumed. And he would have legal recourse to use government force to suppress the mutiny.*
- *In Isaiah 5, the vineyard (Israel and Judah) is at fault. But here, the defiant tenant farmers are at fault (the leaders of the people, not the people themselves).*
- *This rejection led to decisive, catastrophic judgment. The rejection of Jesus and of John (11:29) was a rejection of God.*

Parable of Defiant Tenants | 12:1-12

- *Without overtly declaring his Sonship, Jesus clearly implies the Sanhedrin ‘s rejection of God’s final messenger means disaster now waits for them. The sacred trust of God’s chosen people will be transferred to the new Israel of God, the Church.*
- *10-11 – Jesus quotes Ps 118:22-23, a few verses before the praise chanted before him at the Triumphal Entry (Ps 118:25-26).*
- *“The stone the builders ~~were~~ rejected” = One of the building blocks gathered for the construction of Solomon’s Temple rejected in the construction of the Sanctuary but which proved to be the keystone to the porch. The rabbis taught that Ps 118:22-23 referred to Abraham or David or the Messiah, while “the builders” were sometimes held to be the teachers of the Law.*
- *This reference confirms the identification of Jesus as the son in the parable and contrasts his despised and rejected status with the future glory to which God had appointed him.*

Parable of Defiant Tenants | 12:1-12

- *This text warns that God will reverse the judgment of men on his Son as the final messenger in a startling display of power, turning defeat into apparent triumph (Acts 4:10-12, 1 Pet 2:10 – note the making of a new people of God).*
- *12 – The Sanhedrin who heard Jesus naturally understood his reference to Isaiah 5 and the allusion to their hostility towards Christ. They would have understood Christ's accusation of their rebellion after the pattern of Israel. And his biting condemnation of their failure as leaders of the people.*
- *They understood it all very clearly. The emphasis on their understanding here versus 4:11, 33 where they did not understand, indicates that the secret of Kingdom is on the verge of being publicly revealed. Note that Jesus himself takes the initiative to increasingly disclose the secret of his person. Though men are blinded by their rage to the truth.*
- *Only the crowds prevented the leaders from laying hands on Jesus immediately following their intentions of 11:18.*

Application | If Jesus had been telling this parable to us . . .

- *"A man planted a vineyard . . ." | Do I understand that what I think of as my life, my vineyard, actually belongs to God and he is right to expect payment from my life?*
- *"He put a wall around it, dug a pit and built a watchtower." | Do I appreciate that God is and had been working in my life directly controlling events and results so I recognize, worship and praise him?*
- *"At harvest time he sent a servant . . ." | Who has God sent to me, caused to be in my life, that speaks the Word of God into my specific circumstances and calls me back to God? Do I consider they are prophets of God? Or do I resist them without fear?*
- *"He had one left to send, a son . . ." | Do I consider that rejecting those God has placed in my life is rejection of God himself? Even so, do I still resist? Do I understand judgment awaits this path of rebellion?*

5 Conflicts in Jerusalem | 11:27-12:37

- *Question of Jesus' authority (11:27-33) starts a sequence of 5 conflicts similar to Galilee (2:1-3:6).*
 - *Parable of the Defiant Tenants | 12:1-12*
 - *The Question of Tribute | 12:13-17*
 - *The Challenge to the Resurrection | 12:18-27*
 - *The Question of Which is the Great Commandment | 12:28-34*
 - *The Question Concerning David's Son | 12:35-37*

- *Last 4 from early Christian Passover liturgy of 4 types questions used by rabbis. Only in Passover do they appear in this order. Mark may have followed as used in first decades after Christ's death.*
 - *Questions of wisdom, or points of law (Tribute), asked by a proverbial wise son.*
 - *Questions of mockery, which often refer to the resurrection (Resurrection), asked by a proverbial wicked son.*
 - *Questions of conduct, of relationship with God and men (Great Commandment), asked by a proverbial simple believing son.*
 - *Questions of interpretation, which often attempt to resolve apparent contradictions in Scripture (David's Son), asked by the head of the family himself.*

The Question of Tribute | 12:13-17

- *13 – No introduction but likely occurred in one of the porches of the Temple (11:15-16, 27).*
- *Here we have again a joint question (3:6) intended to entangle Jesus in his words – for in his words they sensed his claim to absolute authority and, thus, his threat to them.*
- *14-15a –Opening disingenuous remarks were intended to close any possible evasion to their difficult question = “Jesus, you’re a good guy, a smart guy, let us ask you a question!”*

- *Note import of the question of tribute money ever since it had been imposed by Romans in AD 6.*
 - *Josephus notes that the Zealot Jews of the day refused to pay tribute because they considered it a prelude to slavery, refusing to acknowledge Caesar's dominion over them.*
 - *The Pharisees considered it a humiliation but justified its payment. They were concerned with the moral implications, “Does the Law of God allow it?”*
 - *The Herodians supported it on principle and were concerned with the political implications, “Is it practical given our present national situation?”*
 - *Hence the question was insincere, an effort to force Jesus into a compromised position either spiritually or politically. They were thrusting Jesus onto the horns of a dilemma.*
 - *A “Yes” would discredit him in the eyes of the people. A “No” would invite censorship from Rome.*

The Question of Tribute | 12:13-17

- 15b-16 – Jesus recognizes the question is fraudulent. And note the exasperation in his voice.
- A Roman denarius was the only coin accepted for payment of taxes in Judea. Here, again, we have Tiberius portrayed as the semi-divine son of the god Augustus and the goddess Livia with the inscription “Son of the Divine Augustus.” Both the image and inscription were rooted in the imperial cult of emperor worship. Everyone knew the coin.
- 17 – Jesus, accepting the use of Caesar’s coins, implicitly acknowledged his authority. His image and inscription demonstrated the right of the sovereign who coined the money to exact tribute. There are obligations to the state which do not infringe up the rights of God but are grounded in his appointment.
- By acknowledging Caesar’s authority, Jesus showed himself opposed to any form of theocracy.

The Question of Tribute | 12:13-17

- But by demonstrating so sharply between Caesar and God, Jesus bluntly protested the idolatrous claims advanced by the coins.
- There is always a tendency in civil authority to reach beyond appointed function. The temptation to self-glorification always accompanies power. This was particularly clear with Caesar.
- Jesus rejected worship of anyone other than God. Divine honors belong to God alone.
- Jesus shows that duties to God and Caesar, though distinct, are not completely separate. They are united and ruled by the higher principle of accomplishing all things according to the will of God.
- There is an irony in Mark’s closing statement that Jesus’ adversaries marveled greatly at Jesus. They had come to trap him but could not escape the devastating realization of the authority displayed in his word.