

# Mark 12 Commentary

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## MARK: THE SERVANT JESUS

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### THE LIFE OF CHRIST SHOWING COVERAGE BY MARK (SHADED AREA)

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Chart from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

**Mark 12:1 And He began to speak to them in parables: "A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey.**

NET Mark 12:1 Then he began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a fence around it, dug a pit for its winepress, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers and went on a journey.

NLT Mark 12:1 Then Jesus began teaching them with stories: "A man planted a vineyard. He built a wall around it, dug a pit for pressing out the grape juice, and built a lookout tower. Then he leased the vineyard to tenant farmers and moved to another country.

ESV Mark 12:1 And he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country.

NIV Mark 12:1 He then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey.

GNT Mark 12:1 Κα ρξατο α το ς ν παραβολα ς λαλε ν, μπελ να νθρωπος φ τευσεν κα περι θηκεν φραγγ ν κα ρυξεν πολ νιον κα κοδ μησεν π ργον κα ξ δετο α τ ν γεωργο ς κα πεδ μησεν.

KJV Mark 12:1 And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

YLT Mark 12:1 And he began to speak to them in similes: 'A man planted a vineyard, and put a hedge around, and digged an under-wine-vat, and built a tower, and gave it out to husbandmen, and went abroad;

ASV Mark 12:1 And he began to speak unto them in parables. A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a pit for the winepress, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country.

CSB Mark 12:1 Then He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug out a pit for a winepress, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers and went away.

- **he began:** Mk 4:2,11-13,33,34 Eze 20:49 Mt 13:10-15,34,35 21:28-33 22:1-14 Lu 8:10 22:9
- **A man:** Mt 21:33-40 Lu 20:9-15
- **planted:** Ps 80:8-16 Isa 5:1-4 Jer 2:21 Lu 13:6-9 Joh 15:1-8 Ro 11:17-24
- **and put:** Ne 9:13,14 Ps 78:68,69 147:19,20 Eze 20:11,12,18-20 Ac 7:38,46,47 Ro 3:1,2 9:4,5
- **and rented:** Song 8:11,12 Isa 7:23
- **and went:** Mk 13:34 Mt 25:14 Lu 15:13 19:12
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Isaiah 5:1-5+ Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. 2 He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with the

choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it And also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then **He expected it to produce good grapes, But it produced only worthless ones.** 3 “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard. 4 “What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce **worthless ones?** 5 “So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: **I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.**

**English** translation of the Septuagint of Isaiah 5:1-2 - Now I will sing to my beloved a song of my beloved concerning my vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a high hill in a fertile place. 2 And **I made a wall** round it, and **dug a trench**, and **planted a choice vine**, and **built a tower** in the midst of it, and dug a place for the **wine-vat** in it: and I waited for it to bring forth grapes, and it brought forth thorns. (

Matthew 21:33+ “**Listen** to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey.

Only Matthew records the first parable (WE KNOW IT IS A PARABLE BECAUSE OF THE OPENING WORDS IN Mt 21:33) Jesus spoke to the silenced the Sanhedrin:

Mt 21:28-32- But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’ 29 “And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it and went. 30 “The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I will, sir’; but he did not go. 31 “Which of the two did the will of his father?” They \*said, “The first.” Jesus \*said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you (Mt 21:43 ADDS THE KINGDOM WILL BE TAKEN FROM THEM!) (ONE CAN IMAGINE THE BOILING ANGER OF THE SANHEDRIN UPON HEARING JESUS’ WORDS!). 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him (SEE Mt 3:7-9+); but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you (JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS), seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward (NOT ONLY DID THEY NOT REPENT, THEY DID NOT EVEN EXPRESS REMORSE! THEIR HEARTS WERE STONY HARD) so as to believe him.

Luke 20:9+ And He began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time.

Mark 12 has 7 Segments and they include 4 questions from religious leaders (Mark 12:14, 15, 23, 28) and 7 questions from Jesus (Mark 12:9, 15, 16, 24, 26, 35, 37). It is also notable that there are 11 verses with Old Testament quotations - Mark 12:1, 10, 11, 19, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36. All except one story deals with one of the major groups of the Jewish religious leaders as shown below...

- Mark 12:1-12 - Sanhedrin and multitude
- Mark 12:13-17 - Pharisees and Herodians
- Mark 12:18-27 - Sadducees
- Mark 12:28-34 - Scribes
- Mark 12:35-37 - Scribes
- Mark 12:38-40 - Scribes
- Mark 12:41-44 - Widow

Israel Was Symbolized as a Vineyard in the Bible

**Barton** - Jesus’ stories, also called parables, always used something familiar to help people understand something new. This method of teaching compels listeners to discover truth for themselves. The moment Jesus spoke of a vineyard, the well-versed religious leaders surely recognized the correlation with Isaiah 5:1–7, where Isaiah described Israel as a vineyard. Isaiah’s parable described judgment on Israel; Jesus’ parable described judgment too. The situation pictured in this parable was by no means unusual. Galilee had many such estates with absentee owners who had hired tenant farmers to care for the fields and crops. The parable indirectly answered their question about his authority, showed them that he knew about their plan to kill him, and revealed the judgment that awaited them. (LAC)

**And (kai)** - Don't miss this connective word **and**, for in this instance it clearly ties this parable with the preceding interchange with the religious leaders who had asked Jesus by what authority He was doing the things He was doing and He refused to tell them. And now in parable form He will in a sense tell them that His authority is founded on the fact that He is the "beloved son," in the Parable, the Son of God. This is another example of a poor chapter break (remembering that these were man-made, not divinely given).

As noted above in the notes on "[Related Passages](#)" it is clear that this is the second of two parables addressed to the serpentine Sanhedrin. The first is found only in Mt 21:28-32 and is not found in Mark or Luke. **Lenski** makes an interesting comment that "It seems that the **Sanhedrists wanted to leave at this point** (AFTER THE FIRST PARABLE - Mt 21:28-32 - THAT WAS ENOUGH "BAD NEWS"), but Jesus detained them long enough to hear another parable." **Warren Wiersbe** adds "**Before they had opportunity to escape**, He told them a parable (Mark 12:1-12) that revealed where their sins were leading them. They had already permitted John the Baptist to be killed, but soon they would ask for the crucifixion of God's Son!" ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

**Daniel Hill** makes an excellent point - Now normally a parable was given to instruct the positive ones (ED: THOSE WHO HAD HEARTS TO RECEIVE THIS TRUTH) while not giving the negative one (THOSE WHO DID NOT HAVE EYES TO SEE NOR EARS TO HEAR) more to reject. But this parable is different: This parable is for the rejecters of truth and we be understood by those who are the antagonist. Hence, this is a **warning parable**. ([Mark 12](#))

**Ray Stedman** - Can you imagine the boldness and daring of our Lord Who, in this veiled and yet very clear way [threw this parable right into their teeth](#)! He is describing to them who they are, and what they are doing. **And, indirectly, he is answering their question, "By what authority do you do these things?"** He says, "Here is My authority: I am the owner of the vineyard. I am the rightful Heir to it. I am the beloved Son Whom the Father has sent. You've killed the prophets, stoned and beat those who came from God; now here I am, the Son." And he told these men what they would do: They would beat him, kill him, and cast him out of the vineyard. Jesus is under no delusions as to what is going to happen to him. But then he goes on to predict what would ultimately happen, that God has the final answer. ([By What Authority?](#))

**He began to speak to them in parables** - **Them** is the "the chief priests, and scribes, and elders," the Sanhedrin of Mark 11:27+ who claimed they did not know the answer to Jesus' question (Mk 11:33+). Note that in Luke's version it says "He began to tell the people" (Luke 20:9+), but it is clear from the hostile response of the leaders (Mk 12:12+) that they understood exactly Jesus was "targeting" in this parable = them, the religious leaders! Jesus' words only added to the intensity of the anger of the religious leaders who were already upset with Him because of His cleansing of the Temple the previous day. Note that Mark uses the plural "**parables**," but only records one here. Matthew on the other hand records three parables: this parable, the parable of the two sons, and the parable of the marriage feast (cf. Matt. 21:28-22:14).

**Parables** (symbol) (3850) ([parabole](#) from **para** = beside, near + **ballo** = throw, cast; English "parable") is literally a throwing beside or placing of one thing by the side of another (juxtaposition as of ships in battle in classic Greek). The metaphorical meaning is to place or lay something besides something else for the purpose of comparison. (Mt 24:32, Mk 13:28, Mk 3:23, Lk 14:7). An illustration (Mt 13:3). **MacArthur** says **parabole** is "A spiritual or moral truth would often be expressed by laying it alongside, so to speak, a physical example that could be more easily understood. A common, observable object or practice was used to illustrate a subjective truth or principle. That which was well known was laid alongside that which was not known or understood in order to explain it. The known elucidated the unknown. The parable was a common form of Jewish teaching... Teaching through parables and other figurative means is effective because it helps make abstract truth more concrete, more interesting, easier to remember, and easier to apply to life. When a truth is externalized in the figures of a parable, the internalizing of moral and spiritual meaning is much easier. In the series of parables in chapter 13, Jesus uses such familiar figures as soil, seed, birds, thorns, rocks, sun, wheat, tares, mustard seed, leaven, hidden treasure, and a pearl. But in these particular parables themselves the truth is not made clear, because the basic story tells nothing but the literal account, without presenting the moral or spiritual truth. It was only to His disciples that Jesus explained what the soil, the seed, the thorns, and the other figures represent. And an unexplained parable was nothing but an impossible riddle, whose meaning could only be guessed at." (Matthew: The MacArthur NT Commentary). **Wuest** adds that **parable** "is an illustration thrown in alongside of a truth to make the latter easier to understand... The Greek word means "that which is thrown alongside of something else" to explain it. Thus, the tabernacle was an object lesson used to explain spiritual truth. As long as it remained an object lesson, thus a recognized institution, it was clear that the actual tabernacle to which it pointed was not yet in use. The tabernacle in Israel, and later, the temple, remained that object lesson during the history of Israel, until the veil of the temple was rent." ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

As alluded to above, while some of Jesus' parables are difficult to understand, this one is not. This parable is about the Jews' rejection of their Messiah, the Lord Jesus. All who heard this parable understood, even the hard-hearted religious leaders (Mk 12:12). Jesus was accusing the religious leaders of Israel of being the murderers of the Messiah, and He made this parabolic accusation in the presence of the crowd. This parable would bring His conflict with the religious leaders to a "[proverbial head](#)"!

**Grassmick** gives us some background to help set the parable in context, explaining that the Jews knew about this system of someone supervising the vineyard of a rich person - This parable reflects the social situation of first-century Palestine, especially Galilee. Wealthy foreign landlords owned large land estates which they leased to tenant farmers. The tenants agreed to cultivate the land and care for the vineyards when the landlords were away. A contract between them designated that a portion of the crop was to be paid as rent. At harvest time the owners sent agents to collect the rent. Inevitably tension arose between the absentee owners and the tenants. (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

#### Related Resource:

- [Discussion of Vineyards in the Holy Land](#) with several nice black and white pictures

**"A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT (oikodomeo) A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers (tenants or tenant farmers) and went on a journey** - Luke's version adds "he went on a journey for a long time" (Luke 20:9+). Jesus is quoting from the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) version of Isaiah 5:1-2 ([see above](#)). The first word in the Greek text is "**vineyard**" which places great emphasis on this aspect of the parable, for the rest of the parable turns on the idea of a vineyard.

Jeremiah 2:21 **"Yet I planted you a choice vine, A completely faithful seed. How then have you turned yourself before Me into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?"**

Psalm 80:8-16+ **You removed a vine from Egypt; You drove out the nations and planted it.** 9 You cleared the ground before it, And it took deep root and filled the land. 10 The mountains were covered with its shadow, And the cedars of God with its boughs. 11 It was sending out its branches to the sea And its shoots to the River. 12 Why have You broken down its hedges, So that all who pass that way pick its fruit? 13 A boar from the forest eats it away And whatever moves in the field feeds on it. 14 O God of hosts, turn again now, we beseech You; Look down from heaven and see, and take care of this vine, 15 Even the shoot which Your right hand has planted, And on the son whom You have strengthened for Yourself. 16 It is burned with fire, it is cut down; They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.

**James McGowan** - The Parable of the Defiant Tenants reflects the social background of Jewish Galilee in the first century, with its great landed estates and the inevitable tension between the absentee-owners and the dispossessed, land-hungry peasantry who cultivated the land as tenant-farmers. Recent study of the Zenon papyri and of the rabbinic parables has shown that situations very closely analogous to that of the parable actually existed in Palestine both around 280 years prior to Jesus' ministry and for some time afterward (from William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*). (Twenty-First Century Biblical Commentary- Mark)

**Barton** - The comparison of Israel to a vineyard is common in the Old Testament (Psalm 80:8–13; Isaiah 5:1–7; Jeremiah 12:10; Hosea 10:1). It pictures God's work (someone has to plant a vineyard) and patient care in tending and caring for his people. (Ibid)

**Lenski on wine press** - a winepress is hewn out of the rock floor and shaped like a figure eight (see depiction above), the upper half being a shallow basin for treading out the grapes, the lower half (or lower part of this half) a deeper basin into which the juice flows and from which it is dipped out. (Borrow [The interpretation of St. John's gospel](#))

**Robertson** says a wine press "is the vessel or trough under the winepress on the hillside to catch the juice when the grapes were trodden."

**Guzik** - This sort of tenant farming relationship was a common practice in Jesus' day, especially in the region of Galilee. Archaeologists have discovered records of this same sort of dispute between landowners and tenant farmers. ([Mark 12 Commentary](#))

While one has to be cautious in identifying every aspect of a parable, in this parable the main players are relatively clear. Here the **"Man"** who planted the **vineyard** is God the Father and the vineyard is the nation of Israel chosen and cultivated by God Himself (Isa 5:1-4+). Notice how He proceeded to protect His "vineyard," from destruction. The **vineyard** (or grapevine) had been the national symbol for Israel for centuries (as was the **fig tree** mentioned in Mk 11:12-14+) so the religious leaders did not have to guess the identity in this parable. God expected Israel to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, yet it consistently produced the sour grapes of selfish and sinful living ("worthless ones" in Isa 5:2,4,7+).

**NET Note** adds that "The **vineyard** is a figure for Israel in the OT (Isa 5:1–7+). The nation and its leaders are the **tenants**, so the **vineyard** here may well refer to the promise that resides within the nation. The imagery is like that in Romans 11:11–24+."

**Lenski on went on a journey** - This going abroad pictures the great trust which God imposed on the leaders of Israel: the precious vineyard of his people reposed entirely in their care. Yes, God brought Israel from Egypt to Canaan, planted it, fenced it in, equipped

it there, and placed it under these spiritual rulers whose office was continuous. (Borrow [The interpretation of St. John's gospel](#))

**Wiersbe** has an interesting note - According to Leviticus 19:23–25, a farmer would not use the fruit until the fifth year **ED**: Usually it took at least five years for grapevines to begin to produce at commercial levels. The owner expected to participate in his investment.), though we are not sure the Jews were obeying this regulation at that time. In order to retain his legal rights to the property, the owner had to receive produce from the tenants, even if it was only some of the vegetables that grew between the rows of trees or vines. This explains why the tenants refused to give him anything: they wanted to claim the vineyard for themselves. It also explains why the owner continued to send agents to them; it was purely a question of authority and ownership. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

**Hiebert** - The three activities of the owner in preparing the vineyard (Mk 12:1) indicate that nothing was left undone to make this vineyard a choice estate. (1) He set a **hedge** about it, not merely to mark its boundaries but to provide protection against marauders and wild animals. Such a hedge or fence might be built of unmortared stone gathered out of the field or be a planted hedge of thorn bushes. (2) He also dug a **pit for the winepress**, essential equipment for processing the crop. The phrase a place for the winefat, one word in the original, occurs only here in the New Testament and refers to the vat located below the winepress to hold the wine. The winepress, generally hewn out of the solid rock, was composed of two vats—an upper, broad, and shallow hollow where the grapes were crushed and the lower, smaller, and deeper vat connected by a channel where the juice was collected. (3) The **tower** was used for shelter and storage as well as an observation post for the watchman. It was often circular in shape, built of stone, with a flat roof, and was as much as fifteen or twenty feet high. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

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#### Question - [What is the meaning of the Parable of the Vineyard?](#)

**Answer:** The Parable of the Vineyard appears in three of the gospels (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19), with Matthew's account being the most complete. However, there are additions in the others; hence, it is wise to study all three accounts so as to achieve the greatest understanding. To get the context of what is happening, we need to look at Matthew 21:18. Early in the morning, Jesus goes to the temple courts to teach (21:23). While He is teaching, the chief priest and elders confront Him, wanting to know by what authority He is teaching. Not allowing them to control the conversation, Jesus answers the question by first asking a question (21:24-26). They do not like His question nor His response to their answer; essentially, He has told them that they can't save face from their obvious attempt to cajole Him and, therefore, He is not obligated to answer their question (21:27). What Jesus told them is that John the Baptist and He received their authority from the same source. This exchange causes the leaders to become angry and puts them in opposition to Jesus. Jesus then further frustrates the priests by telling two parables: the first one is the Parable of the Two Sons, and the second is the Parable of the Vineyard, sometimes called the Parable of the Wicked Tenants.

The first parable Jesus teaches tells the priests that they have claimed to accept the message from God but they have failed to live up to it by being obedient. Outwardly, they are pious and appear to be people of God, but God knows the heart, and there they have failed miserably. The next parable (the Parable of the Vineyard) is like pouring salt on a wound. Just in case they didn't fully understand (which they did), Jesus gives a much clearer picture of what He means. Obviously, this further infuriates the priests, but it also gives the others who were present an opportunity to hear Jesus fully explain the implications of the disobedience of the Jewish people throughout the ages.

**Background:** There are 6 main characters in this parable: 1) the landowner—God, 2) the vineyard—Israel, 3) the tenants/farmers—the Jewish religious leadership, 4) the landowner's servants—the prophets who remained obedient and preached God's word to the people of Israel, 5) the son—Jesus, and 6) the other tenants—the Gentiles. The imagery used is similar to Isaiah's parable of the vineyard (it would be prudent to study this also) found in Isaiah chapter 5. The watchtower and the wall mentioned in verse 33 are means of protecting the vineyard and the ripened grapes. The winepress is obviously for stamping out the juice of the grapes to make the wine. The farmer was apparently away at the time of harvest and had rented the vineyard to the tenants. This was customary of the times, and he could expect as much as half of the grapes as payment by the tenants for use of his land.

**Explanation:** Verses 34-36 tell us the landowner sent his servants to collect his portion of the harvest and how they were cruelly rejected by the tenants; some were beaten, stoned, and even killed. Then he sent even more the second time and they received the same treatment. The servants sent represent the prophets that God had sent to His people/Israel and then were rejected and killed by the very people who were claiming to be of God and obedient to Him. Jeremiah was beaten (Jeremiah 26:7-11; 38:1-28), John the Baptist was killed (Matthew 14:1-12), and others were stoned (2 Chronicles 24:21). In this parable Jesus is not only reminding the religious establishment what they were like, but He was putting in their minds a question: how could they claim obedience as God's people and still reject His messengers? We don't know how many servants the owner sent, but that is not what is important; the theme is God's repeated appeal through His prophets to an unrepentant people. In next verses (37-39), the situation becomes even more critical. The landowner sends his own son, believing that they will surely respect him. But the tenants see an opportunity here; they believe that if they kill the son they will then receive his inheritance. The law at the time provided that if there were no heirs then the property would pass to those in possession (possession is nine tenths of the law). This amounts to conspiracy to



commit murder by the Jewish leadership, and it is prophetic in the sense that Jesus is now telling them what they are going to do to Him (see Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16). After Jesus' death, Peter would make the same charges against the religious establishment (Acts 4:8-12). The tenants probably thought that the fight for the property was over, but it wasn't; the owner would now appear on the scene.

Jesus now (vs.40-41) asks the question, what will the owner do to the evil tenants? What He is doing is forcing the religious leaders/priests to declare their own miserable fate: condemnation for their blatant disobedience. This is similar to the question that Nathan put to David (2 Samuel 12:1-7). Up to this point, Jesus has been dealing with the immediate situation of Israel and its past disobedience; now Jesus leaves open the question of what Israel's leadership is going to do with the Messiah, the Son of God, whom He refers to as the "chief cornerstone" (vs 42). Cornerstones and capstones are used symbolically in Scripture and picture Christ as the main piece of the foundation of the church and the head of the church, respectively. Jesus is the beginning of and is foundational to the church, and He now stands over the church in His rightful position of honor, guiding the church to fulfill its divine destiny. This verse makes clear prophetically how Jesus will be rejected by the religious establishment and ultimately be crucified (see Psalm 118:22-23).

The key to understanding this parable and what it says about the religious leaders is found in Mt 21:43, where Jesus makes their lack of obedience personal. Jesus tells the leaders that because of their disobedience they will be left out of the kingdom of heaven (individually and as a people); that they have let their opportunity for the time being slip away to be given to the Gentiles (see Mt 21:41, "other tenants"). This will be more than they can tolerate, as we will see in Mt 21:45, 46. He is saying that there will be a new people of God made up of all peoples who will temporarily replace the Jews so that Jesus can establish His church. This will change the way God deals with man, from the old dispensation of the law to a new dispensation of God's grace. It will usher in a period of time where man will no longer understand forgiveness of sins as man's work through what he does or doesn't do or by the sacrifices of animals on the altar, but by the work of Christ on the cross. It will be a time where each individual can have a personal and saving relationship with the One and only God of the universe. The exciting part of the verse is the phrase "who will produce fruit"; this gives authority to the church to share the gospel of Christ to the lost of the world. Up to this time, the Jews felt that they had automatic membership in God's kingdom because of their relationship to Abraham; this is why they put so much emphasis on genealogies. But the new people of God would truly have what God wanted for Israel all along: a personal and holy relationship that would be honored through the spreading of God's word to all peoples (see Exodus 19:5-6).

Jesus continues the stone metaphor in Mt 21:44 to show how a stone can be used to build something beautiful, such as His church, or it can be used to crush and destroy, depending on the situation. This could be likened to God's word: to some it is salvation, peace and comfort. To others it is foolish and disconcerting because of its ability to convict man of his sins (2 Timothy 3:16).

Verses 45 and 46 give us three insights into the psyche of the chief priest of the religious establishment. 1) They are jealous and envious of Jesus' popularity with the common people. This encroaches on their authority and power to govern. 2) They have come to the realization that Jesus is talking about them. This hurts their pride and embarrasses them in front of the people. 3) They understood the analogy of the son and that Jesus was referring to Himself. This would be blasphemous to them, and they would now seek to kill Jesus. From here the leaders would meet in secrecy to plot how they would get rid of Jesus. Why all the secrecy? The people thought of Jesus as a prophet from God; arresting Him could cause an uprising. An uprising would jeopardize the leaders' relationship with the Roman authorities, something that the Jews did not want at any cost.

Application: We apply this parable to our lives by asking two questions; first, have you come to know Christ as your Lord and Savior, or have you rejected Him like the Jewish leadership did? The process is simple, as long as you are sincere in seeking a relationship with Christ. You need to recognize your sins, and then accept Christ as the only One who can save you from the penalty of your sins. Second, if you are a believer, what have you done with Jesus? Are you like the bad tenants, rejecting His Word and living a life of disobedience? If you are, you need to study God's Word and pray for guidance, seeking His will for your life and living out that will as best as you can, moment by moment, day by day.(Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org))

**Mark 12:2 "At the *harvest* time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers.**

- at: Ps 1:3 Mt 21:34 Lu 20:10
- a slave: Jdg 6:8-10 2Ki 17:13 2Ch 36:15 Ezr 9:11 Jer 25:4,5 35:15 44:4 Mic 7:1 Zec 1:3-6 7:7 Lu 12:48 Joh 15:1-8 Heb 1:1
- Mark 12 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### **Related Passages:**

Matthew 21:34 "When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his

produce.

Luke 20:10+ At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, so that they would give him some of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

## SENDING SLAVE TO CLAIM "RENT"

**At the harvest time** - **Time** is the Greek word [kairos](#) so more literally this reads "at the season," clearly the season when vintage was expected. "The harvest time stands for the time when God expected to obtain some reward for His investment in Israel. " (Constable)

**Time** (season, opportunity, epoch, proper time) ([2540](#))([kairos](#)) means a point of time or period of time, time, period, frequently with the implication of being especially fit for something and without emphasis on precise chronology. It describes the period as especially appropriate and favorable (the right time). **Uses in Mark** Mk. 1:15; Mk. 10:30; Mk. 11:13; Mk. 12:2; Mk. 13:33;

**He sent a slave ([doulos](#)) to the vine-growers** - Who are the slaves in the parable? Clearly they represent the OT prophets, the warning messages of which they largely rejected. His sending of slave after slave in this parable is a picture of the longsuffering of the owner of the vineyard, i.e., the Lord's patience with His rebellious people.

**NET Note** - This slave (along with the others) represent the prophets God sent to the nation, who were mistreated and rejected.

**Slave** ([1401](#)) [doulos](#) from [deo](#) = to bind) was an individual bound to another in servitude and conveys the idea of the slave's close, binding ties with his master, belonging to him, obligated to and desiring to do his will and in a permanent relation of servitude. In sum, the will of the **doulos** is consumed in the will of the master. A bondservant is one who surrendered wholly to another's will and thus devoted to another to the disregard of his own interest This is a wonderful and accurate description of the Old Testament prophets God sent to Israel.

**THOUGHT** - A [doulos](#) should be the description of every disciple of Jesus - wholly devoted and surrendered to Him with our will totally [subsumed](#) in His good and acceptable and perfect will (Ro 12:2b+)!

**In order to** (term of purpose) **receive some of the produce ([karpos](#) - "fruits") of the vineyard from the vine-growers** - The vine-growers would be the Jewish leadership. The produce expected would have been the sharing of the truth of Jehovah with the lost Gentiles who had no direct access to and revelation of the living God in their pagan cultures that served dead gods that were no gods.

**Produce (benefit (fruit) ([2590](#)) ([karpos](#))** is used in its literal sense to refer to fruit, produce or offspring, which describes that which is produced by the inherent energy of a living organism. **Karpos** is what something naturally produces. Figuratively, **karpos** is used of the consequence of physical, mental, or spiritual action. In the NT the figurative (metaphorical) uses predominate and this is particularly true in the Gospels, where human actions and words are viewed as **fruit** growing out of a person's essential being or character. **Karpos** refers to that which originates or comes from something producing an effect or result (benefit, advantage, profit, utility). Uses in Mark - Mk. 4:7; Mk. 4:8; Mk. 4:29; Mk. 11:14; Mk. 12:2;

**Vineyard** ([290](#))([ampelon](#)) was a plot of land where grapes were grown on grapevines. Used figuratively Figuratively in Matt. 21:28, 33, 39-41; Mark 12:1, 2, 9; Luke 13:6; 20:9, 10, 13, 15, 16. **Ampelon** - 23x in 21v - Matt. 20:1; Matt. 20:2; Matt. 20:4; Matt. 20:7; Matt. 20:8; Matt. 21:28; Matt. 21:33; Matt. 21:39; Matt. 21:40; Matt. 21:41; Mk. 12:1; Mk. 12:2; Mk. 12:8; Mk. 12:9; Lk. 13:6; Lk. 20:9; Lk. 20:10; Lk. 20:13; Lk. 20:15; Lk. 20:16; 1 Co. 9:7

**SIDE NOTE:** It is interesting that in Deut 23:24-25 specific instructions had been given to Israeli farmers to share their grapes and grain with others! The produce of the vineyard or the field, that which had been given freely by the Lord, was not to be greedily withheld from others. To meet the need of the poor or the hungry traveller (Jew or Gentile) it was permissible for them to eat the grapes or pluck the ears of corn. In this parable of course Israel was commissioned to share what God had graciously given her, the "produce" of the revelation of God in the Scriptures so that hungry (lost) souls might "eat" and come to a knowledge of the truth about the true and living God. Israel failed miserably to carry out her commission to be a **light to the Gentiles**, a function Paul alluded to in Acts 13:47+ "For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A



**LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH."** (see the Gentile's reaction to Paul's declaration = Acts 13:48-49+ and then note the Jewish reaction in Acts 13:50+ which is exactly what the Lord is speaking about in this parable - no **produce** for the **Owner of the Vineyard**. Saved souls are the ultimate produce or "**fruit**" (cf Mt 3:8) and here in Acts 13 the Jews actively fought against this goal! Amazing greed instead of amazing grace!)

**Barton** lists the main elements in this parable

1. the man who planted the vineyard—God,
2. the vineyard—Israel,
3. the tenant farmers—the Jewish religious leaders,
4. the landowner's servants—the prophets and priests who remained faithful to God and preached to Israel,
5. the son—Jesus, and
6. the others to whom the vineyard was given—the Gentiles. (LAC)

**Mark 12:3 "They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed."**

- **they:** 1Ki 18:4,13 19:10,14 22:27 2Ch 16:10 24:19-21 36:16 Ne 9:26 Jer 2:30 20:2 26:20-24 29:26 37:15,16 38:4-6 Mt 23:34-37 Lu 11:47-51 13:33,34 Ac 7:52 1Th 2:15 Heb 11:36,37
- **and sent:** Jer 44:4,5,16 Da 9:10,11 Zec 7:9-13 Lu 20:10-12
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### **Related Passages:**

Matthew 21:35 "The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third.

Luke 20:10+ "At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, so that they would give him some of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

Hebrews 11:36-38+ And others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38(men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

### **FIRST SLAVE BEATEN**

**They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed** - NET = "But those tenants seized his slave." **Beat** refers to a severe beating or flogging. This slave was dispatched with no fruit in his hands.

**Barton** - Israel, pictured as a vineyard, was the nation that God had cultivated to bring salvation to the world ("FRUIT"). The religious leaders not only frustrated their nation's purpose; they also killed those who were trying to fulfill it. They were so jealous and possessive that they ignored the welfare of the very people they were supposed to be bringing to God. (LAC)

**Lenski** adds that this parable centers our attention "on the vicious action of these vine-growers to whom the vineyard is leased, and who were to meet the terms of that lease. In what condition the vineyard was under their management, whether full or empty of fruit, is not the point to be brought out. Our eyes are focused altogether on the outrageous vine-growers who were in possession of the precious vineyard when the great owner at the proper season sends for the fruit that is due him according to the terms of the lease." (Borrow [The interpretation of St. John's gospel](#))

**NET Note** - The image of the tenants beating up the owner's slave pictures the nation's rejection of the prophets and their message. The slaves being sent **empty-handed** suggests that the vineyard was not producing any fruit - and thus neither was the nation of Israel.

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**Beat** (beating, flogged, receive lashes, strike) ([1194](#))([dero](#)) literally meant to remove the skin (flay = strip off skin) and in the NT is used to depict the action of whipping, beating, thrashing or scourging in a manner calculated to take off the skin and was used to describe **beating** of Jesus (Lk 22:63+). Jesus warned His disciples they would be flogged (Mk 13:9+) and they were (Acts 5:40)! **Dero** can refer to striking someone on the face or the body (John 18:23; 2 Cor. 11:20) or to a total physical beatdown (Acts

**Mark 12:4 "Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully.**

- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 21:36 "Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them.

Luke 20:11+ "And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty-handed.

**Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully** (NET = "treated outrageously") - The treatment given this slave by the tenants became more violent (see good summary of how they were treated Hebrews 11:36-38+, cf. beaten Jeremiah 26:7-11; 38:1-28, stoned 2 Chronicles 24:21). While this is a parable, clearly it shows how **"they,"** the covenant people of Israel severely mistreated the messengers God repeatedly sent to warn them that they would be punished for their spiritual adultery.

**Treated shamefully** (818)([atimazo](#) from **a** = without + **time** = honor) means to be treated with indignity, to cause to be disgraced, or to treat shamefully. It means to cause to have a low status involving dishonor and disrespect. All NT uses - Mk. 12:4; Lk. 20:11; Jn. 8:49; Acts 5:41; Rom. 1:24; Rom. 2:23; Jas. 2:6

**Mark 12:5 "And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some and killing others.**

- **that one:** Mk 9:13 Ne 9:30 Jer 7:25-28 Mt 5:12 21:35,36 22:6 23:37 Lu 6:22,23,36
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 21:35 "The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. 36 "Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them.

Luke 20:12+ "And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out.

**And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some and killing others-** The third (and others) received the worst fate of all - murder! (John the Baptist killed, Matthew 14:1-12) The maltreatment of **many others** depicts the amazing forbearance of the owner (i.e., God)! **Hill** points out that "This highly unusual reaction of the owner effectively displays the enormity of the guilt of the husbandmen. No ordinary individual would allow such a series of violent actions to continue against his servants. But this owner pictures God as the owner of the Israelite vineyard, and His practice toward her religious leaders was without parallel."

**Grassmick** - Time and again God had sent prophets to Israel to gather fruits of repentance and righteousness (cf. Luke 3:8) but His prophets were abused, wounded, and killed (cf. Jer. 7:25-26; 25:4-7; Matt. 23:33-39). (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Constable** - The main point of the parable is the wicked treatment Israel's leaders had given the servants whom God had sent to them.

**Hiebert** says "The point of the parable lies in this unprincipled, vicious action of the husbandmen. They selfishly failed to execute their contract and resorted to outrageous opposition to the just claims of the owner." ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Mark 12:6 "He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'**

NET Mark 12:6 He had one left, his one dear son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

NLT Mark 12:6 until there was only one left-- his son whom he loved dearly. The owner finally sent him, thinking, 'Surely they will respect my son.'

ESV Mark 12:6 He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

NIV Mark 12:6 "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

GNT Mark 12:6 π ν α ε χεν υ ν γαπητ ν· π στειλεν α τ ν σχατον πρ ς α το ς λ γων τι ντραπ σονται τ ν υ ν μου.

KJV Mark 12:6 Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

- **one:** Ps 2:7 Mt 1:23 11:27 26:63 Joh 1:14,18,34,49 3:16-18 1Jn 4:9 5:11,12
- **a beloved son:** Mk 1:11 Mk 9:7 Ge 22:2,12 37:3,11-13 44:20 Isa 42:1 Mt 3:17 17:5 Lu 3:22 9:35 Joh 3:35 Heb 1:1,2
- **They:** Ps 2:12 Joh 5:23 Heb 1:6 Rev 5:9-13
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 21:37 "But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

Luke 20:13-14+ "The owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.'

### A BELOVED SON

**He had one more to send, a beloved ([agapao](#)) son** - The Greek reads literally "Yet he had one" after all the slaves were either mistreated or killed. Twice in Mark (at His baptism in Mk 1:11+ and His transfiguration in Mk 9:7+) we have seen the Father refer to Jesus as "My beloved Son."

**he sent him last of all to them, saying, 'They will respect my son** - Note the phrase **last of all** (not found in either Matthew or Luke's account). The word last is [eschatos](#) which "last" in the sense of a final stage in a process. E.g., in Rev 15:1+ the "**last** seven" plagues of judgment against the earth are declared to be the completion of God's wrath against the wickedness of humankind. **Eschatos** indicates the final element in a significant series, in this context a series of sending prophet after prophet (the most recent being John the Baptist), and the repeated response being to mistreat and/or murder! Israel as a nation was led far too often by utterly depraved men. In this parabolic statement, the beloved son was their last (eschatos) chance to repent and believe! And according to Moses He too was a Prophet for Moses declared "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him." (Dt 18:15) Sadly, they DID NOT LISTEN TO HIM!

[Eschatos](#) is used by Jesus in John 12:48 "He who **rejects** (in the [present tense](#) = continually turn their back on and refuses) Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the **last** ([eschatos](#)) day.

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**Respect** ([1788](#))([entrepo](#)) means to turn back or about. In the active sense it means put to shame, make ashamed, reprove (1Cor 4.14). In the passive it means to be put to shame, be ashamed (Titus 2.8). Finally in the passive with the middle sense, it means strictly to turn oneself toward someone; hence respect, reverence, have regard for (Mt 21.37). The idea is to be shamed into respect.

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#### Barton - CONSCIOUS REJECTION

The tenants in Jesus' story knew exactly what they were doing. They killed the son to take his property. Did the conspirators against Jesus knowingly reject Him? The tenants assumed wrongly that they would inherit the vineyard if they eliminated the son of the owner. The religious leaders of Jesus' day assumed they would continue in power if they killed Jesus. In both cases (the story and history), people who should have recognized rightful authority rejected it. Scripture makes one of its most sobering points when it teaches that we will be responsible for what we know (Romans 2:1ff+). The results of the tenants' rejection of the son are not

immediate. But justice will be served when the landowner arrives. Submit to Jesus' authority. Accepting or rejecting him has eternal consequences. (LAC)

**Mark 12:7 "But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!'"**

- **This:** Mk 12:12 Ge 3:15 37:20 Ps 2:2,3 22:12-15 Isa 49:7 53:7,8 Mt 2:3-13,16 Joh 11:47-50 Ac 2:23 5:28 7:52 13:27,28
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 21:38 "But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.'

Luke 20:14+ "But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours.'

### KILL THE HEIR

**But** - Term of contrast. Instead of respect him they plot to remove him!

**Those vine-growers said to one another** - Only Mark has this detail describing the collusion of the "vine-growers," in this case clearly the depraved religious leaders of Israel. Luke adds "when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned (deliberated) with one another" (Luke 20:14+)

**This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours-** This is a fascinating statement. Why do I say that? If we can interpret this aspect of the parable literally, Jesus says they knew the beloved son was "the heir."

**Wuest** agrees writing "The Sanhedrin recognized our Lord for what He was, the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel. The Lord had come to claim the vineyard, Israel, for Himself. He had received friendly recognition from the people. This had aroused the jealousy of their spiritual leaders. They tried in desperation to recover their waning power over the people by giving Him over to the Gentiles for crucifixion." ([Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader](#))

**Daniel Hill** - According to our system of law this is absurd, but the Jewish legal code indicated that if property worked by a tenant farmer was found without owner and heirs, it would be given to the tenants. ([Mark 12](#))

**MacArthur** - According to traditional law, land that remained unclaimed for three years would become the property of those working it. If they killed the heir, they reasoned, the land could be theirs. (See [Mark Commentary](#))

**Rod Mattoon** - Why would these men behave this way in the first place? In that day, a tenant farmer could lay claim to the land that he was farming if the owner of the land was gone for more than three years. This would be based on the presumption that the owner lost interest or was dead. They may also have concluded that the owner of the land was dead when the son showed up. There was a law in that day that stated that if the owner died and he had no heirs to leave the land, whoever was first to claim the land, especially the occupants, would be allowed to have the land. These men most likely concluded that they could claim the inheritance of the land if they killed this son. By now, the religious and social leaders must have understood the meaning of the parable. They had already reasoned together on their plan to destroy Jesus. They did this because **they saw Him as the heir, the beloved Son, though they rejected Him as such**. The officials wanted the inheritance, the power, the glory, the rule, so they plotted the heir's death. Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen to Him. He was predicting His death. The Lord willingly and voluntarily would lay down His life for us all. He chose to die for the sins of mankind. (See John 10:17-18).

**Utley on the inheritance will be ours** - This refers legally to the Jewish law of "ownerless property" that could be claimed by right of possession. It reflects mankind's fallen attitude of "more and more for me at any cost." Humanity wants to be its own god (cf. Gen. 3).

**Guzik** - They apparently thought that if they killed the owner's son, the owner would then just give up and let them have the vineyard. ([Mark 12 Commentary](#))

**Herbert Lockyer** -In my unregenerate state I was among the number who cried, "This is the heir—come, let us kill him." I must never lose sight of the part my sin played in slaying the sacrifice on Calvary.

**Mark 12:8 "They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.**

- **threw:** Mt 21:33,39 Lu 20:15 Heb 13:11-13
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Matthew 21:39 "They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Luke 20:15+ "So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

Hebrews 13:12-13+ Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. 13 So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

## **CAST OUT THE HEIR**

**They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard** - And in very few days this is exactly what the religious hierarchy of Israel is going to do to Jesus Christ. Jesus was crucified outside of the city of Jerusalem (**out of the vineyard**) (see Hebrews passage above).

**Grassmick** comments "Some say this predicts what would happen to Jesus: He would be crucified outside of Jerusalem, expelled from Israel in a climactic expression of the leaders' rejection of Him. But this presses the parable's details too far here. It is better to see the throwing of the son's dead body over the wall without burial as a climax to their wicked indignities. Mark's emphasis of their rejection and murder of the son took place within the vineyard, that is, within Israel." (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Mark 12:9 "What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others.**

- **will:** Mt 21:40,41
- **he will:** Lev 26:15-18,23,24,27,28 De 4:26,27 28:15-68,61 Jos 23:15 Pr 1:24-31 Isa 5:5-7 Da 9:26,27 Zec 13:7-9 Mt 3:9-12 12:45 Mt 22:7 23:34-38 Lu 19:27,41-44 20:15,16
- **and will:** Isa 29:17 32:15,16 65:15 Jer 17:3 Mal 1:11 Mt 8:11-13 21:43 Ac 13:46-48 28:23-28 Ro 9:30-33 10:20,21 11:1-12
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Matthew 21:40 "Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" 41 They \*said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons."

Luke 20:15-16+ "So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 "He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." When they heard it, they said, "May it never be!"

## **LEADERS ANNOUNCE THEIR OWN FATE!**

**What will the owner of the vineyard do?** - Jesus asks a rhetorical question of His "learned" audience of religious leaders. Matthew records the answer "They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons." (Mt 21:41) **Ray Stedman** comments that in response to their declaration "Jesus says, "You are right. You have judged yourselves." Stedman is in essence paraphrasing what Jesus goes on to declare in Mark 12:10-11 and they clearly understood Jesus' words as shown by their reaction in Mark 12:12. Jesus' question reminds me of another lesser prophet named Nathan who asked David what he would do about an injustice to a poor man (2 Sa

12:1-12), and when David was told "You are the man" (who committed the injustice), David confessed "I have sinned" (2 Sa 12:13) while the religious leaders sought all the more to put Jesus to death!

This question recalls the one in Isaiah

Isaiah 5:3-4+ "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard.  
**"What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?"**

And in that same section of Isaiah 5 we see God's judgment which is similar to the one the leaders pronounced on themselves!

Isaiah 5:5+ "So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard:**I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.**

**Wiersbe** adds that "The leaders answered the question first and thereby condemned themselves (Matt. 21:41), and then Jesus repeated their answer as a solemn verdict from the Judge. But before they could appeal the case, He quoted what they knew was a **messianic prophecy**, Psalm 118:22–23+. We met this same psalm at His triumphal entry (Mark 11:9–10). **"The Stone"** was a well-known symbol for the Messiah (Ex. 17:6+; Daniel 2:34+, Da 2:44–45+; Zech. 4:7; Ro. 9:32–33; 1 Cor. 10:4; and 1 Peter 2:6–8). The Servant-Judge announced a double verdict: they had not only rejected the Son, but they had also refused the Stone! There could be only one consequence—judgment (Matt. 22:1–14)." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

**He will come and destroy ([apollumi](#)) the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others ([allos](#) not [heteros](#))** - The rejection of the beloved son would bring judgment, in this case judgment on Israel and its leaders "and would transfer their privileges to others temporarily (cf. Rom. 11:25, 31+)." (Grassmick) Is this not similar to the warning that Jesus' forerunner John the Baptist declared to the religious leaders (Mt 3:7+) in Mt 3:10+ "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

Who are the **others**? Most commentaries say the **"others"** are the Gentiles which sounds reasonable considering the fact that the church is now predominantly Gentile. But as discussed below by John MacArthur, one should not overlook that the first individuals who received charge over God's "Gospel seed" were all Jewish - 12 Jewish apostles and then one additional Jewish apostle Paul. It was through their ministry that the Gospel of the Kingdom was spread throughout the known world. So MacArthur makes an interesting point that the "others" may not be Gentiles as normally interpreted but actually be the believing Jewish apostles who replace the evil "vine-growers," the unbelieving Jewish religious leaders.

**John MacArthur** as alluded to above has a somewhat different explanation for the **"others"** writing "It is not just a simple shift from Jew to Gentile, although obviously the people of God in the past were predominantly Jewish and now are predominantly Gentile. It is a shift in leadership. That's what our Lord is talking about. And of all people, the new leadership are the despised apostles and disciples of Jesus." **MacArthur** devotes almost an entire sermon to explaining who the **"others"** are and if you are interested in a more detailed discussion read or listen to [The Murder of God's Son - A Prophetic Parable-Part 2](#) It is certainly food for thought and something I have never heretofore considered. It is notable that others is not [heteros](#) (different kind which would favor others as Gentiles) but [allos](#) (others of the same kind which would favor Jews), which does support MacArthur's premise the **other vine-growers** are of the same kind are also Jews. And of course the early church was almost entirely Jewish at its inception. Interesting!

**R. C. H. Lenski** explains "Jesus must have told the parable so dramatically that the answer came spontaneously without a moment's hesitation. It is so correct because the minds of these pilgrims are centered on the objective facts as these are stated in the parable and are not yet directed toward who these vine-growers really are. The people thus follow their own sense of justice, that justice which will vindicate God's judgments on all unbelievers. The answer thus keeps to the parable. Jesus accepts it as his own, which leads Mark and Luke to write as they do. Mark notes that before they could reflect upon what they had just said, Jesus repeated their assessment, saying, **"He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others"** The sudden realization of the significance of what had just been hastily stated suddenly dawned upon them causing others among their group to erupt with **"May it never be!"** (Luke 20:16+). (Borrow [The interpretation of St. John's gospel](#))

**Barton** - Over hundreds of years, Israel's kings and religious leaders had rejected God's prophets—beating, humiliating, and killing them. Most recently, John the Baptist had been rejected as a prophet by Israel's leaders (Mk 11:30–33). Next Jesus, the beloved Son of God, already rejected by the religious leaders, would be killed. Jesus explained that the Jewish leaders would be accountable for his death because in rejecting the messengers and the Son, they had rejected God himself. God's judgment would be spiritual death and the transfer of the privileges of ownership to others, namely, the Gentiles (see Romans 11:25–32+). In this parable Jesus spoke of the beginning of the Christian church among the Gentiles. God would not totally reject Israel; in ancient times he always



preserved a remnant of faithful people. (LAC)

Here we have the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the world-wide dispersion of the Jews A.D. 70, the call of the Gentiles, and the Church of Jesus Christ, the latter being the channel through which God is operating temporarily while Israel is in dispersion, and until Israel will be regathered at the second Advent, and restored to fellowship with and usefulness to God.

**Spurgeon** - "If you do not hear the well-beloved Son of God, you have refused your last hope. He is God's ultimatum. Nothing remains when Christ is refused. No one else can be sent; heaven itself contains no further messenger. If Christ be rejected, hope is rejected."

**James Edwards** remarks: Two points are worthy of note so far. **First**, the landowner takes vengeance not on the vineyard but on the tenants of the vineyard. That is, the parable cannot be interpreted as a blanket judgment on the Jewish people, but rather on their leaders, particularly the Sanhedrin. **Second**, the heroic party is not the tenant farmers but the landowner, who justly settles accounts. The parable thus cannot be construed as evidence for a vision or program of a popular uprising against oppression on the part of Jesus. Regardless of popular sentiment about absentee land ownership in Jesus' day, it is the tenants who are defiant rebels against a rightful owner. That must surely be understood as Jesus' judgment on the Sanhedrin and Jewish leadership for confiscating the things of God. (Pillar NTC - Mark)

**Mark 12:10 "Have you not even read this Scripture: 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone;**

- **have:** Mk 12:26 2:25 13:14 Mt 12:3 Mt 19:4 Mt 21:16 Mt 22:31 Lu 6:3
- **The stone:** Ps 118:22,23 Isa 28:16 Mt 21:42 Lu 20:17,18 Ac 4:11,12 Ro 9:33 Eph 2:20-22 1Pe 2:4-9
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 21:42 Jesus \*said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'?"

Luke 20:17+ But Jesus looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone'?"

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.

Psalms 118:22+ The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone.

**Psalms 118:22+ is clearly an important passage to God** for the Spirit quotes from it five times in the New Testament: Mt 21:42, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11, 1 Peter 2:7

1 Peter 2:4+ And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," 8 and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

JESUS CHRIST THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE

## REJECTION OF THE CORNERSTONE

Why does Jesus ask this question? The religious leaders had answered correctly in pronouncing their self-condemnation, but they still did not fully grasp what they had said. Jesus is going to help them understand!

**Paul Apple** - Switching imagery here – from the cultivation of a vineyard to the building of the temple Same lesson – God dealing with the Rejection of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ ([Mark Commentary](#))

**Lenski** - The climax of the (preceding) parable, the death of the son himself, is repeated in the first line of the psalm: "A stone which those building rejected," (Borrow [The interpretation of St. John's gospel](#))

**Daniel Akin** - Interestingly, it is the same Psalm shouted by the people at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem in Mk 11:9-10+ (cf. Ps. 118:25-26+). It is clearly Messianic. He knows who He is and why He has come! (Mk 10:45+) The parable and His commentary make this abundantly clear! ([Mark 12:1-12 God Sent His Son and We Killed Him](#))

In Jesus' quotation, the "**son**" of the parable became the **stone** of this prophecy; the "**tenant farmers**" of the parable became the **builders**.

**Have you not even read** ([anaginosko](#)) **this Scripture** ([graphe](#)) - This is [a slap in their face](#), a rebuke against their spiritual blindness (Mk 4:12+). "What a dig at the scribes and Pharisees and priests who considered themselves experts in the OT" (Apple) One can only imagine their reaction even to this opening question from Jesus! How dare Jesus question these authorities, who had come to question His authority! They may have read, but they lacked spiritual eyes to see and tender, humble hearts that trembled at His Word (Isa 66:2)!

The Opposite of respecting and reverencing the Son is rejecting Him

**THE STONE** ([lithos](#)) **WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED** ([apodokimazo](#) = reject after scrutiny!) - Jesus appeals to a seemingly insignificant statement in this Psalm which describes a **stone** which examined, found flawed and thrown aside by the stonemasons. But Jesus interpreted this prophecy in light of the New Testament revelation and thus He teaches that He Himself is the **Stone** Who was examined and rejected by the **builders**! The **builders** are the Jewish religious leaders who saw His miracles, who witnessed His sinless life, who saw His power over the natural and supernatural world (demons), and yet still chose to reject Him. Like the stonemasons, they made an examination of the "**Stone**" and refused to receive Him (Jn 1:11+). This **Stone** which was rejected was in fact the most important stone in the building! Jesus' point was that He was the most important "Stone" in the "Building" of the Jewish nation, and even though this Stone was rejected, ultimately it would be the supreme Stone! This reminds me of an old Gospel song by [Leon Patillo entitled Cornerstone](#). If you like songs with a little beat, give [Cornerstone](#) a listen.

**Hiebert** - "**The stone which the builders rejected**"—the quotation begins with the very thought which climaxed His parable—His rejection by the Jewish leaders. Like the husbandmen rejecting the son, so the builders rejected the stone. The builders, those recognized as engaged in building the Lord's spiritual temple, represent the Jewish priests and religious rulers. In their official activities, they were confronted with a stone, Christ Himself, which they rejected, subjected to their scrutiny, and condemned as failing to pass their test. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

Ultimately the prophecy of **the Stone which the builders rejected** was fulfilled when the Jews cried out to Pilate "**Crucify, crucify** (both commands) Him!" (Lk 23:21+) But the rejected Stone would become the resurrected Stone when the stone was rolled away from His stone tomb and this would be marvelous in our eyes (and our eyes will behold this marvelous sight forever and ever. Amen)!

**Barton** - Jesus used this metaphor of a stone to show that one stone can affect people different ways, depending on how they relate to it (see Isaiah 8:14–15+; Isa 28:16; Daniel 2:34+, Da 2:44–45+). Ideally they will build on it; many, however, will trip over it. At the Last Judgment, God's enemies will be crushed by it. At that time, Christ, the "building block," will become the "crushing stone." (1 Pe 2:8+) He offers mercy and forgiveness now, and he promises judgment later. (LAC)

**THIS BECAME THE CHIEF** ([kephale](#) - fig. superior rank) **CORNER** ([gonia](#) - capstone) **stone** - Note that "**stone**" is added to the translation. "**This**" refers to the **stone** which the stonemasons examined and rejected in Psalm 118:22+. But what the Psalmist says is that this rejected stone would be the **chief cornerstone** (some interpret it as "[capstone](#)" a stone at the top of the wall binding the whole together and consummating the work). **Cornerstone** in its literal usage most often referred to the large stone placed in the foundation at the main corner of a building. In biblical times, buildings were often made of cut, squared stone. By uniting two intersecting walls, a **cornerstone** helped align the whole building and tie it together. In addition the **cornerstone** occasionally referred to the top or final stone of a building (capstone).

To what does Jesus the chief corner stone relate to today? The **church**, for Paul writes to the Gentile believers in Ephesus

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone**, (Eph 2:19-20+)

**Hiebert** - "Is become the head of the corner"—declaring the divine reversal of verdict of the religious leaders concerning the stone. The rejected stone became the head of the corner, architecturally the most important stone in the structure. The **cornerstone** is the stone binding together two adjoining walls, but it is not certain whether the stone is thought of as being placed at the bottom or at the

top of the corner—probably the latter. Morison holds that the reference is “to a corner stone in the cornice.” Both positions could apply to Christ. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**THOUGHT** - Regardless of which meaning one prefers, the important point is that Jesus is both the Foundation Stone and the Capstone! Anyone who believes in Jesus will come to experience that He is the Solid Rock on which they can build their life in this present age and the one to come. Amen!

The phrase **chief corner**, in Greek *kephale gonias*, is a [Hebraism](#) which refers to the final stone in the building (according to the TDNT). The unique stone of the pinnacle corner is Christ Himself, Who is also the temple's foundation. He is both underneath all, upholding us, and above all, crowning us as our glorious Head. All glory to our Chief Corner Stone, the Messiah!

The living **Cornerstone** is the first stone laid. All other stones are placed after it. It is the preeminent stone in time. (He 2:10+, Heb 6:19, 20+, Heb 12:2+). The Cornerstone is the supportive stone. All other stones are placed upon Him and held together by Him (Col 2:19+). They all rest upon Him. The **Cornerstone** is the preeminent stone in position and power and so it is with Christ Who is our support and our power.

#### [The Church's one foundation](#)

Is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
She is His new creation  
By water and the Word:  
From heav'n He came and sought her  
To be His holy Bride;  
With His own blood He bought her,  
And for her life He died.  
- Samuel J Stone

**James Brooks** has an interesting comment that "The Jews understood the stone (Ps 118:22) to be their own nation, which was rejected by other nations but which would be restored by the Lord. The early Christians understood it to be Jesus Christ (note especially Eph 2:20). Other “stone” passages are Rom 9:33 and 1 Pet 2:8, which quote Isa 8:14, and 1 Pet 2:6, which quotes Isa 28:16. (NAC)

#### [My Hope Is Built](#)

-- Edward Mote

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly trust in Jesus' Name.

#### *Refrain*

*On Christ the Solid Rock I stand,  
All other ground is sinking sand;  
All other ground is sinking sand*

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**Stone** (3037) (**lithos**) is a mass of hard consolidated mineral matter ([English definition](#)) which in Scripture refers both to a literal stone as when it is stated that God can raise up children of Abraham from the stones (Mt 3:9, Lk 3:8), the stones of the Holy Temple (Mt 24:2, 13:1-2, Lk 19:44, 21:5-6), the stone that sealed Christ's tomb (Mt 27:60, 28:2, Mk 15:46, 16:3-4, Lk 24:2, Jn 20:1), etc. In the present context Jesus uses lithos in a figurative sense to describe Himself (cf Mt 21:44, Mk 12:10, Lk 20:17-18, Acts 4:11, Ro 9:32-33).

**Rejected** (593) (**apodokimazo** from **apo** = off, away from, pictures separation of one thing from another + **dokimazo** = to test, examine, scrutinize to see whether a thing is genuine or not) means to reject or refuse to accept after testing, scrutiny or examination. The preposition **apo-** speaks of separation and thus conveys the picture of rejecting completely. In this context this verb means that the Jewish religious leaders examined Jesus and deemed as useless in their "building program" and thus rejected Him. What a vivid, tragic picture this verb **apodokimazo** presents! **Wuest** comments that "The simple verb (**dokimazo**) means “to put to the test for the purpose of approving.” The prefixed preposition (apo-) means “off, away from.” This tells us the story of Messiah's rejection by Israel. Israel was looking for its Messiah. Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be Messiah. The leaders of Israel investigated His claims, found them to be true, substantiated by the miracles He performed (John 3:2), yet with all this evidence, rejected Him as Messiah because He did not meet their specifications. They were looking for a Messiah who would deliver Israel from the despotism of Rome, not from the dominion of sin. But this Messiah will some day become the King of kings and Lord of

lords over the earth as the Head of the Millennial empire, the Headstone of the Corner.

**Chief** (2776)(**kephale**; English - [cephalic](#)) refers to a literal head ( Mt 5:36; 8:20, etc), but in the present context refers to a figurative head as noting as denoting the head as chief part, specifically the cornerstone (Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Pt 2:7). It is notable that the first use of **kephale** in the Septuagint is in the so-called [proto-evangelium](#), the first Gospel where God prophetically declares "I will put enmity between you (SATAN) and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He (MESSIAH) shall bruise you on the **head**, And you shall bruise him on the heel (EXACTLY WHAT CRUCIFIXION DID TO ONE'S HEEL!)." (Ge 3:15+).

**Corner** (1137)(**gonia** from **gonu** = the knee) means literally corner (of street Mt 6:5); figuratively of the "corners" or extremities of the earth (Rev 7:1); of a building, also known as the chief corner stone, again used figuratively in the present passage of Christ (compare Mt 21:42, Mk 12:10; Acts 4:11; 1 Pt 2:7)

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## CAPSTONE

Cornerstones and capstones were valued architectural pieces. Stone masons demonstrated their ability by choosing just the right rock. Cornerstones anchored and shaped the foundation of a large building. They had to be square and solid. Capstones required a special shape. They were the final piece in an arch. Jesus is both cornerstone and capstone. Jesus' role gives shape to all of history. His presence defines the church. Though rejected by those who should have known better, Jesus was placed in the honored position by his heavenly Father. Make Jesus the cornerstone of your life. (LAC)

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## STUNNING REVERSAL

The very people who should most welcome the coming of God's kingdom will be denied its privileges, and the very people most unlikely to succeed spiritually will find it. So all spiritually satisfied, religiously proud, and biblically astute and learned people should take note. Christ is the center, and no amount of paraphernalia can take his place. You may know Greek and Hebrew, you may hold church office, and you may be a respected Christian philanthropist, but if any of this nudges Christ from the center of your faith and life, beware of some stunning reversals ahead. Others will receive God's blessing. (LAC)

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**Question:** [What does it mean that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone?](#)

**Answer:** Since ancient times, builders have used cornerstones in their construction projects. A cornerstone was the principal stone, usually placed at the corner of an edifice, to guide the workers in their course. The cornerstone was usually one of the largest, the most solid, and the most carefully constructed of any in the edifice. The Bible describes Jesus as the cornerstone that His church would be built upon. He is foundational. Once the cornerstone was set, it became the basis for determining every measurement in the remaining construction; everything was aligned to it. As the cornerstone of the building of the church, Jesus is our standard of measure and alignment.

The book of Isaiah has many references to the Messiah to come. In several places the Messiah is referred to as "the cornerstone," such as in this prophecy: "So this is what the sovereign Lord says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line'" (Isaiah 28:16–17). In context, God speaks to the scoffers and boasters of Judah, and He promises to send the cornerstone—His precious Son—who will provide the firm foundation for their lives, if they would but trust in Him.

In the New Testament, the cornerstone metaphor is continued. The apostle Paul desires for the Ephesian Christians to know Christ better: "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:19–21). Furthermore, in 1 Peter 2:6, what Isaiah said centuries before is affirmed in exactly the same words.

Peter says that Jesus, as our cornerstone, is "chosen by God and precious to him" (1 Peter 2:4). The Cornerstone is also reliable, and "the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (verse 6).

Unfortunately, not everyone aligns with the cornerstone. Some accept Christ; some reject Him. Jesus is the "stone the builders rejected" (Mark 12:10; cf. Psalm 118:22). When news of the Messiah's arrival came to the [magi in the East](#), they determined to bring Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But when that same news came to [King Herod](#) in Jerusalem, his response was to attempt to kill Him. From the very beginning, Jesus was "a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall" (1 Peter 2:8).

How can people reject God's chosen, precious cornerstone? Simply put, they want to build something different from what God is building. Just as the people building the [tower of Babel](#) rebelled against God and pursued their own project, those who reject Christ disregard God's plan in favor of their own. Judgment is promised to all those who reject Christ: "Anyone who falls on this stone will

be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed" (Matthew 21:44). (Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org))

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Mark 12:10

Have you not even read this Scripture? - Mark 12:10

Books! Books! Books! Hardcover and paperbacks. Reference works and jokebooks. Romantic novels and mysteries. Self-help books and religious publications. They just keep appearing -- and we keep buying them.

We also keep writing them. No wonder Solomon said, "Of making many books there is no end" (Ec 12:12). But one book supersedes all the others -- The Bible.

It is the Word of God, written by authors who were inspired by the Holy Spirit and kept from error (2Ti 3:16). It is God's truth, telling us what to believe and how to live. This Book should be required reading for everyone!

Jill Briscoe was addressing a convention of religious writers and editors. An author of several books and numerous articles, she was talking about what it means to have people read your words and be influenced by your writing. She called it a privilege and a responsibility. Then Mrs. Briscoe made this provocative statement: "When we get to Heaven," she said, "we will not say to God, 'Did You read my book?' Rather, God will say to us, 'Did you read My Book?'" How about it? Have you read His book today? -- D C Egner. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Our history is marked by the filling of books  
With what we have thought, said, and done;  
But one Book, the Bible, reveals the true way --  
It tells of the Savior, God's Son.  
-- JDB

A well-read Bible is a sign of a well-fed soul.

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#### Related Resources:

- Christ the Stone and the Rock
- [Christ Our Rock](#)
- [Christ Our Rock of Refuge](#)
- [Christ Our Rock of Refuge-2](#)
- [Rock of Our Salvation](#)

**Mark 12:11 THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'?"**

- Nu 23:23 Hab 1:5 Ac 2:12,32-36 3:12-16 13:40,41 Eph 3:8-11 Col 1:27 1Ti 3:16
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 21:42 Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'?"

Psalms 118:23 This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.

### MARVELOUS PROVIDENTIAL FULFILLMENT

**THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD** - What is **this**? In context it refers to the events of the rejection of the Cornerstone. The point of this passage is that the rejection of the Stone, God's Son, by the "Jewish builders" was foreknown!

**Barton** - It seemed that Jesus had been rejected and defeated by his own people, the Jews, but God would raise him from the dead and seat him at his own right hand. Jesus would be vindicated, and it is marvelous in our eyes. (LAC)

**Akin** - The rejection of the Son results in a glorious reversal that is marvelous. Jesus' rejection, humiliation and crucifixion is an apparent tragedy, but God will use it all for a greater purpose that can only be described as 1) "the Lord's doing" (HCSB, "This came from the Lord") and 2) something "marvelous [wonderful] in our eyes."...This parable is so clear: God will win even when, for a fleeting moment, it seems He has lost. An empty tomb proves it is so. Redemptive history reaches a glorious climatic victory in this beloved Son, this rejected stone. ([Mark 12:1-12 God Sent His Son and We Killed Him](#))

**Barton** writes that "Among all the Gospel writers, only Mark quoted the words, This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Mark stressed divine intervention and its meaning for God's people." (LAC)

**David Garland** writes "The final quotation, "**The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes**" (12:11), attributes Jesus' condemnation of the temple to God's work. The tenants' destruction, the giving of the vineyard to others, and the transformation of a rejected stone into the capstone are marvelous to the ones who have eyes to see God's plan. The impotent animal sacrifices in a fruitless, racist, chauvinistic, stone structure will end. The Son whom these leaders will put to death will be raised by God and will become the locus of salvation.

**AND IT IS MARVELOUS** ([thaumastos](#)) **IN OUR EYES** - Remember all caps in the NAS is a direct quote from the OT. **Our eyes** - only those eyes that are **not** spiritually blinded like the religious leaders to whom these events would not be marvelous but instead motivation to kill Jesus!

In Psalm 118:23 "**marvelous**" is the Hebrew word *pala* which means to be surpassing or extraordinary and is translated miracles in several passages. I think Henry Morris' comment on these words in Ps 118:23 is a reasonable consideration for he writes "The word "marvellous" is actually "miraculous." The resurrection of Christ, after His rejection and crucifixion, typified by the restoration and exaltation of the chief cornerstone after it had first been refused by the temple builders, was the greatest miracle since creation, and certainly should be deemed marvelous in our eyes."

**Daniel Akin** has a slightly different take but still marvelous - In The Last Battle by C. S. Lewis, Queen Lucy says to Lord Digory, "In our world too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world" (Lewis, The Last Battle, 161). To this we might add, "In our world there was also a cross, and hanging on it was someone greater and more wonderful than our whole world." It was the Lord's doing. And it is marvelous in our eyes! ([Mark 12:13-17 Should Christians Obey the Government](#))

**Steven Cole** concludes this parable - Jesus told this parable for two main reasons. He wanted to encourage His faithful servants who get beat up and thrown out of the vineyard to keep on being faithful. He owns the vineyard and the main thing is for His servants to bear fruit for Him. Second, He told it to warn those who wrongly think that they own the vineyard that they do not. A day of reckoning is coming! Every first time visitor to the town of Twin Lakes, Colorado hits the brakes when he first drives into town. The reason for that automatic behavior is that there is a police car with a mannequin sitting behind the wheel just as you come over a hill heading into town. Before you realize that it is just a dummy, you hit your brakes because you think that you are accountable. We need to keep in mind that God is not a dummy-He's real! Jesus Christ is the rightful heir and owner of the vineyard. Either we submit to Him and serve Him or we will face His certain judgment. If we wrongly start thinking that we own the vineyard, the stone will fall on us and scatter us like dust. ([Who Owns the Vineyard?](#))

**John MacArthur** writes that this message (the Parable of the Vineyard and Stone) is one "of love and warning, though delivering it brought the Lord not joy, but rather intense sorrow moving Him to tears (cf. Luke 19:41). Predictably, but tragically, the leaders rejected His warning and redoubled their efforts to kill Him (Luke 20:19). That same warning applies to everyone: either submit to Christ as Lord and Savior, or be crushed by Him in judgment. Rejecting Jesus Christ is the most tragic choice anyone can ever make. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36, cf John 8:24)." (See [Luke Commentary](#))

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**Marvelous** ([2298](#))(**thaumastos** from **thamazo** = to wonder, marvel, be struck with admiration) means wonderful, admirable, wondrous. **Thaumastos** is used throughout classical Greek in descriptions of gods. Friberg - (1) of things relating to God and beyond human comprehension wonderful, marvelous, remarkable; (2) substantively to. qaumasto,n of what is unexpected and worthy of notice the amazing thing (Jn 9:30). Thaumastos - 6x in 6v - Matt. 21:42; Mk. 12:11; Jn. 9:30; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 15:1; Rev. 15:3. Translates "majestic" in Ps 8:1,9. In Ps 68:35 = "O God you are **awesome** (thaumastos)" Ps 98:1 = "He has done **wonderful** things." In Micah 7:15 "I will show you **miracles** (thaumastos)." (Borrow [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

**Thaumastos** in Septuagint - Ex. 15:11; Exod. 34:10; Deut. 28:58; Deut. 28:59; Jos. 3:5; Jdg. 13:18; Jdg. 13:19; Est. 5:2; Job 42:3; Ps. 8:1, 9; Ps. 42:4; Ps. 65:4; Ps. 68:35; Ps. 93:4; Ps. 98:1; Ps. 106:22; Ps. 118:23; Ps. 119:129; Prov. 6:30; Isa. 3:3; Isa. 25:1; Dan. 8:24; Dan. 9:4; Dan. 12:6; Amos 3:9; Mic. 7:15;



"The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes."—Psalm 118:22-23

Nicolaus Copernicus was nineteen years old when Christopher Columbus followed the stars to the West Indies. Copernicus constructed a new system of astronomy that consisted of a solar system with the sun and not the earth as the center. Both the Catholic and the emerging Protestant churches rejected his theories. Copernicus's book, 'Revolutions,' was published during the last year of his life and drew criticism from two sources. Philosophers held onto Aristotle's theory that the earth was the fixed center of the universe. Churchmen accused Copernicus of contradicting the Bible. Many opposed him on both counts.

Nearly a century later Galileo was charged with heresy and warned not to defend the Copernican theory. In 1632, at nearly seventy years of age, the invalid Galileo published a book that held to the Copernican theory. He was immediately summoned to trial and remained under house arrest until his death in 1642.

Isaac Newton's success with theoretical physics finally brought the Copernican theory triumph and Copernicus is now considered the founder of modern astronomy.

Jesus was rejected because he did not match the Pharisees concept of a messiah. Who is the center of your universe? Have you molded Jesus to become who you think He should be? Or is he the Lord of all? Take time now to contemplate the size of your God—the God who created the universe. Worship His awesome greatness and His marvelous love.

"What, but God? Inspiring God! Who boundless Spirit all, and unremitting energy, pervades, adjusts, sustains, and agitates the whole."—James Thomson

**Mark 12:12 They were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And so they left Him and went away.**

- **feared:** Mk 11:18,32 Mt 21:26,45,46 Lu 20:6,19 Joh 7:25,30,44
- **they understood:** 2Sa 12:7-15 1Ki 20:38-41 21:17-27
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 21:43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. 44 "And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." 45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. 46 When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet.

Luke 20:18+ "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." 19 The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.

### RELIGIOUS LEADERS FINALLY UNDERSTAND

Note that Matthew 21:43 adds a significant statement by Jesus the **"the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people (GENTILES), producing the fruit of it. "And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."** Little wonder that they were seeking to seize Jesus after that "in your face" pronouncement of judgment on unbelieving Israel and the ungodly leaders. And if that was not enough, Jesus declared the Gentiles would take over the function that the Jews refused to fulfill of being a light to the world.

**Kent Hughes** - Did Team Sanhedrin get the message? Oh yes! They recognized a spiritual slam dunk when they saw one. They understood the parable/allegory and understood its implications. They knew it threatened the giving of the vineyard/Israel to new leadership. They understood Jesus' application of some famous Old Testament passages. They got it—but tragically they didn't believe it for a second....They set themselves to fulfill the parable to the letter—to throw him "out of the vineyard and kill him" (Lk 20:15). Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified, was outside the city (cf. John 19:17; Hebrews 13:12, 13). (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

**They were seeking to seize Him** - They were **seeking to seize** with an intent to do harm. Is is notable that it is not the Jewish crowd that is seeking to seize Jesus, but the religious leaders, for they understood the parable was directed not so much against the nation as a whole as against its leaders. Sadly, the nation would still suffer the consequences of the the sins of their leaders. The leaders of nations impact the people of the nation more than most people understand! Be careful who you vote into office!

**Akin** - With premeditated malice, they move ahead with their sinister plan to murder the Son sent by God. What Herod the Great failed to do to the infant boy born in Bethlehem to Joseph and Mary, these religious elites will accomplish outside the city walls of Jerusalem. Like the demons who recognize Jesus as a threat to their very existence (1:24), they refuse to submit to His Lordship and plot in vain how they might destroy Him. Verse 12 is a disappointing summation of their response. As Paul would later explain, all of this is foolishness and a stumbling block to them. For us, however, it is the power of God unto salvation (1 Cor. 1:18-25). ([Mark 12:13-17 Should Christians Obey the Government](#))

**And yet they feared the people** - Matthew explains the reason they **feared the people** - "because they considered Him to be a prophet. (Mt 21:46) This is sad because they should have feared God who could destroy body and soul in Hell. (Mt 10:28).

**For they understood that He spoke the parable against them-** This explains not why they feared the people, but why they tried to seize Him. **McGee** quips that "The problem is that too many people in our churches today miss the point." "Who told them so, but their own guilty consciences?" (Trapp)

**David Garland** - Jesus' allegory is a riddle, but the leaders do not need coaching to see that they are its target. They understand its implications, which only heightens the enormity of their guilt. Jesus has told the disciples that the high priests and teachers of the law in Jerusalem will kill him (9:33). Now he tells the rulers, albeit in an allegory, that they will kill the Son. That they move ahead with their plot means that they carry it out with malice aforethought. They are like the demons who recognize Jesus as a threat who has come to destroy them (1:24), but rather than submit to him they try in vain to destroy him. Jesus' enemies bide their time because they fear the reaction of the fickle crowd more than they fear God (11:18; 12:12). (NIVAC-Mark)

**Against them** - (pros autous) - Robertson writes "It was a straight shot, this parable of the Rejected Stone (Mk 12:10f.) and the longer one of the Wicked Husbandmen (Vine-Grower). There was no mistaking the application, for he had specifically explained the application (Matt. 21:43-45). The Sanhedrin were so angry that they actually started or sought to seize him, but fear of the populace now more enthusiastic for Jesus than ever held them back. They went off in disgust, but they had to listen to the Parable of the King's Son before going (Matt. 22:1-14)."

**Understood** (1097) ([ginosko](#)) describes intelligent comprehension and thus even these otherwise spiritually blind religious leaders had their eyes opened to fully understand the personal ramifications of Jesus story. It reminds me of the story of the prophet Nathan who confronted David after his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sa 12:1-6) and tells him a story of injustice to which David reacts, at which point Nathan says **"You are the man!"** (2 Sa 12:7). Nathan went on to reveal the consequences of David's sin (2 Sa 12:7-12) David's response to the exposure of His sin was different than the religious leaders, for "David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die." (2 Sa 12:13)

**Warren Wiersbe** makes an interesting practical application - When the rulers rejected John the Baptist, they sinned against the **Father** who sent Him. When they crucified Jesus, they sinned against the **Son**. Jesus had told them that they could sin against Him and still be forgiven, but when they sinned against the **Holy Spirit**, there could be no forgiveness (Matt. 12:24-37). Why? Because that was the end of God's witness to the nation. This is the so-called "unpardonable sin," and it was committed by the Jewish leaders when they finally rejected the witness of the Spirit of God through the Apostles. The evidence of their rejection was the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:51-60). Then the Gospel went from the Jews to the Samaritans (Acts 8) and then to the Gentiles (Acts 10). In this parable (Lk 20:9-19), Jesus illustrated the insidious nature of sin: **the more we sin, the worse it becomes**. The tenants started off beating some of the servants and wounding others, but they ended up becoming murderers! The Jewish leaders **permitted** John the Baptist to be killed, they **asked** for Jesus to be crucified, and then **they themselves stoned** Stephen. They sinned against the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that was the end of God's witness to them. It is a serious thing to reject the message of God and the messengers of God (see John 12:35-43; Heb. 2:1-4). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

**Guzik** - They were cut to the heart and convicted by the Holy Spirit. They reacted to the conviction of the Holy Spirit by rejecting, not by receiving. They plotted to murder Jesus instead of repenting before Him. ([Mark 12 Commentary](#))

**And so they left Him and went away** - "This is the second time the Sanhedrin representatives would have arrested our Lord in the precincts of the Temple, but fear of the people prevented this (Mark 11:18+). For the moment they were forced to admit defeat, and they returned to their council chamber to mature their schemes.

**Kistemaker** adds "The lesson is: *Principiis obsta*: **"Resist the beginnings!"** Watch out for the first misstep. Every further advance into sin will be easier than the previous step."

**Mark 12:13 Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement.**

- **they sent:** Ps 38:12 56:5,6 140:5 Isa 29:21 Jer 18:18 Mt 22:15,16 Lu 11:54 Lu 20:20-26
- **Herodians:** Mk 3:6 8:15 Mt 16:6
- Mark 12:13-17 - Pharisees and Herodians
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### **Related Passages:**

Matthew 22:15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said.

Luke 20:20+ So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they could deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor.

### **YET ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO TRAP JESUS**

Think about the context for a moment. Jesus had just issued a very solemn warning to the religious leaders in the parable of the Vineyard, but it has no effect on their desire to kill Him!

**Then** - [then](#) is an expression of time which frequently marks the sequence of events as in this case. Keep in mind that neither Mark or Luke had the intervening [parable of the marriage feast](#) (Mt 22:1-14). Presumably this preceded this attempt to trap Jesus.

**Geddert** - The whole prelude to their question is loaded with irony and hypocrisy:

- Teacher (as if they are planning to learn from him).
- We know that you are sincere (if only they were).
- You show deference to no one. (You give straightforward answers to everyone. They will soon wish he did not!)
- You do not regard people with partiality. (True, he will embarrass them just as he embarrassed those who sent them!) The literal wording is heavily ironic: You do not look into the face of people. (True again: he looks into the heart!)
- You teach the way of God. (True, Jesus does teach the way—the word *hodos* is used. Too bad his enemies have rejected the way that John has prepared and Jesus is walking.)
- In accordance with the truth (something of little interest to those setting their trap for Jesus!). [Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#)

**They sent** ([apostello](#)) **some of the Pharisees** ([pharisaïos](#)) **and Herodians** (see [note below](#)) **to Him** - Luke 20:20+ describes them as "**spies** (*egkathetos*) **who pretended** (*hupokrinomai*) **to be righteous.**" Jesus knew they were hypocrites for He "did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man." (Jn 2:24-25+) Matthew describes some of these men as "**disciples**" of the Pharisees (thus they would have been younger men) (Mt 22:15). The **Herodians** were political adherents to Herod supported Roman rule, both hated by the **Pharisees**. So here we see a sad example of the ancient proverb "[the enemy of my enemy is my friend](#)" in which two generally opposing parties (Pharisees and Herodians) choose to work together against their common enemy Jesus Christ! The irony is that the name Pharisees means "separatist," but they did not live up to their name and were willing to work closely with men they despised so that might kill Jesus! Their plotting anticipates Mark 15:3,4, where the ruling priests began "to accuse Him harshly." We see several passages alluding to these natural enemies uniting forces to destroy their common Enemy, Jesus (Mark 3:6+, Mark 8:15+; Mt. 22:16).

**THOUGHT** - Beloved follower of Jesus, this hatred of the **Pharisees** and **Herodians** toward Christ continues today and explains why men will often reject you and your narrow minded (to them) Gospel and why terrorist groups target Christians. Forewarned is forearmed. Jesus declared "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also" (Jn 15:18-20, cf Jn 17:14, Pr 29:27). Forewarned is forearmed so keep in mind that the idea of persecute (cf 2 Ti 3:12+) is to continuously hound someone, to stay after

them, to ridicule them, to dog them, to watch their every move to try to catch them doing something for which you can accuse them, to not let up on them. This world is not our home and we are aliens and strangers and should expect persecution and derision from those who are dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1+) and detest our holiness (not "holier than thou" but genuine Spirit enabled holy lives!).

**Herodians** - At the time of Jesus, there were certain groups—the **Pharisees**, the **Herodians**, and the **Sadducees**—that held positions of authority and power over the people. Other groups were the Sanhedrin, the **scribes**, and the **lawyers**. Each of these groups held power in either religious or political matters. The **Herodians** held political power, and most scholars believe that they were a political party that supported King Herod Antipas, the Roman Empire's ruler over much of the land of the Jews from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. The **Herodians** favored submitting to the Herods, and therefore to Rome, for political expediency. This support of Herod compromised Jewish independence in the minds of the Pharisees, making it difficult for the **Herodians** and Pharisees to unite and agree on anything. **But one thing did unite them—opposing Jesus.** Herod himself wanted Jesus dead (Luke 13:31), and the Pharisees had already hatched plots against Him (John 11:53), so they joined efforts to achieve their common goal. (See full article - [Who were the Herodians?](#))

**Hughes** "Two opposite powers can bind people together. One is love, and the other is hatred. Of course, love is to be preferred by far. It is the glue of the Holy Trinity. It is God's ordained adhesive for the Church as well (cf. John 13:34, 35). Nevertheless, hatred, though fragmenting and destructive, serves as a diabolical superglue among otherwise diverse people. Such was the case with the Pharisees and Herodians. There could hardly be two groups with such opposing outlooks. The Pharisees were nationalistic. They longed for the messianic kingdom and the overthrow of the Romans. The Herodians had sold themselves out to the Romans and served as their well-cared-for stooges. The Pharisees represented conservative Judaism, whereas the Herodians were liberal and syncretistic in their convictions. The Pharisees were (so to speak) right-wingers. The Herodians were left-wingers. The Pharisees represented cautious resistance to Rome, the Herodians wholesale accommodation. But they were cemented together by their mutual hatred for Jesus. The Pharisees hated him because he was disrupting their religious agenda, the Herodians because he threatened their political arrangements. They both wanted him dead." (Preach the Word-Luke)

**In order** (term of purpose) **to trap Him in a statement** - This brood of vipers hatches their serpentine, satanically inspired scheme to snare the Son of God in a verbal trap. These religious snakes had made deceit an art form! They were like "malicious" hunters trying to trap Jesus like one would ensnare a bird or hook a fish. They will "bait the trap" in the following verses. Statement is [logos](#), which is a bit ironic as they are trying to catch the [Logos](#) (John 1:1+) in a [logos](#)! Luke 20:20 gives the purpose of trapping Jesus **in a statement** was "so that they could deliver ([paradidomi](#) = give over to the power of) Him to the rule and the authority ([exousia](#)) of the governor ([PILATE](#))."

**Trap** ([64](#)) ([agreuo](#) from [agra](#) = a capture, a catch of fish - Lk 5:4,9+) means to hunt or catch animals, birds or fish. Here used figuratively to detect a blunder or misstep and thus analogous to catching an animal. **Agreuo** is used 5x in the Septuagint - Pr 5:22+; Pr 6:25-26 = trap of a harlot! What a picture of danger of not guarding our eyes and heart!!!!; Job 10:16; Hos. 5:2. Pr 5:22+ is especially instructive teaching that "His own iniquities will capture the wicked." What a picture of sin as a hunter or trapper, seeking to trap our souls!!! (cf Ge 4:6,7, 1 Pe 2:11+)

**Mark 12:14 They came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?"**

- **Teacher:** Mk 14:45 Ps 12:2-4 55:21 120:2 Pr 26:23-26 Jer 42:2,3,20
- **we know:** Joh 7:18 2Co 2:2,17 4:1 5:11 1Th 2:4
- **You are truthful and defer:** De 33:9,10 2Ch 18:13 Isa 50:7-9 Jer 15:19-21 Eze 2:6,7 Mic 3:8 2Co 5:16 Ga 1:10 2:6,11-14
- **for You are not partial** Ex 23:2-6 De 16:19 2Ch 19:7
- **Is it lawful :** Ezr 4:12,13 Ne 9:37 Mt 17:25-27 22:17 Lu 20:22 23:2 Ro 13:6
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 22:16 And they **sent their disciples** to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and **defer to no one**; for You are not partial to any. 17 "Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?"

Luke 20:21+ They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. 22 "Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

## FLATTERING HYPOCRITES

**Flattery** - excessive or insincere praise given especially to further one's own interests ; praise that is not sincere but is intended to get you something that you want ; the act of giving excessive compliments, generally for the purpose of ingratiating oneself with the subject. Historically, flattery has been used as a standard form of discourse when addressing a king or queen. Note that they make two attempts to set Jesus up: First, by flattery and second by asking Him a double-edged question.

**Hughes** adds that "Their strategy was perfumed with **flattery**. Flattery is the reverse mirror-image of gossip. Gossip involves saying behind a person's back what you would never say to his face. Flattery is saying to a person's face what you would never say behind his back. How ingratiating their language was—like puffs from a perfume bottle: (squeeze) "Teacher, you're always right." (squeeze) "Preacher, you don't play favorites. You show us the true way." How sweet it seemed!" Like politicians, preachers are peculiarly susceptible to flattery. It is a professional titillation. A preacher, extravagantly flattered by a fawning parishioner, responds, "What you say is very kind, and of course, untrue. But tell me more about your thoughts ..."Of course, Jesus, the Preacher, smelled it for what it was—the stench of duplicity. Jesus well knew the wisdom of the Word: "a flattering mouth works ruin" (Proverbs 26:28). "Whoever flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet" (Proverbs 29:5). "May the LORD cut off all flattering lips" (Psalm 12:3). (Preach the Word - Luke)

**Stevenson** gives some background - The Romans had ruled over Jerusalem in one form or another since 63 B.C. Since that time, there had been a gradual increase in taxes, all going to fund the Roman Empire. To be fair, it must be admitted that the Romans also provided certain services such as their system of roads. However, it is always true that government takes away more than it gives and Rome was certainly no exception to this rule. Earlier in this century a rebellion had taken place under the banner of "no tribute to the Romans." It was claimed by these rebels that taxation was tantamount to slavery. There were three taxes which were collected:

1. Ground Tax: Made up of 10% of all the grain and 20% of all the wine and fruit produced.
2. Income Tax: 1% of a man's income.
3. Poll Tax: A flat tax of one denarius (a day's wage) was paid by all men from 14 to 65 years of age and on all women between the ages of 12 to 65. (they paid a head or poll tax collected when a census was taken)

Another source says there was "a custom tax was collected at ports and city gates as toll for goods transported-rates were 2 to 5 percent of the value of the goods."

**Alfred Edersheim** - Foiled in their endeavor to involve Him with the ecclesiastical, they next attempted the much more dangerous device of bringing Him into collision with the civil authorities. Remembering the ever watchful jealousy of Rome, the reckless tyranny of Pilate, and the low artifices of Herod, who was at that time in Jerusalem, we instinctively feel, how even the slightest compromise on the part of Jesus in regard to the authority of Cæsar would have been absolutely fatal. If it could have been proved, on undeniable testimony, that Jesus had declared Himself on the side of, or even encouraged, the so-called 'Nationalist' party, He would have quickly perished, like Judas of Galilee (Acts. 5:37; Jos. Ant. 18. 1. 1; 20. 5. 2). The Jewish leaders would thus have readily accomplished their object, and its unpopularity have recoiled only on the hated Roman power. How great the danger was which threatened Jesus, may be gathered from this, that, despite His clear answer, the charge that He perverted the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, was actually among those brought against Him before Pilate (Lk 23:2-note = "And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and **forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar**, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.""). ([The Question of Tribute to Caesar](#))

The Jews were enraged at having to pay taxes to Rome, thus supporting the pagan government and its gods. There were seeking to hang Jesus on the "[on the horns of a dilemma](#)" with either horn capable of inflicting a fatal blow. They were turning the tables for earlier He had asked them "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" (Lk 20:4-note)? If Jesus said it was not lawful to pay Caesar, He would be arrested as an insurrectionist and suffer capital punishment at the hands of Rome. If He said it was appropriate to pay Caesar, the fawning of the Jewish crowd would be stirred to fury and He would be quickly discredited as Messiah.

**Barton** - This was a hot topic in Palestine. The Jews hated to pay taxes to Rome because the money supported their oppressors and symbolized their subjection. Much of the tax money also went to maintain the heathen temples and luxurious lifestyles of Rome's upper class. The Jews also hated the system that allowed tax collectors to charge exorbitant rates and keep the extra for themselves. The Roman government allowed tax collectors to contract for tax collection by paying the Romans a flat fee for a



district. Then the tax collectors could profit from collecting all they could get. Anyone who avoided paying taxes faced harsh penalties. Thus, this was a valid (and loaded) question, and the crowd around Jesus waited expectantly for his answer. Matthew, as a former tax collector, was certainly interested in Jesus' response to this question. (LAC)

**They came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one-** They call Him "Teacher" as if they really desire to be taught! Hypocrites to the core! Then they flatter Him -- **Truthful**" is [alethes](#) signifying that He was true in the sense that He could not lie. How fascinating since these tricksters are "[lying through their teeth](#)" as we might say today! They are saying we know Your teaching is "orthodox" ("correctly" = orthos ). Well, if they knew that, then why didn't they believe it? Of course, the heart of the problem is always an problem of the heart! They had spiritual "heart disease," which is the worst kind, because only a supernatural heart transplant can cure this eternally fatal condition. Furthermore their **flattery** was ironic, because even though they did not believe what they were saying, what they said about Jesus was absolutely true!

**Teacher** (1320) ([didaskalos](#) from [didasko](#) = teach to shape will of one being taught by content of what is taught <> cp [didaskalia](#)) is one who provides instruction or systematically imparts truth, which certainly is a perfect "job description" of Jesus and should be the same description for all who claim to follow in His steps. When you teach, do you teach systematically? When you preach, do you preach verse by verse (expositionally)? This title is reserved for the most respected and honored rabbis (but in their mouths was flattery).

**For** - Term of explanation. Explains why Jesus defers to no one.

**You are not partial to any** - **Not partial** is an interesting word (actually 3 Greek words, [blepo](#) = look + eis = toward + [prosopon](#) = face) meaning literally something like "You do not look to the face of men!" Or "You do not look on anyone's countenance." Their point is that no matter to whom Jesus spoke, He would say the same thing and not be swayed by who they were (rich or poor, learned or unlearned, master or slave, etc).

**Rienecker on not partial** - Used in the expression "to accept the face," which is a Hebraism meaning "to regard with favor," "to show partiality" (Geldenhuys). Present tense indicates the habitual practice.

Th' eternal law before Him stands;  
His justice, with impartial hands,  
Divides to all their due reward,  
Or by the scepter or the sword.  
([Isaac Watts - Play hymn](#))

**But teach the way of God in truth** - When I was a boy if I lied my mother would say "*Liar, liar, pants on fire!*" The Pharisees and Herodians were a veritable blazing bonfire! They did not believe what they said or else they would have believed the truth spoken by He Who is Truth (Jn 14:6)! **The way** refers to the manner God desires His creatures to think and live. In short the way of God was the will of God and they said (with lying lips) that Jesus taught it correctly.

**NET Note** - "Very few comments are as deceitful as this one; they did not really believe this at all. The question of the Pharisees and Herodians was specifically designed to trap Jesus."

**Teach** (1321) ([didasko](#) from [dáo](#)= know or teach; English = didactic) means to provide instruction or information in a formal or informal setting. It is the word that is used to refer to a choir director who trains a choir over a long period of rehearsals until they are able to perform. And so didasko describes the ability to pass on truth in a systematic manner so that one receives it, implements it, and experiences a change of behavior.

**Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not** - The Jews have chafed under the poll-tax, but most are paying it. What choice do they have? This tax refers specifically to the "[poll tax](#)" or capitation tax (head money, see [tributum capitis](#)) "for which silver denaria were struck, with the figure of Caesar and a superscription, e.g. "[Tiberiou Kaisaros](#)." (Robertson) This payment made by the people of one nation to another was in a sense a symbol of submission to and dependence on the ruling nation. Imagine how this must have "rubbed the wrong way" ([see pix](#)) in the hearts of the Jews when year after year they had to come up with a silver denarius to drop in the Roman [coffer](#) to support a pagan, idolatrous nation that oppressed them and whom they hated deeply! Indeed, the Jews hated the system that allowed tax collectors to charge exorbitant rates and skim off extra for themselves. It was the Jews' deep seated hatred that these pretenders were hoping to stir up against Jesus. If Jesus said they should pay taxes, they would call Him a false Messiah and a traitor to their nation and their religion. But if he said they should not, the evil spies would report Him to Rome as a traitor of the empire. Jesus' questioners thought they had Him [between a rock and a hard place](#) this time, but He outwitted them yet once again.



**John MacArthur** comments that "By **lawful** they were referring not to Roman law, but to God's law. They thought they knew that the biblically correct answer was negative, and that that was the answer the people would expect. The people believed that the land of Israel and all that it produced belonged to God. Consequently, they hated paying taxes to occupying pagan idolaters. And there were diverse taxes imposed by the Romans, including income taxes, land taxes, import taxes, and transport taxes. But the tax the Jewish people hated most was the poll tax everyone paid for living under Rome's authority. They found it especially offensive because it suggested that Caesar owned them, while they passionately viewed both themselves and the nation as solely God's possession. **Taxation was a constant source of friction between the Jews and Rome**, and played a large part in both the [rebellion led by Judas of Galilee](#) (ED: Jewish leader who led resistance to the census imposed for Roman tax purposes by [Quirinius](#) in [Iudaea Provincea](#) around 6 A D) and the [Jewish revolt of a.d. 66-70](#), which ended in the utter destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman general Titus. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Wiersbe** comments "Governmental authority is instituted by God and must be respected (Pr 8:15; Da 2:21, 37-38; Ro 13:1-7; 1 Pe 2:11-17-note). Yes, our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20-note), and we are strangers and pilgrims on earth, but that does not mean we should ignore our earthly responsibilities. Human government is essential to a safe and orderly society, for man is a sinner and must be kept under control. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

**Is it lawful** - Is it allowed? **Wuest** notes that **lawful** is "The word is *exesti*. The English word "lawful" at once suggests government, a system of civil or criminal law. The Greek word does not necessarily refer to that. The word means "it is permissible, it is allowed, permitted." The context indicates whether the restrictions are religious or civil. Here the Jews were not discussing the legality of paying poll tax to Caesar, but whether a Jew should do so in view of his theocratic relationship to God. They pressed for an answer, yes or no, as if there were no other possible answer. They hoped, in view of His Jewish background and teaching, that He would say no. That would involve Him at once with the Roman authorities. Such a reply, considering the present mood of the crowd, might put Him at the head of a rebellion (Acts 5:37) or at least would have made Him liable to a charge of treason (Luke 23:2). Had He given an affirmative answer, He would have incurred the displeasure of the Jewish crowds.

**Lawful** (1832)(*exesti* from *ek* = out + *eimi* = to be) means it is lawful, it is permitted, it is possible (referring to moral possibility or propriety meaning). The **lawful** is that which is permissible or permitted by law. Specifically in most uses *exesti* refers to things permitted or not permitted by the Torah (the Law), which had to do with standards of conduct which the Word either required or prohibited. *Exesti* implies and acknowledges the authority of the Word of God or an authority prescribed by what is proper and permitted. And so the Word of God, especially the Torah was the standard that guided the conversation and actions of Jesus and the disciples and was part of many of His disagreements with the religious leaders. So we see that *exesti* had to do with what the Word said about eating (Mt 12:4), Sabbath (Mt 12:2,10), marriage (Mt 19:3-5), taxes (Mt 22:17). Often *exesti* took the form of a question, "**Is it lawful?**" (Mt 12:10, 12, Mt 19:3, 20:15, 22:17, Mk 2:24, 3:4, 10:2, 12:14, Lk 6:9, 14:3, 20:22, Acts 21:37). Paul used it in the phrase "all things are lawful for me" in the sense of "permitted." (1 Cor 6:12, 10:23).

**Poll-tax** (2778)(*kensos* - Latin loanword - cf "census") literally meant census and in this context refers to the enumeration of people and property for the purpose of extracting taxes from them. 4x in NT - Matt. 17:25; Matt. 22:17; Matt. 22:19; Mk. 12:14

**Geddert** - If Jesus says **yes**, he loses popularity with the crowds (whose enthusiasm for Jesus prevents the religious leaders from acting against him). If Jesus says **no**, they can lay charges against Jesus before the Romans. Either way, their plot against Jesus moves forward. ([Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#))

**Steven Cole** - It's easy to scoff at the inconsistency of these religious leaders, but we need to look within and admit that we're all prone toward hypocrisy. It lurks in all of our hearts because we're all disposed to want to look good to others, while we forget about what God sees. We're like the little boy who was bragging to his brother about how he had killed a mouse that he caught. He told him how he clobbered it with a broom and then it grabbed it by the tail and smashed it against a rock. Just then, the boy looked up and saw that the preacher was visiting the family and was within earshot. Without missing a beat, the boy added, "And then the good Lord called it home."...But preachers are prone to hypocrisy also. It's easy to want to look more righteous in front of people than you really are. If you're not careful, you can give the impression in sermons that you have it all together spiritually, when you really don't. Sometimes someone will make a comment about my level of piety that goes beyond the truth: "You must spend hours in prayer each week!" No, as a matter of fact, I struggle with prayer just like you do! But if I let the comment go uncorrected, thinking, "What will it hurt?" I fall into hypocrisy.... to avoid hypocrisy, we must not convey false impressions to make ourselves look better to others than we know we really are. ([Guile, Government, and God](#))

**ILLUSTRATION** - **Questions!!!** – Consider this true story about a very successful grocery store in Connecticut. Stu Leonards' grocery store grossed over \$100 million last year. The average grocery store makes \$300 per square foot. Stu's preparation

generates an amazing \$3,000 per square foot. The average grocery store stocks 15,000 items; Stu stocks only 700. Stu has profited immensely from the art of listening and asking the right questions. One day Stu asked a lady, "What do you think of our fresh fish?" She says, "I don't think that the fish is fresh." After explaining it is fresh every day from Boston's Pier she still wasn't convinced so he asked two questions:(1) "What do you mean our fish is not fresh?" She said, "Look at it. It just doesn't look fresh to me. You have that filet sitting on a green cardboard container. You have plastic wrap over the filet -- and it's wrinkled. Finally, you have a price sticker over half of the filet." He asked her a second question:(2) "What would fresh fish look like to you?" "I go to Boston all the time," she said. "I like to see the fish on ice." Stu walked across the aisle and laid the fish flat on the ice. Fish sales soared from 15,000 lbs. a week to 30,000 lbs. a week and stayed at that level. - Listening & asking the right questions holds tremendous opportunity for all of us...unless you're not sincere with your questions!!! **(Brian Bell)**

**Mark 12:15 "Shall we pay or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at."**

- **knowing:** Mt 22:18 Lu 20:23 Joh 2:24,25 21:17 Heb 4:13 Rev 2:23
- **Why:** Mk 10:2 Eze 17:2 Ac 5:9 1Co 10:9
- **a denarius:** Mt 18:28,
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 22:18 But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? 19"Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius.

Luke 20:23+ But He detected their trickery and said to them, 24 "Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's."

Marcus Aurelius on Denarius

### TO PAY OR NOT TO PAY THAT IS THE QUESTION

**Shall we pay or shall we not pay?"** - If Jesus answered, "Yes, pay Caesar," the Pharisees would accuse Him of yielding to Rome which negate His claim as Messiah for the people believed the Messiah would deliver Israel from Rome. If He answered, "No, do not pay Caesar," the Herodians would report Him to Pilate as being opposed to Caesar's rule, thus guilty of sedition. They thought that they had Him this time!

**But He, knowing their hypocrisy** - Matthew 22:18 "But Jesus perceived their malice ([poneria](#) - intentional evil)" Luke 20:23+ "But He detected their trickery ([panourgia](#) also describes their "father" [Jn 8:44] Satan in 2 Cor 11:3)."

**Geddert** - Knowing their hypocrisy, Jesus first exposes it. In response to Jesus' request, someone immediately produces one of the forbidden idolatrous coins. Their trap would have worked better if they had pretended they didn't have any of the detested coins. ([Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#))

**Edgar** - "The baseness of the plot is evident. Their hearts are hostile to Caesar, but they are ready to become "informers" against him for the sake of getting rid of him."

**Wuest** - Mark has "knowing their **hypocrisy**," Matthew, "perceived their **malice**" (Mt 22:18), Luke, "perceived their **trickery**" (Mt 20:23). Thus, the three evangelists give us a rounded picture of the impressions these men made upon our Lord. Why tempt Me? The word is [peirazo](#) "to put to the test." The secondary and late meaning of the word is "to tempt in the sense of soliciting to do evil." Here, the Jewish leaders were putting our Lord to the test. ([Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader](#))

**Steven Cole** on **knowing their hypocrisy** - Jesus saw right through their trickery (the word is used of Satan's craftiness in deceiving Eve, 2 Cor. 11:3). Jesus always sees through hypocrisy! As Hebrews 4:13 says, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Paul said that he lived, "not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts" (1 Thess. 2:4). Let us learn from the pretense of these religious men that we sometimes can fool others, but we can never fool God. Be on guard against the sin of religious hypocrisy. ([Guile, Government, and God](#))

**Hypocrisy** ([5272](#))/([hupokrisis](#)) from **hupo** = under + **krino** = to judge; See also word study on **Hypocrite** = [hupokrites](#)) refers literally to delivery of a speech, along with interpretive gestures and

imitation. In the Greek theater it referred to the practice of putting on a mask and playing a part on stage and in a positive sense described the actor's ability. The NT only gives hupokrisis a negative connotation referring to hypocrisy, duplicity (the quality of being double - belying of one's true intentions by deceptive words or action), insincerity, dissimulation (hiding under a false appearance; hiding or disguising one's thoughts or feelings - don't we all do this from time to time?!). The idea is to pretend, to act as something one is not and so to act deceitfully, pretending to manifest traits like piety and love. It means to create a public impression that is at odds with one's real purposes or motivations, and thus is characterized by play-acting, pretense or outward show. It means to give an impression of having certain purposes or motivations, while in reality having quite different ones.

Comment on Mark 12:15+ from **Ralph Earle (Word Meanings in the NT)** - This verse and its two parallels (Mt. 22:18; Luke 20:23+) furnish **an interesting example of how the three Synoptic accounts supplement each other**. Three different verbs and three different nouns are used. Let us look first at the nouns. Matthew has *poneria*, Luke has *panourgia*, while Mark has *hupokrisis*. In his excellent commentary on the Greek text of Mark, Swete writes: "**Malice** (*poneria*) lay at the root of their conduct, unscrupulous cunning (*panourgia*) supplied them with the means of seeking their end, whilst they sought to screen themselves under the pretence (*hupokrisis*) of a desire for guidance and an admiration of fearless truthfulness" (p. 259). **Now to the verbs**. Mark uses *eidos*, a form of the verb *oida* (*eido*) (know intuitively). Matthew has *gnous*, the aorist of *ginosko* (know by experience or experimentation). Luke has *katanoesas*. The verb is *katanoeo*, which means "notice" or "observe" (AG). Swete comments: "**The Lord detected their true character intuitively (eidos), He knew it by experience (gnous), and He perceived it by tokens which did not escape His observation (katanoesas).**" He adds: "**Thus each Evangelist contributes to the completeness of the picture.**"

**Said to them, "Why are you testing Me?"** - In typical rabbinical style, Jesus responds to the pretenders with a question of His own. Jesus was the Master at use of the "counter question!" Testing is in the **present tense** (continually testing).

**Testing** (3985) (*peirazo* from the noun *peira* = test from *peiro* = perforate, pierce through to test durability of things) is a morally neutral word simply meaning "to test". Whether the **test** is for a good (as it proved to be in Heb 11:17) or evil (Mt 4:1 "*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted** by the devil*") depends on the intent of the one giving the test and also on the response of the one tested. (See study of similar word *dokimazo*) See also word study on related word - *peirasmos*

**Bring** (present imperative) **Me a denarius to look at** - Jesus' command was a **Master stroke** (pun intended!) The Jews were revolted by Caesar's head on the denarius for it smacked of idolatry! But Jesus knew that at least one Jew in the throng was carrying an "idol" in his pocket. Imagine the hush that came over this group and the trepidation that began to enter the wicked hearts of the religious leaders who must have thought "He's up to something again!" I am intrigued that none of the Gospel accounts state that Jesus actually touched the denarius or took it in His hand (cf Mt 22:19; Lk 20:24).

**Denarius** (1220) (*denarion* from Latin origin) denoted a Roman silver coin equivalent to a laborer's average daily wage. Here the specific name of the coin was retained in the translation, because not all coins in circulation in Palestine at the time carried the image of Caesar. (*Dictionary article*). See **ROMAN COINAGE** It was the practice of all new emperors to issue new coins with their own likeness stamped on the face. There is a sense in which the coin was considered to be the personal property of the king. It bore testimony to the rule of the king whose likeness it carried. The first thing that a conqueror would do would be to issue new coins with a new face.

**Hughes** - The silver denarius, weighing 3.8 grams, had been in use in the Roman world since 268 B.C. and continued to be used into the reign of L. Septimius Severus (A.D. 193–211). Denarii bore the head of Tabors and the inscription TI. CAESAR DIVI AVG. F. AVGVSTVS (Tabors Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, Augustus). (Ibid)

**Mark 12:16 They brought one. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" And they said to Him, "Caesar's."**

- **likeness:** Mt 22:19-22 Lu 20:24-26 2Ti 2:19 Rev 3:12
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## Related Passages:

Matthew 22:19 "Show Me **the coin used for the poll-tax.**" And they brought Him a denarius. 20 And He \*said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 21 They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."

Luke 20:24+ "Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's."

**They brought one. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?"** - "Caesar's image (Greek: eikōn; NRSV: head) is used elsewhere in the NT to refer to forbidden images (e.g., Rom. 1:23; Rev. 13:14). However, it is also used to refer to Christ being the image of God (e.g., 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15), to humans being created in the image of God (1 Cor. 11:7), and to believers being changed into the image of God/Christ (Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:18)." ([Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#))

**Likeness** (1504)(**eikon**) properly, "mirror-like representation," i.e. what is very close in resemblance. **Eikon** is an artistic representation, as one might see on a coin in the present context. Colossians 1:15 describes Jesus as "the **image** (eikon) of the invisible God" a living manifestation of the true God which stands in radical contrast to the eikon of the ruling Caesar on the denarius who claimed to be god! **Eikon** is the same Greek word is used in in the Lxx of Gen 1:26 to describe man made in the "image" of God. **NET Note** - Jesus is making a subtle yet powerful contrast: Caesar's image is on the denarius, so he can lay claim to money through taxation, but God's image is on humanity, so he can lay claim to each individual life.

**Hughes** - One side bore the head of Caesar and the abbreviated inscription TI. CAESAR DIVI AVG. F. AVGVSTVS ("Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, Augustus"). The denarius was the amount that had to be paid into the Roman fiscus (treasury) by all adult men and women just for the privilege of existing. It could only be paid with that coin bearing Caesar's image and inscription. (Ibid)

**Inscription** (1923)(**epigraphe** from **epí** = on, upon + **grápho** = write. [Epigraphy](#) = study of inscriptions or epigraphs) means writing upon something and in the NT refers to inscriptions concerning the leader of the world system at that time (Caesar) and the Leader of the Jews (and the world), Jesus. Mark 15:26 has another famous inscription - "The **inscription** of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS." (cf Luke 23:38+) **All uses**- Matt. 22:20; Mk. 12:16; Mk. 15:26; Lk. 20:24; Lk. 23:38 Not found in the Septuagint.

**And they said to Him, "Caesar's** - The denarius had an image of the reigning Caesar, in this case probably Tiberius Caesar (A.D. 14-37) and included an inscription which referred to Caesar as divine and as "chief priest." The Caesars were worshiped as gods, so the claim to divinity on the coin itself repulsed the Jews. Thus the coin served as a constant reminder of Israel's subjection to Rome (one that they even had to "pay for!")

**David Guzik** has an interesting comment on **Whose image and inscription does it have?** - Essentially, Jesus said "You recognize Caesar's civil authority when you use his coins, therefore you are obliged to pay him the taxes he asks for." "The denarii bore the head of Tiberius and the inscription TI. CAESAR DIVI AVG. F. AVGVSTVS (Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, Augustus). The image and inscriptions of ancient coins would have been understood as a property seal; the coins belonged to Caesar." (Pate). A spiritual lesson can be learned from what is inscribed on coins issued in the United States, because each phrase has an important association in the Christian life. - (1) In God we Trust (2) Liberty (3) E. Pluribus Unum (Out of Many, One) (Enduring Word Bible Commentary – Luke)

**Caesar** (2541)(**kaisar** of Latin origin) refers to the emperor of Rome. It was originally a surname of Julius Caesar, later taken as a title by the chief Roman ruler. **Zodhiates** on **Caesar** - The title taken by each of the Roman emperors, e.g., **Augustus Caesar** who reigned when the Lord Jesus was born (Luke 2:1); his successor **Tiberius Caesar**, who reigned from a.d. 14-37 (Luke 3:1); **Claudius Caesar**, from a.d. 41-54 (Acts 11:28; 18:2); **Nero**, under whom Peter and Paul were martyred, a.d. 54-68 (Phil. 4:22); **Domitian** was Caesar from a.d. 81-96, and under him John was exiled to Patmos. **Caesar** is mentioned by the Lord Jesus in Luke 20:22-25, both literally as referring to **Tiberius Caesar** and figuratively as meaning any earthly ruler. The name Caesar came to be used as a symbol of the state in general and is often used in this sense in the NT (Matt. 22:17, 21; Mark 12:14, 16, 17; Luke 20:22, 24, 25). (Borrow [The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament](#) )

**Brian Bell** summarizes this section on the trap set by the Herodian spies - It was a perfect trap! To affirm would alienate him from the Jews who were against this tax. To deny the lawfulness of this tax would bring Roman wrath upon him So Jesus hits them right

between the horns of their dilemma. But Jesus did not deal with it as a **political** question. He saw it as a **spiritual** issue! Just as the coin bore the image of Caesar, so man bears the image of God and has a responsibility to Him. But that also means we have a responsibility to human government, because government was instituted by God (Ro 13:1-7) It is not an either/or situation, but a both/and! If you live under a government's rule; If you are protected by your government (police, military, national guard, etc); If you are using your government's money to buy & sell; then you are in debt to the gov under which you live & enjoy its benefits. But whose image & superscription is upon you? The greatest Potentate is stamped upon every human face...God Himself! – We have been made in the image and likeness of God! The superscription on every human life is that God alone is Pontifex Maximus. Thus He said in effect, "As is the coin to Caesar, so are you to God." Give to Caesar what's his, but don't forget to give to God what is His! So what's God's? Everything I have, everything I am! If you live under a God's rule; If you are protected by your God; If you are using God's power and gifts; then you are in debt to God under which you live & enjoy His benefits. Read - Ro 13:7,8 (our debt to Him is love) Christians must accept the state as ordained by God and render respect and obedience to the governments. When a conflict arises between our allegiance to the state & our allegiance to God, we must be true to God (**ED: JESUS SAID IT THIS WAY** -"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." Mt 6:24-+ JESUS ALONE IS OUR LORD AND OUR MASTER). ([Commentary](#))

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#### The Divine Image in the Soul (Bishop Ehrler.)

1. The Divine image ought to be our highest glory.
2. Let the Divine image which we bear be a constant exhortation to serve God.
3. Never defile the Divine image by sin.
4. Endeavour to increase every day the beauty of the Divine image.
5. Respect the Divine image in your neighbour.

**Mark 12:17 And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him.**

- **Render:** Pr 24:21 Mt 17:25-27 Ro 13:7 1Pe 2:17
- **and to God:** Mk 12:30 Pr 23:26 Ec 5:4,5 Mal 1:6 Ac 4:19,20 Ro 6:13 12:1 1Co 6:19,20 2Co 5:14,15
- **And they were amazed:** Job 5:12,13 Mt 22:22,33,46 1Co 14:24,25
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 22:21 They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then **render** to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." 22 And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.

Luke 20:25+ And He said to them, "Then **render** to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 26 And **they were unable to catch Him** in a saying in the presence of the people; and being amazed at His answer, they became silent.

### RENDERING TO CAESAR AND TO GOD

**And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."**- Jesus escapes what they Pharisees and Herodians thought was an inescapable trap!

**NET Note** - Jesus is making a subtle yet powerful contrast: Caesar's image is on the denarius, so he can lay claim to money through taxation, but God's image is on humanity, so he can lay claim to each individual life. Jesus' answer to give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's was a both/and, not the questioners' either/or. So he slipped out of their trap.

**Geddert** - Mark's reader, and probably also the original opponents of Jesus, are expected to see in the final part of Jesus' response a challenge to give themselves completely to God. If God's image is stamped onto our very being, we owe ourselves fully to God. Jesus' opponents, instead of giving themselves to God, have robbed God at every turn. They have withheld their love for God and neighbor (Mk 12:32-33), substituting for love both legalism and ceremonialism. They have robbed Jewish pilgrims and especially Gentile visitors in the temple (Mk 11:15-17). They robbed the poor of their possessions (Mk 12:40) and God of the honor that is God's alone (Mk 12:38-39). To use the imagery of Jesus' parable, they are stealing the vineyard's fruit (Mk 12:3) and trying to steal



the vineyard itself (Mk 12:7). Then they seek refuge in the temple, turning it into a den of robbers (Mk 11:17). They think they can trap Jesus with a question about taxes. Instead, Jesus has sprung the trap on them. ([Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#))

**Barton** - Paying the taxes, however, did not have to mean submission to the divinity claimed by the emperor through the inscription on the coins. Caesar had the right to claim their tax money, but he had no claim on their souls. The Jews had a responsibility to give to God what was his. While they lived in the Roman world, the Jews had to face the dual reality of subjection to Rome and responsibility to God. Jesus explained that they could do both if they kept their priorities straight. The tax would be paid as long as Rome held sway over Judea, but God had rights on eternity and on their lives. (LAC)

**Steven Cole** on "**Render ... to God the things that are God's**" - Jesus' statement implies that just as the Roman coin had Caesar's image stamped on it and thus rightfully fell under his jurisdiction, so every person has God's image stamped on him or her and thus rightfully belongs to God. Just as Caesar had sole authority to issue coins stamped with his image, so God is the only one who creates human beings stamped with His image. We owe God our very existence. He rightfully owns us, our possessions, our money, and our time. If we are not yielding ourselves completely to His sovereign lordship, we are disobeying the supreme authority of the universe! By challenging Jesus, these Pharisees and Herodians were guilty of not rendering to God the things that are God's. They came to Jesus, not to obey Him, but to trap Him. They acted as if they were sincerely interested in His opinion about a moral issue, but they had no intention of obeying what He said. But the only way you can come to Christ is to come honestly, confessing your sins, being willing to obey Him. If you come to contend with Him in order to get your own way, beware! He knows the secret motives of every heart! One day every knee will bow before Him. So the overarching principle is that we must submit all of our lives to the absolute sovereignty of God, the supreme ruler of the universe. He sets up rulers and takes them down according to His will. As Daniel 4 repeats three times, "The Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes" (Da 4:17, 25, 32+). When God's authority confronts our authority to rule our lives, we must submit to Him or face His judgment. We've all got to do business with God who examines our hearts. Don't risk playing games with Him! It always causes great damage to the cause of Christ when a man who has crusaded against pornography gets caught with a prostitute. We need to judge our hypocrisy and live with integrity before God. A few years ago, the late Senate Chaplain Richard Halverson told about a senator who was speaking at a church men's dinner. The senator asked how many men believed in prayer in the public schools. Almost every hand went up. He then asked, "How many of you pray daily with your children in your home?" Only a few hands were raised. Ouch! Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. But above all, render to God the things that are God's. ([Guile, Government, and God](#))

**R M Edgar** on rendering to Caesar and to God - Caesar has his domain, as the currency shows. He regulates the outward relations of men, their barter and their citizenship, and by his laws he makes them keep the peace. But beyond this civil sphere, there is the moral and the religious, where God alone is King. Let God get his rights as well as Caesar, and all shall be well. These words of Christ sounded the death-knell of the Jewish theocracy. They point out two mutually independent spheres. They call upon men to be at once loyal citizens and real saints. We may do our duty by the state, while at the same time we are conscious citizens of heaven, and serve our unseen Master in all things.

**Render** (aorist imperative) (591)([apodidomi](#) from **apó** = from + **didomi** = give and so to "give off" from one's self) literally means to give back, then to put away by giving and then in a more figurative sense to pay back or recompense. To give what is proper and due.

**And they were amazed at Him** - Luke 20:26+ adds this detail "**And they were unable to catch** ([epilambano](#) - get a grip on, take possession of) Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and **being amazed** at His answer, **they became silent** ([sigao](#)) (BUT THEY WOULD ATTACK AGAIN!)." **Amazed** is **ekthaumazo** (only here in Bible) in the [imperfect tense](#) pictures His enemies as utterly [baffled](#). One can see they talking to each other and over and over they express their total amazement at Jesus' ability to slip their "sure" trap!

**MacArthur** comments that these religious leaders "Instead of marveling at Christ's astonishing wisdom and reexamining their obligation to God, the frustrated leaders were amazed, but rather than admit that to Jesus, they became silent. Their attitude toward Him had not changed. Though they had failed to elicit the incriminating response from Him that they had hoped for, they stubbornly persisted in trying to find another way. When they finally managed to bring Jesus before Pilate, they lied and said, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar" (Luke 23:2). Their sinful stubbornness left them in a hopeless, irremediable, unredeemable situation." (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Steven Cole** - Jesus' answer stunned the pretenders. In one succinct sentence, He showed that God and Caesar each have legitimate realms of authority with corresponding responsibilities. But if there is a conflict between realms, God is supreme over Caesar. By asking His critics to produce the Roman coin, Jesus underscored the fact that they were enjoying the benefits of Caesar's government. They used his coinage; they enjoyed many civil improvements and benefits that he provided. Thus they were obligated to give him his due. And yet, by His final statement, "to God the things that are God's," Jesus affirmed that it would be wrong to go along with Caesar's blasphemous claim to deity, which was stamped on each coin. One side read, "**Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus**" ("divine Augustus"? Woe!); the other read, "**Pontifex Maximus**" ("Chief Priest"). Jesus meant that



above Caesar is God. We must never go so far in rendering unto Caesar that we violate our obligation to God, the supreme sovereign who rules over all....By His statement, “**render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s**” Jesus acknowledged that God has ordained civil government and given it a proper sphere of authority. God ordained civil government for the good of society. Paul explains this in Romans 13:1-7, where he commands, “Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God” (Ro 13:1). He goes on to state that the government “is a minister of God to you for good” (Ro 13:4). When Paul wrote this, the godless Nero was emperor. Thus we must conclude that we are not free to disobey or rebel against wicked rulers, unless they command us to violate God’s higher law. (See his sermon [Guile, Government, and God](#) for more on the role of government and how Christians should interact).

**THOUGHT - Let’s apply the truth in this passage** - Who’s image do you bear? By creation all men bear the image of God (Ge 1:26-27). But only by redemption do men bear the image of Christ. So let me ask “Whose image do you bear?” As Paul says if we bear Christ’s image, we “are not our own, for we you have been bought with a price: therefore we are to glorify God in our body.” (1 Cor 6:19-20-note) That is the way we render to God the things that are God’s! We “present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship.” (Ro 12:1-note) Dear Christ follower, are you rendering to God what is due to Him Alone? **Spurgeon** writes on the image of Christ in us “I have heard it said that the good sculptor, whenever he sees a suitable block of marble, firmly believes that there is a statue concealed within it, and that his business is but to take away the superfluous material, and so unveil the “thing of beauty,” which shall be “a joy for ever.” Believer, you are that block of marble; you have been quarried by divine grace, and set apart for the Master’s service, but we cannot see the **image of Christ** in you yet as we could wish; true, there are some traces of it, some dim outlines of what is to be; it is for you, with the chisel and the mallet, with constant endeavour and holy dependence upon God, to work out that **image of Christ** in yourself, till you shall be discovered to be by all men like unto your Lord and Master., “The life of Jesus will be manifested in your bodies that Christ would be formed in you.” (cf 2 Cor 4:10)

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#### **Walter Kaiser - Render to Caesar?**

For many readers of the Gospels this does not seem to be a particularly hard saying. They pay their taxes to the state and give financial support to the church and various forms of religious and charitable action, and consider that this is very much in line with the intention of Jesus’ words. There are others, however, who find in these words material for debate, arguing that their meaning is not at all clear, or else, if it is clear, that it is quite different from what it is usually taken to be. Our first business must be to consider the setting in which the words were spoken. When we have done that, we may realize that some of those who heard them felt that here was a hard saying indeed.

Mark, followed by Matthew (Mt 22:15–22) and Luke (Lk 20:19–26), tells how a deputation of Pharisees and Herodians came to Jesus while he was teaching in the temple precincts during his last visit to Jerusalem and, expressing their confidence that he would give them a straight answer, without fear or favor, asked him if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not. By “lawful” they meant “in accordance with the law of God, the basis of Israel’s corporate life.” Mark says that the questioners planned “to entrap him in his talk” (Mk 12:13 RSV); Luke spells this out more explicitly: their purpose, he says, was to “take hold of what he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor” (Lk 20:20 RSV). The governor or prefect of Judea was the representative of Caesar, and any discouragement of the payment of taxes to Caesar would incur sharp retribution from him.

It was, indeed, a very delicate question. After Herod the Great, king of the Jews, died in 4 B.C., the Romans divided his kingdom into three parts, giving each to one of his sons. Galilee, where Jesus lived for most of his life, was ruled by Herod Antipas until A.D. 39. Judea, the southern part, with Jerusalem as its capital, was given to Archelaus (compare Mt 2:22). The sons of Herod received taxes from their subjects, as their father Herod had done. The Herods were not popular, but religiously they were Jews, so no religious difficulties stood in the way of paying taxes to them. But Archelaus’s rule in Judea proved to be so oppressive that, after nine years, the Roman emperor removed him to forestall a revolt and reorganized Judea as a Roman province, to be governed by a prefect appointed by himself. From now on the people of Judea were required to pay their taxes to the Roman emperor, Caesar. A census was held in A.D. 6 to determine the amount of tribute the new province was to yield.

The Jews had been subject to Gentile overlords for long periods in their history, but no prophet or religious teacher had ever taught in earlier days that there was anything wrong in paying tribute to those overlords. On the contrary, the prophets taught them that if they fell under Gentile domination, this was by God’s permission, and they should acknowledge the divine will by paying tribute to their foreign rulers. But around the time of the census in A.D. 6 a new teaching was spread abroad, to the effect that God alone was Israel’s king, and therefore it was high treason against him for his people to recognize any Gentile ruler by paying him tribute. The principal teacher of this new doctrine was Judas the Galilean, who led a revolt against the Romans (see Acts 5:37). The revolt was crushed, but its ideals lived on, and the propriety of paying taxes to Caesar continued to be a subject for theological debate. It would be generally agreed that Jews in the lands of the Dispersion, living on Gentile territory, should pay taxes in accordance with the laws

of the areas where they lived. But the land of Israel was God's land; this was recognized by its inhabitants when they handed over one-tenth of its produce to the maintenance of his temple in Jerusalem. But the taxes that the Roman emperor demanded were also derived from the produce of God's land. Was it right for God's people, living on God's land, to give a proportion of its produce to a pagan ruler? When the question was framed in those terms, the obvious answer for many was no.

What would Jesus say? While he stayed in Galilee the question did not arise; taxes in that region were paid to a Jewish tetrarch. But when he visited Judea, he came to a place where it was a burning question. However he answered it, it would be almost impossible to avoid giving offense. If he said that it was unlawful to pay taxes to Caesar, the Roman governor would get to hear of it and he could be charged with sedition. If he said that it was lawful, he would offend those who maintained the ideals of Judas the Galilean, and many would think him unpatriotic. This would lose him much of his following in Judea.

"Bring me a denarius," said Jesus; "let me look at it." The denarius was a Roman silver coin; Roman taxes had to be paid in Roman coinage. When a denarius was forthcoming, Jesus asked, "Whose face is this? Whose name is this?" The answer, of course, was "Caesar's." Well, said Jesus, the coin which bears Caesar's face and name is obviously Caesar's coin; let Caesar have it back. The verb translated "render" has the sense of giving back to someone that which belongs to him.

Did he imply that the use of Caesar's coinage was a tacit acknowledgment of Caesar's sovereignty? Perhaps he did. There were some Jews whose orthodoxy was such that they would not look at, let alone handle, a coin which bore a human face. Why? Because it was said to infringe the second commandment of the Decalogue, which forbade the making of "any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Ex 20:4 RSV). Jesus did not necessarily share this attitude—money of any kind was held in little enough regard by him—but there may have been an implication in his words that the Pharisees among his questioners might have appreciated: such coins were unfit for use by people who were so scrupulous about keeping the law of God, and should go back where they came from. Caesar's coins were best used for paying Caesar's tribute. If that was what Caesar wanted, let him have it; the claims of God were not transgressed by such use of Caesar's money. What was really important was to discover what God's claims were, and see to it that they were met. Once again, he laid primary emphasis on seeking God's kingdom and righteousness.

Some interpreters have discerned more subtle ambiguities in Jesus' answer, as though, for example, he included in "the things that are God's" the produce of God's land and meant that none of it should go to Caesar, not even when it was converted into Roman coinage. But this kind of interpretation would render the whole business about producing a denarius pointless. Certainly his answer would not satisfy those who believed that for Judeans to pay tribute to Caesar was wrong. If some of the bystanders had been led by the manner of his entry into Jerusalem a few days before to expect a declaration of independence from him, they must have been disappointed. And indeed, there seems to have been less enthusiasm for him in Jerusalem at the end of Holy Week than there had been at the beginning. On the other hand, if his questioners hoped that he would compromise himself by his reply, they too were disappointed. He not only avoided the dilemma on the horns of which they wished to impale him, but turned it so as to insist afresh on the central theme of his ministry. ([Go to page 407 in Hard Sayings](#))

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## CIVIL OBEDIENCE

Jesus taught that Christians should render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. In this passage, Jesus did not elaborate on all the issues related to a Christian citizen's responsibility to the state, but he did indicate a preference for compliance and civil stability. So . . .

Choose your battle carefully. No state is perfect. If you refuse to live with moments of unfairness or bureaucratic hassle, you'll need to live by yourself on an island.

Cooperate and support the state as far as faith will take you. Fortunately in democratic countries (unlike Judea in Jesus' time), we can work for peaceful change through speeches, publications, assemblies, boycotts, and media campaigns. There is no need to be a hermit or a rebel.

Be wary of radicals on the left and reactionaries on the right. Militia movements have appealed to worried Christians and caused them to become more worried still. Leftist movements have attracted other Christians, who confuse political change with spiritual growth.

When resistance is required, pray a lot and take counsel from Christian friends. Citizenship requires compromise, but Christians should not compromise Christ or do injustice before God. (See [Matthew](#) - LAC)

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## GOOD TIMING

The Pharisees and Herodians thought they could trap Jesus by forcing him to choose between two responsibilities. He stunned them by choosing both. He demonstrated that behind many of our conflicts lies a failure to recognize priorities. Should we give time and attention to our families or our work? Can we communicate our relationship with God through the work we do or by setting our work aside and engaging our fellow workers in conversation? Should we support our church or other worthy causes? According to Jesus' handling of this situation, these problems are issues of timing and priority, not right and wrong. The real challenge for most of

us concerns whether or not we are doing what we should be doing at the appropriate time.

Citizenship in the kingdom of God doesn't lessen commitments. In fact, it often intensifies them! Marriage duties, parental roles, church involvement, earthly citizenship—all take specific place under God's authority. Make sure your commitment to God stays strong, then all your priorities will be under his authority. (See [Matthew](#) - LAC)

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#### **Question - [What did Jesus mean when He said, “Render to Caesar what is Caesar’s”?](#)**

**Answer:** “Render to Caesar what is Caesar’s” is a well-known quote that appears in Matthew 22:21 and is part of Jesus’ response to a joint attempt by the Herodians and Pharisees to make Jesus stumble in front of His own people.

The [Herodians](#) were a non-religious Jewish party who supported the dynasty of Herod and the general policy of the Roman government. They perceived that Christ’s pure and spiritual teaching and influence were antagonistic to their interests. The [Pharisees](#), on the other hand, were members of an ancient Jewish sect who believed in the strict observance of oral traditions and the written Law of Moses. They didn’t believe that Christ was the Messiah, despite His many miracles during His earthly ministry. Although Herodians and Pharisees were at opposite ends of the political spectrum, their common hatred of Christ was enough for them to join forces to try to destroy Him.

Here is the context of Jesus’ command to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s”: in Matthew 22 Jesus had just returned to Jerusalem for the final time and recently finished sharing several parables with the crowd. Jesus’ enemies saw an opportunity to put Jesus on the spot in front of His followers. In verse 17, they say to Jesus, “Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” (ESV). It was a trick question, and they knew it. If Jesus answered, “No,” the Herodians would charge Him with treason against Rome. If He said, “Yes,” the Pharisees would accuse Him of disloyalty to the Jewish nation, and He would lose the support of the crowds. To pay taxes or not to pay taxes? The question was designed as a Catch-22.

Jesus’ response is nothing short of brilliant: “But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, ‘Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax.’ And they brought him a denarius” (Matthew 22:18–19ESV).

The denarius was a coin used as the tax money at the time. It was made of silver and featured an image of the emperor with an inscription calling him “divine.” The Jews considered such images idolatry, forbidden by the second commandment. This was another reason why, if Jesus answered, “Yes,” He would be in trouble. His acceptance of the tax as “lawful” could have been seen as a rejection of the second commandment, thus casting doubt on His claim to be the Son of God.

With the coin displayed in front of them, Jesus said, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” The Herodians and Pharisees, stating the obvious, said, “Caesar’s.” Then Jesus brought an end to their foolish tricks: “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21ESV). Upon hearing this, Jesus’ enemies marveled and went away (verse 22).

When Jesus said, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,” He was drawing a sharp distinction between two kingdoms. There is a kingdom of this world, and Caesar holds power over it. But there is another kingdom, not of this world, and Jesus is King of that (John 18:36). Christians are part of both kingdoms, at least temporarily. Under Caesar, we have certain obligations that involve material things. Under Christ, we have other obligations that involve things eternal. If Caesar demands money, give it to him—it’s only [mammon](#). But make sure you also give God what He demands.

Caesar minted coins, as he had a right to do, and he demanded some coins in return, as was his right. After all, his image was stamped on what he had made. God has “minted” the human soul, and He has stamped His image on every one (Genesis 1:27). So give Caesar his due—the temporary stuff of this world—but make sure to give God His due: “Offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness” (Romans 6:13). (Source: [GotQuestions.org](#))

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#### **Money And Time**

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. —Mark 12:17

Today’s Scripture: Mark 12:13-17,28-31

During a trip to London, I visited the Bank of England Museum, then made my way to The Clockmakers’ Museum. At some point, it struck me that both money and time have been very important commodities as far back as anyone can remember. Yet they present one of the great dilemmas of life. We trade our valuable time working for money, and then we spend our money to make the most of our time off. We seldom possess the two with any degree of balance.

In contrast, our Lord never seemed perplexed by money or time. When asked if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, Jesus answered: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17). With great demands on His time, Jesus spent early mornings and late nights in prayer, seeking to know and do His Father's will.

Hymnwriter Frances Havergal wrote:

Take my life, and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;  
Take my moments and my days,  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.  
Take my silver and my gold,  
Not a mite would I withhold;  
Take my intellect and use  
Every power as Thou shalt choose.

We can properly balance time and money when we offer ourselves without reservation to God. —David McCasland

Spend time and money wisely—they both belong to God.

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### **The Alice Tax**

Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. — 1 Timothy 6:8

Today's Scripture: Mark 12:12-17,41-44

Author Calvin Trillin's wife, Alice, held a unique view of income tax. She believed that "after a certain level of income, the government would simply take everything." She thought there should be a limit on how much money people were allowed to keep for themselves. Writing in *The New Yorker*, Trillin said of his wife, "She believed in the principle of enoughness."

In Mark 12, Jesus avoided a carefully laid trap by telling His questioners to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (v.17). When Jesus watched people making their offerings to the temple treasury, He commended a woman who would have been considered foolish for her extravagance. "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" (vv.43-44).

Jesus placed more importance on wholehearted love for God than on wholesale concern over material needs. His tranquil attitude toward money and possessions was based on trusting His Father to supply each day's needs. "Your Father knows the things you have need of" (Matt. 6:8).

Enoughness. What a concept! By: David C. McCasland [\(Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved\)](#)

He clothes the lilies, feeds the birds;  
Would He to you, then, pay less heed?  
Look up to Him with prayerful heart,  
He will supply your every need. —Renfrow

Contentment is not getting what we want but being satisfied with what we have.

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### **Related Resources:**

- [What does the Bible say about government?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about paying taxes?](#)

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**Mark 12:18 Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and began questioning Him, saying,**

- **came:** Mt 22:23-33 Lu 20:27-40
- **say:** Ac 4:1,2 23:6-9 1Co 15:13-18 2Ti 2:18

- Mark 12:18-27 - Sadducees
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Matthew 22:23 On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him,

Luke 20:27+ Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection),

## IRONICAL HYPOCRISY

This is the third attempt by the religious elite to discredit Jesus before the people, this time with another sect, the Sadducees, the only mention of this group in the Gospel of Mark.

[Daniel Akin](#) has an interesting (understatement) introduction to Mark 12:18-27 writing "There is a playful saying that teachers of the Bible will often cite: "If you want to build a big crowd then teach on "sex" or "the end times." And, if you want to build a really big crowd then teach on "sex in the end times!" 2) Interestingly, that very issue was raised by a group of religious leaders who did not even believe in the end times, who rejected outright any doctrine of life after death. They are known in the Bible as the Sadducees. 3) The question of life after death has always fascinated humans, especially the religious. Every religion has some perspective on the issue though they vary widely in what they believe. Recent surveys point out the 80% of Americans believe in some form of life after death, with another 9% saying it may be true but that they were not sure. 4) Christianity has always had a strong doctrine concerning life after death, even if we had to admit to a good bit of mystery on the precise details. There is nothing surprising about this, after all we build our understanding of the future, end times and eternity from the teachings of Jesus, an empty tomb, and a resurrected and living Savior. The Bible tells us a lot but it does not tell us everything. 5) In this passage we will see how Jesus countered the troubling riddle of the Sadducees and demolished their theology and doctrine of annihilation. In the process, we will allow additional scriptures and theological reflection to help us craft a healthy perspective on what we can expect for the future. For those who know and trust Christ for salvation one thing is certain: it is all good! ([Mark 12:18-27 Will There Be Sex in Heaven?](#))

**Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus**- Talk about evil hypocrites! They do not even believe the resurrection but will still attempt to use it to trap Jesus. **Who say that there is no resurrection** - And as you have likely heard, that is why they were "**sad you see!**" (Get it?) **MacArthur** writes that "They were so defined by not believing in the resurrection, that they had mastered the art of infuriating the Pharisees and the rest of the people with their arguments. They made a joke out of resurrection."

**Hiebert** - The historical present **came** pictures them as confidently approaching, assured that their question will confound Jesus....Because they could not see the teaching of a resurrection in the Pentateuch, which alone they regarded as normative for Jewish life and thought, they rejected it as a Pharisaic innovation....They felt themselves superior to Him and intended to expose His inadequacy as a teacher in theological matters. They thus hoped to discredit Him before the people and also demonstrate the superiority of their position to that of the Pharisees. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

As [Akin](#) says "The parade of opponents that began in Mark 11:27 continues. The chief priests, scribes and elders took their shot in Mk 11:27-12:12 and went down in flames. The Pharisees and Herodians were the second wave of enemies to take Him on in Mk 12:13-17 and He shut their mouths. Now the Sadducees come with a trick question they had probably used dozens of times to frustrate the Pharisees. They will now try it out on Jesus. This is the only time in Mark that Jesus has an exclusive encounter with the Sadducees ([Mark 12:18-27 Will There Be Sex in Heaven?](#))

[Akin's](#) excellent summary of the Sadducees - A small sect of the priestly families. - Wealthy aristocrats with significant political/temple influences. They dominated the Sanhedrin (cf. Acts 5:17). - Sympathetic to [Hellenism](#), the Herods and Rome. - Considered only the books of Moses (Pentateuch) as authoritative. In a sense this made them theological conservatives. - Had a strong doctrine of human free will. - Did not believe in angels and demons (Acts 23:8). - Were not looking for a Messiah-King from David's line. - Did not believe in the immortality of the soul. - Did not believe in a future bodily resurrection. Josephus said, "The doctrine of the Sadducees is this: souls die with bodies." ([Antiquities, 18:1, 4 - INTERESTING NOTE AS HE DISCUSSES PHARISEES IN 18:3](#)). - With the total destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, their center of power, and political influence came to an end and they vanished from history. ([Mark 12:18-27 Will There Be Sex in Heaven?](#))

In Acts 23 Luke records Paul's defense before the Council declaring

But perceiving that one group were **Sadducees** and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council,



"Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!" 7 As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and **Sadducees**, and the assembly was divided. 8 For the **Sadducees** say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. (Acts 23:6-8+)

And so we see that the Sadducees scoffed at many of the Pharisees' beliefs in the supernatural. The Sadducees remind me of Thomas Jefferson's so-called "Bible" which "is especially notable for its exclusion of all miracles by Jesus and most mentions of the supernatural, including sections of the four gospels that contain the Resurrection and most other miracles, and passages that portray Jesus as divine!" Amazing! Shocking! ([See Jefferson's Bible](#)). Clearly the Sadducees and Pharisees were bitter rivals, except when it came to opposing Jesus again proving the truth of the ancient proverb that "[The enemy of my enemy is my friend!](#)" (See Jn 11:47 where "chief priests" are the Sadducees) Of the major groups of Jewish religious leaders, the Sadducees were the smallest and yet one of the most influential, because of their wealth, and aristocratic standing in Jewish society. Many of the priests and chief priest were Sadducees as well as most of the Sanhedrin. They held most of the positions of power in the Temple including oversight of the lucrative business operations in the Court of the Gentiles on the Temple grounds, giving them good reason to hate Jesus Who overturned their lucrative business (Lk 19:45-48). Surprisingly they, like the Herodians, were eager to cooperate with the Romans. The Sadducees were religious liberals in their denial of the resurrection, angels, and the age to come. Josephus wrote that the Sadducees believed that the soul and body perish together at death. Since they rejected life after death, the Sadducees focused all their attention on this present life, this world which "is passing away, and also its lusts." (1 Jn 2:17). The Sadducees lived life as if there were no tomorrow. They fastidiously observed the Mosaic Law, but at the same time oppressed the common people, and used their positions of power to indulge themselves at the expense of the common people. If the Sadducees were alive today, their "theme song" might have been the Grassroots "[Let's Live for Today!](#)" especially the **refrain** "Sha la la la la la, let's live for today and don't worry about tomorrow"! On the other hand they were fundamentalists who rejected the oral traditions which the Pharisees accepted. The Sadducees only accepted the Torah or Pentateuch as their primary authority and they contended that the resurrection was not taught in the Torah nor in any of the other OT books.

**Wuest** adds that "The Pharisees were the ritualists, the Herodians, the political party among the Jews allied with the ruling Roman class, the Sadducees, the rationalists. The latter professed a disbelief in angels or spirits, and in a resurrection. They were closely identified with the priestly aristocracy (Acts 5:7), were relatively few in numbers, and were not held in as much esteem by the people as the Pharisees. These approached Jesus with the question which divided them from the Pharisees." ([Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader](#))

**Alan Carr:** The Sadducees controlled all the buying and selling that went on at the Temple. Thus, they were angry with Jesus because He had interrupted their business enterprises when He cleansed the Temple, Mark 11:12-19. When the Temple was destroyed in AD 70 so the Sadducees disappeared from history.

The **Sadducees** did not accept the OT passages that teach a future resurrection and a quick scan of the passages reveals the most likely reason they did not accept the following passages. Why not? Because none are taken from the Torah which was their primary authoritative source. Jesus would soon crush their absurd argument with Scripture from the Torah!

Job 19:25-27 (probably the oldest book in the Bible indicating belief in resurrection from ancient times) "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. 26 "Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; 27 Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!

**Comment** - A site I respect feels this is not a resurrection passage, but I disagree. Daniel Akin agrees that "The doctrine of resurrection finds Old Testament support in places like Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:9-11; and Daniel 12:2."

Psalm 16:9-11+ ([A Messianic Psalm](#)) Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. 10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. 11 You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

**Comment:** Psalm 16:10 is quoted by Peter in Acts 2:27+ in his first sermon to the Jews after Pentecost as a prophecy that was fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Peter states clearly that David did not fulfill the promise of this psalm (Acts 2:29+). (Read the full context - Acts 2:22-27+ and compare Acts 13:33-35+)

[Gotquestions](#) - The resurrection of the Messiah is strongly implied in another Davidic psalm. Again, this is Psalm 22. In verses 19–21, the suffering Savior prays for deliverance "from the lion's mouth" (a metaphor for Satan). This desperate prayer is then followed immediately in verses 22–24 by a hymn of



praise in which the Messiah thanks God for hearing His prayer and delivering Him. The resurrection of the Messiah is clearly implied between the ending of the prayer in verse 21 and the beginning of the praise song in verse 22.

Psalms 49:15+ But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, For He will receive me. Selah.

Isaiah 53:10-11+ But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring (CLEARLY IMPLIES HE WOULD LIVE AFTER BEING RENDERED AS A GUILT OFFERING), He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. 11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

**Comment:** And back again to Isaiah 53: after prophesying that the Suffering Servant of God would suffer for the sins of His people, the prophet says He would then be "cut off out of the land of the living." But Isaiah then states that He (Messiah) "will see His offspring" and that God the Father will "prolong His days" (Isaiah 53:5, 8, 10). Isaiah proceeds to reaffirm the promise of the resurrection in different words: "As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see light and be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11). ([Scriptures prophesy resurrection of Messiah](#))

Isaiah 26:19 **Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise.** You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.

Daniel 12:2+ **"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake,** these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

Daniel 12:13+ "But as for you (DANIEL), go your way to the end; **then you will enter into rest and rise again** for your allotted portion (REWARD SURELY ALLUDED TO IN Da 12:3+) at the end of the age."

**Comment:** When will Daniel be resurrected (and the other OT saints)? This passage says at the end of the age ([see timing of resurrections](#)). We are still in that same age now and it will be brought to an abrupt end when Messiah returns at His Second Coming, defeats all opposition (Gentile and Jew) and sets up His Millennial Kingdom.

**And began questioning Him, saying** - In Luke's version (Luke 20:27+) they also address Jesus as "Teacher," ([didaskalos](#)) which was generally a respectful greeting, but from the lips of these hypocritical vipers it was undoubtedly tinged with [duplicity](#) (deliberate deceptiveness in behavior and speech). They certainly did not really consider Jesus to be **THEIR** Teacher! As they allude to in their quote, their "Teacher" is Moses (the [Torah](#)). I agree with **Wuest** on "Teacher" writing that "Their purpose was hostile. They address our Lord as **Teacher**, but the use of the title is purely formal. They did not come to learn." No, they came to trap Jesus in a "Resurrection Riddle!"

#### Related Resources:

- [Why is the truth of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ so important? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ important? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [When will the Resurrection take place? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why should I believe in Christ's resurrection? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the first resurrection? What is the second resurrection? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is more important, the death of Christ or His resurrection? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Is the resurrection of Jesus Christ true? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Can the various resurrection accounts from the four Gospels be harmonized? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What did Jesus mean when He said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life" \(John 11:25\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Where do the Hebrew Scriptures prophesy the death and resurrection of the Messiah? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Where was Jesus for the three days between His death and resurrection? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How will our resurrection body be different from our current body? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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**EXAMPLE OF BELIEF IN THE AFTERLIFE** - Benjamin Franklin penned the words on his own epitaph, doing so at the young age of 22 and living to age 84.

The Body of B. Franklin, Printer  
Like the Cover of an old Book  
Its contents torn out,  
And strip of its Lettering and Gilding,

Lies here, Food for Worms,  
But the Work shall not be wholly lost:  
For it will, as he believ'd,  
Appear once more  
In a new & more perfect Edition,  
Corrected and amended by the Author.

This last line is so sad as the 22 yo Franklin assumed that after he died, he would wake up in the presence of the Author (as he calls God). Franklin epitomizes the tragedy that even the wisest of the wise can be spiritually deceived. Six weeks before his death he penned the following words as to his religious beliefs...

"Here is my Creed. I believe in one God, Creator of the Universe. That He governs it by His Providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable Service we render to him, is doing Good to his other Children. That the Soul of Man is immortal, and will be treated with Justice in another Life respecting its Conduct in this ... **As for Jesus of Nazareth ... I think the system of Morals and Religion as he left them to us, the best the World ever saw ... but I have ... some Doubts to his Divinity;** though' it is a Question I do not dogmatism upon, having never studied it, and think it is needless to busy myself with it now, where I expect soon an Opportunity of knowing the Truth with less Trouble." ([Reference](#))

The narrative is classic Franklin, witty and to the point, but sadly mistaken on the truth about Jesus, unless of course he had a change of heart and mind in the intervening 6 weeks before he died (and that is always a possibility!). So in light of his questioning the divinity of Jesus, despite his hope penned in the last line of his epitaph that he would receive a "new and more perfect Edition (referring to his body) corrected and amended by the Author (His reference to God), he seems to have not believed the critical truth "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12+)!

#### Related Resource:

- [What is deism? What do deists believe? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Mark 12:19 "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES and leaves behind a wife AND LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER.**

- **If:** Ge 38:8 De 25:5-10 Ru 4:5
- **dies:** Ru 1:11-13
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 22:24+ asking, "Teacher, Moses said, 'IF A MAN DIES HAVING NO CHILDREN, HIS BROTHER AS NEXT OF KIN SHALL MARRY HIS WIFE, AND RAISE UP CHILDREN FOR HIS BROTHER.'

Luke 20:28+ and they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES, having a wife, AND HE IS CHILDLESS, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER.

### THE SADDUCEES' ABSURD EXAMPLE

**Absurd** is defined in English dictionaries as contrary to reason or propriety; obviously and flatly opposed to manifest truth; inconsistent with the plain dictates of common sense; logically contradictory; nonsensical; ridiculous; silly. Inconsistent with reason, inviting ridicule; manifestly false, ludicrous. In short as discussed in Lk 20:33 ([see note](#)) the Sadducees were using the argument of [Reductio ad absurdum](#), to show belief in the resurrection was absurd! Their intent was to make the idea of a resurrection a joke!

[Stevenson](#) - The question is meant as a trick. It is not a sincere question. It is one of those "can God make a rock so big that He cannot move it" questions. It is a question designed to disprove the doctrine of the resurrection. The question revolves around the laws of the [levirate marriage](#) as set forth in the book of Deuteronomy. Remember, the Sadducees only believed in the books of Moses.

**Teacher** ([didaskalos](#) - see [note above](#)), **Moses wrote for us that** - Since the Scriptural authority of the Sadducees is the [Torah](#), they immediately reference Moses to provide the foundation for their question which is geared to stump and entrap Jesus and make Him look like anything but a respected "**Teacher**" to the Jewish crowd. Remember that it is Tuesday (some think Wednesday) and Jesus is still popular with the crowd as they are still hoping He will be their conquering Messiah and King Who brings in His political kingdom and crushes the Gentile opposition (Rome). They were correct in their supposition, but were off on their timing, for His crushing would indeed occur when the **Stone** returns the Second Time and strikes Nebuchadnezzar's "statue on its feet of iron and clay (THE REVIVED ROMAN EMPIRE) and (CRUSHES) them." (Da 2:34+)

**Hiebert** - their quotation is a free rendering of Deuteronomy 25:5–6, the law concerning [levirate marriage](#). ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Geddert** - Their question is designed to make belief in a resurrection look foolish by proposing a dilemma that it might entail. They refer to the ancient law of levirate marriage, whereby the brother of a man who dies without an heir would marry his widow (Gen. 38:8; Deut. 24:5–6). The purpose of the law is to produce an heir to the property of the deceased man. What if a woman is widowed seven times in an unsuccessful attempt to produce heirs for any of the brothers? If there really were such a thing as a resurrection, whose wife would she become in the next life? ([Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#))

**IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES and leaves behind a wife AND LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER** (Mk 12:19) - Remember that all caps in the NASB indicates a direct quotation from the Old Testament. As an aside, these men knew the Torah and undoubtedly spoke this passage from memory (cf importance of believers [Memorizing His Word](#); see also [Memory Verses by Topic](#)). Some contend the Sadducees' story (i.e., a woman with 7 husbands!) was not hypothetical but was an actual occurrence. Whether it was hypothetical or true does not really matter. And lest you think 7 husbands is unheard of note that several Hollywood stars have been married eight times - Mickey Rooney, Elizabeth Taylor, and Lana Turner!

**Spurgeon** feels that "Probably, this was one of the stock stories they were in the habit of telling in order to cast ridicule upon the resurrection."

In this case the **Sadducees** are quoting from Deuteronomy

"When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. (Deuteronomy 25:5-6)

This passage is referring to what is known as the law of [levirate marriage](#) which says if a man died without an heir, any unmarried brother was obliged to marry the man's widow. The purpose of the law is (1) to provide for the widow in a society where a childless widow would be reduced to begging and (2) to preserve the name of the deceased brother, who would be regarded as the legal father of the first son produced from that marriage, and would allow for the deceased brother's property to be kept in his line.

**COMMENT - Levirate** is from the Latin "**levir**" which means a "husband's brother" (or "brother in law") and thus "[levirate marriage](#)" refers to the Jewish custom which dictated that when a husband died without leaving a surviving son, the dead man's brother (or **nearest male relative**) was allowed to receive (or purchase [cf Ru 4:5-[note](#)]) his deceased brother's (or relative's) property and manage it for the widow, thereby keeping the family property and possessions intact (cp Matt. 22:25; Mark 12:20; Luke 20:29). If the deceased brother left no male children, then the surviving brother was expected to take the deceased's widow in order to provide a male heir (something Judah refused until Tamar tricked him - see Ge 38:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). The firstborn male would be considered the heir of the dead brother's estate and was expected to continue the dead brother's name (Dt 25:5, 25:6-[notes](#), Ru 4:10-[note](#)). If the brother (or the nearest relative) choose not to marry the widow, she subjected him to gross insult (Dt 25:7, 8, 9, 10). The purpose was the perpetuation of the dead brother's name, because if an Israelite died and left his widow without a son, there was the danger that his name might perish and his property pass out of the family.

See also Josephus (bottom half of the page) - [Josephus, Ant. 4.8.23](#)

**Daniel Akin** has a related note on the background of the Sadducee's question - It was grounded in the issue of "levirate (Latin for "brother-in-law") marriage" mentioned in Genesis 38:8-10 and Ruth, and explained in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 which says, "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. And if the man

does not wish to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, 'I do not wish to take her,' then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.'" The gist of the issue is therefore this: **God made a provision for a family to be raised up in name and property rights for a husband who dies with no male heir.** You have to love the way the Bible describes this! The Sadducees took this teaching and created what we call a reductio ad absurdum argument, an argument that reduces things to the absurd or the ridiculous. A man marries a woman and he dies. Fortunately (or "unfortunately") he has 7 brothers who can step in and fulfill the levirate obligation. Tragically, she married each one and each one, all 7, died without bearing a child. Now, since the Pharisees and most rabbis believe the world to come is basically an improved and better one like this world, which therefore would include things like marriage, to whom then will she be married? Assuming monogamy which is a given, which one will have her in marriage with its privileges "in the resurrection" (v. 23), in the world to come? Such a scenario is clearly unthinkable and it shows the foolishness of believing in a future resurrection. Look at all the problems it could potentially cause. No, God is too smart for that and the books of Moses which are the undisputed Word of God make no mention of a future resurrection. Interestingly Jesus has already spoken of his own resurrection 3 times (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). The Sadducees think they have him, but they are headed toward a big disappointment.

**Mark 12:20 "There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children.**

- Mt 22:25-28 Lu 20:29-33
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 22:25+ "Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother;

Luke 20:29+ "Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died childless;

**There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children**- This was apparently the "trump card" for the Sadducees against the Pharisees who believed in resurrection and it was one no Pharisee had ever been able to adequately answer. So they knew that now they could throw this curve ball at Jesus and He would be stumped. You can just imagine their sense of "Gotcha Now Jesus" mentality that stirred their prideful hearts as they began this question which takes up six verses (including the Scripture they quoted above) of the inspired Word of God! We know Jesus was filled with the Spirit for He was very patient to let them finish their lengthy question.

**Hiebert on leaving no children** - All seven brothers successively fulfilled their duty to marry their brother's wife, but the seven left no seed. This childlessness left none of them with a superior claim to be her husband in the resurrection. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Stevenson** - The question presupposes a situation in which there are seven brothers. The oldest is married, but before his marriage can produce any children, he dies. According to Jewish Law, it is now the responsibility of the second brother to have a child by that wife and to raise the child as the heir of the first brother (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). And so, he marries her, but dies before there are any children. And so it goes with the third and the fourth and the fifth and the sixth and the seventh. By this time, I think that I would be a bit suspicious of the woman. But she eventually dies, too.

**Mark 12:21 "The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise;**

- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 22:26 so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh.

Luke 20:30+ and the second

**The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise**- Matthew lumps all the husbands

into one verse "so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh." (Mt 22:26) One would have thought that after the third had died, all would have viewed her as a the [consummate](#) "[widow maker](#)" and avoided her like the plague! But this adds to the absurdity of their story!

**Mark 12:22 and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also.**

- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### **Related Passages:**

Matthew 22:36+ so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. 27"Last of all, the woman died.

Luke 20:31-32+ and the third married her; and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children. 32 "Finally the woman died also.

**and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also-** And everyone takes a deep breath, thanking God that the "[widow maker](#)" has passed!

**Mark 12:23 "In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her."**

- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### **Related Passages:**

Matthew 22:28+ "In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her."

Luke 20:33+ "In the resurrection therefore, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her."

### **WHOSE WIFE WILL SHE BE?**

**D A Carson** makes a good point that the Sadducees question was based on their presupposition "that resurrection life is an exact counterpart to earthly life; and if so, the resurrected woman must be guilty of incestuous marriages or arbitrarily designated the wife of one of the brothers. And if so, which one? Or—and this is the answer the Sadducees pressed for—the whole notion of resurrection is absurd." (Borrow [The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#) - 1994 edition - Abridged - New Testament)

[Stevenson](#) - Do you see what the Sadducees are doing? They are not asking this question because they are actually worried about this situation. They are asking it because they think that the question shows a flaw in the whole teaching about the resurrection. They expect Jesus to stutter and stammer and get red in the face so that they can laugh at Him. But he does nothing of the sort.

Of course, in the next section, Jesus will immediately proceed to correct their erroneous presupposition by pointing out that there is a marked distinction between life in **this age** and life in **that age** which is to come (resurrection life).

**In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her-** The argument that the Sadducees are employing is what is commonly known as [Reductio ad absurdum](#), which is "Latin for "**reduction to absurdity**" "a form of argument which attempts either to disprove a statement by showing it inevitably leads to a ridiculous, absurd, or impractical conclusion, or to prove one by showing that if it were not true, the result would be absurd or impossible." In the present context the goal of the Sadducees is the former, that is, to disprove the resurrection by showing that this belief inevitably would lead one to come to an absurd, even impossible conclusion. In other words they are attempting to show that the resurrection cannot be true because the implications of that belief are absurd or ridiculous in the case of the woman with seven former husbands! Imagine the scene in heaven! Whose wife is she going to be? And remember also that since none of them would die (it's heaven), the scene would be utter [chaos](#) (a state of extreme confusion and disorder in a place that was supposed to be just the opposite! Just imagine all these people wandering around heaven trying to discover who their wife is or who their husband is!). This would be absolutely absurd! It simply could not occur they reason. And then the logical conclusion is that there is not such a thing as the **resurrection** because there was no way the Law of Levirate marriage in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 could be fulfilled! And so the Sadducees thought they had Jesus this time, for this argument had never failed when they had used it to stump their rivals the Pharisees who believed

in the resurrection.

As an aside, although the story of the Sadducees seems a bit ridiculous, their question is not merely theoretical for there will be many in heaven who have had more than one spouse, for any number of reasons. But as Jesus will go on to explain, multiple spouses, bitter divorces, jealousies, etc will (thank God), not be relevant in the life to come! That's good news!

**Mark 12:24 Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God?"**

- **Do:** Isa 8:20 Jer 8:7-9 Ho 6:6 8:12 Mt 22:29 Joh 5:39 20:9 Ac 17:11 Ro 15:4 2Ti 3:15-17
- **because:** Job 19:25-27 Isa 25:8 26:19 Eze 37:1-14 Da 12:2 Ho 6:2 13:14
- **neither:** Mk 10:27 Ge 18:14 Jer 32:17 Lu 1:37 Eph 1:19 Php 3:21
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 22:29+ But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God.

Luke 20:34+ Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage,

### JESUS EXPOSES THE SERIOUS ERRORS OF THE SADDUCEES

**Jesus said to them** - "Theological error must be confronted quickly and clearly. That is exactly what Jesus does with the skeptical and cynical Sadducees." (Akin)

**Is this not the reason** - Here the reason will be explained in a two part answer.

**You are mistaken** - He is saying they are deceived and as I always tell my children "When a person is deceived, by definition, they don't even know they are deceived!"

**Are mistaken** (4105)(**planao** from **plane** which describes "a wandering" and gives us our English word "planet") means literally made to wander and so to go (active sense) or be led (passive sense as of sheep in Mt 18:12-13) astray. In spiritual terms, **planao** means to be made to err from the right way, the highway of truth and holiness. Straying in the spiritual sense occurs when one **does not adhere to the truth** (James 5:19+) and/or **forsakes the right way** (see 2 Peter 2:15+) In this passage **planao** is in the **passive voice** which indicates an outside force or influence causes the deception. In this case it is their unregenerate heart that causes the deception that leads one down the wrong path. The **present tense** indicates the sad truth that these religious men are unsaved and are continually being led astray from God and ultimately being led into eternal separation from His presence.

**MacArthur:** The verb **mistaken** is **planao** from which we get the word planet, wandering bodies. The verb means to cause to wander, to lead astray. You are leading yourselves astray by your biblical ignorance. You're mentally wandering. You've been cut loose from reality. You've been cut loose from reason. You've been cut loose from truth. That is why false teachers in Jude 13 are called wandering star

**That** - Jesus gives two reasons their question is absurd and non-Scriptural.

**You do not understand the Scriptures** (**graphe**) **or the power** (**dunamis**) **of God** (**theos**) - **Understand** (eidotes = perfect tense of **eido**) means that they had failed to come to a perception or realization of the truth of the Scriptures! Imagine their reaction when Jesus made this cutting statement to these pride filled men! Their second major error was they lacked a true perception of the **power of God** which would have also **rubbed them the wrong way**! **Power** is the great Greek word **dunamis** which refers to the intrinsic power and inherent ability of the omnipotent God to carry out some function, in this context to bring the dead back to life! It is therefore not surprising that **dunamis** is translated *miracle* some 20x in the NT. In short these religious leaders do not know God (revealed in the Scriptures) nor the power of God.

**Dwight Edwards** makes an excellent point - There is a vital balance in knowing both of these essential ingredients for radiant godliness. In evangelical circles today there is a tendency to know one OR the other, but too seldom are they both entwined significantly in the same life. Many focus on knowing the Scriptures, but fail to appropriate the power of God which is so necessary



for the word to be properly applied and obeyed. Others are preeminently concerned with the power of God but lack the stability and cutting edge which only the Word of God can provide. Like Stephen, we must seek to "be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3). ([Mark Commentary](#))

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**Geddert** - Jesus' response critiques the Sadducees on two points. They misconceive the nature of the resurrection life. They also erroneously reject a (properly understood) resurrection life. Those of us who wish we knew more about that resurrection life might wish this text were considerably longer. What are their misguided images of a resurrection life? What will it really be like? Jesus critiques a conception of a resurrection life that assumes the following:

- That the resurrection life is a simple continuation of this life, with all its relationships intact.
- That offspring would still be needed as designated heirs of men who die childless.

I think it is going beyond the evidence of this text to insist (as some do) that in the resurrection life these things happen:

- Gender distinctions will disappear.
- There will be nothing corresponding to intimate relationships.
- None of the conditions of our prior earthly life will be remembered or be relevant.

We are told too little to insist on any of these. What seems clear is that those raised will not enter into marriages as we know them in this life. Producing offspring to solve inheritance problems will no longer be necessary. That is likely the point on which we will be like the angels. The Sadducees would not be persuaded by Jesus' clarification that we will be like angels; they do not believe that angels exist. Jesus' only clear statement about the nature of the future resurrection life is that God is powerful enough to design it. Jesus critiques their doubts that God can work out the logistics of a resurrection life. When asked about the nature of the resurrection life, I would rather say, "God will find a way of working that out!" That is better than advancing a series of options and dilemmas each option would create. ([Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#))

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**Some Unanswered Questions** - The Scriptures leave many questions about the hereafter unanswered. Do children grow up in heaven? What about the saints with the Lord who do not yet have their resurrection bodies? What is a spiritual body? And of course through the ages bereaved hearts have asked, "Shall we know each other over there?"

Of course it has been said many times that surely we shall have as much sense there as we have here! The Sadducees asked our Lord about the woman who had been married seven times: whose wife would she be in the resurrection? He replied; "Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God"? (Mark 12:24). When we know not God's Word nor His power we fall into all kinds of error. Error is grounded in ignorance. Jesus went on to say that in the resurrection we neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the angels. He was not covering the whole subject of our status in the hereafter and we can read too much into or out of these words. He simply said that angels do not marry and in this respect we shall be like the angels, for earthly relationships do not obtain in the hereafter.

This does not necessarily mean that we shall feel exactly the same way toward everybody, a stranger or our dearest loved one. I do not know how God will work it all out and I may be speculating, but I cannot feel that I will react just the same when I see my mother or wife over there as to somebody I never saw before. I know that we shall have new bodies and that old emotions will have been displaced by a new personality appropriate to our heavenly life. But I cannot think that there will be one general uniformity of thought and feeling with no degrees of delight as we meet again those we have loved long since and lost awhile. Our Father will grant us fullest joy, and I am not going to let the problem of one woman with seven husbands spoil my anticipation when I walk the golden streets with the one I loved above all others on earth.

Nor do I think that all the residents of that fair city will have the same capacity for enjoyment. The Scriptures teach that some will be beaten with few stripes and some with many and some shall rule over five cities and some over ten. By the same token I cannot believe that heaven will mean no more to faithful saints who walked close to God on earth than to some poor disciple who barely got into heaven saved as by fire with his life gone up in smoke.

Just how the Father will do it I do not know, but my joy will not be less there than here and it will be intensified, not toned down to one unvarying pattern. Even this poor world abounds in color and variety and my eternal home will be no monolithic set-up. I still feel that the dearest here will be dearer there in a way I could never know in this world. But I approach it with no trepidation. My Father knows how to do it and five seconds after I arrive all my questions will have disappeared in ecstasy as I take up my abode in the house of the Lord forever (Vance Havner)

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**Mark 12:25 "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."**

- **but:** Mt 22:30 Lu 20:35,36 1Co 15:42-54 Heb 12:22,23 1Jn 3:2
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 22:30+ "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Luke 20:35-36+ but **those who are considered worthy to attain to that age** and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; 36 for **they cannot even die anymore**, because they are like angels, and **are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.** (COMMENT - Words in **bold** are only in Luke, and not in the parallel passages in Matthew and Mark.)

**Hiebert** - Jesus told them that their doubt was due to their double ignorance, doubly inexcusable in priests ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**For** ([gar](#)) - Term of Explanation. Jesus will explain their error.

**When they rise from the dead** - Not "if" but "**when**" affirming the truth of the resurrection. This statement corrects the Sadducee's failure to understand the power of God. God has miracle working power and will resurrect every person who has ever lived and died. In John 5:28-29 Jesus declared "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which **all** who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a **resurrection of life**, those who committed the evil deeds to a **resurrection of judgment.**" The Sadducees will be truly "sad" in that day and throughout eternity!

**Hiebert** - "Know not the scriptures," the Old Testament writings, is a charge not of ignorance concerning their contents but of failure to understand the true meaning. Had they understood the true nature of the miracle-working God revealed in those Scriptures, they would not have doubted His power to raise the dead....His questioners had thought of the resurrection life only in terms of present earthly conditions. They had failed to see that God's power could make a new world in which the conditions of life were wholly different. His power in transforming the resurrection body no longer made marriage a necessary part of the future state. "By the power of the resurrection, marriage, sex and family relationships will be transcended by perfect communion with God and among persons." Therefore, their objection to the resurrection had no validity; the difficulty they envisioned did not apply to the resurrection life. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Swete** says: "The Sadducees (and the Pharisees also, so far as they connected marriage and the propagation of the race with the future life), showed themselves incapable of conceiving a power which could produce an entirely different order from any within their experience. They assumed either that God could not raise the dead, or that He could raise them only to a life which would be a counterpart of the present, or even more replete with material pleasures."

**They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven**- Note "like" angels. Glorified men and women will BE angels. Here Jesus deals with their failure to understand the Scriptures which they mistakenly thought taught marriage in the afterlife (even though they did not believe in an afterlife)! Why will they be like the angels? They will be eternal beings. There is no death in heaven, so there is no longer need for procreation to continue the race of mankind!

**THOUGHT** - Jesus gives the Biblical truth about marital relationships in heaven which is dramatically different from the more sensual depictions of heaven as propounded in [Islamic theology](#) (INCLUDING 72 VIRGINS!) and Mormon theology (cf "[Celestial Marriage](#)").

Jesus responds to the Sadducees explaining where they are mistaken

1. There will be a resurrection.
2. There will be no marriage relationship as we know it in this life.
3. In some sense we will become like the angels - no procreation, no death

**Wuest** - **Angels** were originally created. There are the same number of **angels** in existence today as when they were created. They do not propagate their kind. They will be like **angels** in this respect, that they will not propagate their kind. Thus, the hypothetical case of the Sadducees has no relation to the future life. ([Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader](#))

**Believer's Study Bible** - **Angels** are not part of the physical order, and they do not engage in physical functions. Men will be like the angels, deathless and above the physical level.

**Alan Carr**: While the relationship of marriage is a wonderful and divinely ordained institution, it is an absolutely earthly institution.

Marriage was designed for companionship, Gen. 2:18, continuation of the species, Gen. 1:22, and for the fulfillment of legitimate sexual needs, 1 Cor. 7:2. When we get to Heaven, we will be like the angels, only in the sense that we will be spiritual beings that will have no need for the physical necessities of this earthly life. In heaven, like the angels, we will be deathless, sinless, sexless, glorified and eternal. But, unlike the angels, we will be like Jesus, 1 John 3:2. Life will be different when we get there. There will be no need for reproduction and childbirth because there will be no death. There will be no exclusive physical relationships like there are here, because in Heaven everyone will be perfectly and intimately related to everyone else, including God. ([A Marriage Made In Paradise](#))

**Darrell Bock** adds that "Since marriage is no longer necessary in the resurrection, the dilemma posed by multiple husbands disappears. The question is an absurdity, not because resurrection is a problem, but because the Sadducean understanding of resurrection is grounded too much in life as it is now. The afterlife is a different and much greater kind of existence. In the next life God the Father is the "parent," so other parental relationships are unnecessary." ([Luke: 9:51-24:53 - Page 1624](#))

**Grant Osborne** - In another sense, we will not need to marry because we will know our current spouses (and everyone else) infinitely better than we know them now. (See [Mark Teach the Text Commentary Series](#))

**David Guzik** comments that "This passage has made many wonder if marriage relationships will exist in heaven, or if those who are husband and wife on earth will have no special relationship in heaven. We are not told enough about life in the world beyond to answer in great detail, but we can understand a few principles. Family relationships will still be known in life in the world beyond. The rich man Jesus described in the afterlife was aware of his family relationships (Luke 16:27-28). The glory of heaven will be a relationship and connection with God that surpasses anything else, including present family relationships (Revelation 21:22-23). If it seems that life in the resurrection that Jesus spoke of here does not include some of the pleasures of life we know on earth, it is only because the enjoyments and satisfactions of heaven far surpass what we know on earth. We can't be completely certain what life in glory beyond will be like, but we can know with certainty that no one will be disappointed with the arrangements (Revelation 22:1-5). ([Mark 12 Commentary](#))

**Stevenson** - The resurrection does not constitute a continuation of life as it is on earth. The old physical laws will no longer apply. And the old physical and social relationships will pale to insignificance in the presence of our relationship with the Lord.

**Danny Akin** - The world of resurrection, the world to come, is different than the world we live in. There is continuity to be sure. I will be I and you will be you, but we will exist and live for all of eternity in an entirely new dimension and reality. ([Mark 12:18-27 Will There Be Sex in Heaven?](#))

**Leon Morris** adds that "Jesus' questioners had failed to realize that the life to come will be essentially different from this life. Where the doctrine of resurrection was held among the Jews it was usually envisaged as an indefinite prolongation of this life, though no doubt with modifications and improvements. ...Jesus rejects all this. Life in heaven will be significantly different from anything on earth. **Human relationships are largely a matter of place and time: they are bound to be different when neither of these applies.** (ED: HEAVEN IS A DIFFERENT PLACE AND TIME NO LONGER EXISTS AS WE KNOW IT!) (See [Luke: An Introduction and Commentary - Page 308](#))

**Daniel Akin** - So, the billion dollar question, "will there be sex in heaven?" Here is what I think we can biblically and safely say:

1. We will exist as glorified bodies in heaven.
2. We will maintain our present and unique identity in heaven.
3. There will be, in one sense, sex in heaven because sex identifies us as male and female in terms of gender.
4. Whatever physical, sensual and sexual pleasure we enjoy in this life will be greatly transcended and magnified beyond our imagination in the life to come. ([Mark 12:18-27 Will There Be Sex in Heaven?](#))

#### Related Resources:

- Excursus (Chart) on the Order of Resurrections
- [Will there be sex in heaven? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Will there be such a thing as gender in Heaven? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### David Thompson: What do other religions say about the afterlife? -

- Mormons: say you go to 1 of 3 kingdoms based on approval of Joseph Smith -
- Hindus: Reincarnated based on your works -
- Muslims, Islam -- Die and go to a pleasure palace; if you die a martyr you get 72 virgins -

- Indians: you need to be buried with your bow and arrows as you go to your Happy and Holy Hunting Ground -
- Egyptians: be buried with things you can take with you into eternity -
- Some Greeks: bury with a coin in mouth so you can pay the fee to cross into the land of the afterlife Religious people just make it up as they go and people believe it; bunch of crazy views
- Important to understand what the Scriptures teach about the afterlife.

#### QUESTION - [Will there be marriage in heaven?](#) [WATCH VIDEO](#)

**ANSWER** - The Bible tells us, "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:30). This was Jesus' answer in response to a question concerning a woman who had been married multiple times in her life —whom would she be married to in heaven (Matthew 22:23-28)? Evidently, there will be no such thing as marriage in heaven. **This does not mean that a husband and wife will no longer know each other in heaven. This also does not mean that a husband and wife could not still have a close relationship in heaven.** What it does seem to indicate, though, is that a husband and wife will no longer be married in heaven. Most likely, there will be no marriage in heaven simply because there will be no need for it. When God established marriage, He did so to fill certain needs. First, He saw that Adam was in need of a companion. "The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'" (Genesis 2:18). Eve was the solution to the problem of Adam's loneliness, as well as his need for a "helper," someone to come alongside him as his companion and go through life by his side. In heaven, however, there will be no loneliness, nor will there be any need for helpers. We will be surrounded by multitudes of believers and angels (Revelation 7:9), and all our needs will be met, including the need for companionship.

Second, God created marriage as a means of procreation and the filling of the earth with human beings. Heaven, however, will not be populated by procreation. Those who go to heaven will get there by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; they will not be created there by means of reproduction. Therefore, there is no purpose for marriage in heaven since there is no procreation or loneliness. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**Henrietta Mears** - There is an old hymn that says, "[I want to be an angel and with the angels stand.](#)" (Here is the [vocal version](#)) Do you want to be an angel when you die? If you do, I am afraid you are never going to make it. God has something much better for you than being an angel. God's children will reign with Him; angels serve Him. Statements like the words of the hymn quoted above have given a very wrong idea of just what angels are. **People have an idea that those who have died have been given a pair of wings and a harp and now are angels.** This is a common mistake and it is not what the Scriptures teach. It is true that all Christians who die trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior are in His presence in heaven, but they are not angels. The Bible teaches that angels are a distinct class of beings who have never been human beings. They are ministering spirits (see Heb. 1:14+). Our Lord said that human beings after they die and rise from the dead "are like angels of God in heaven" (Mt 22:30) in the matter of marriage and giving in marriage. This shows that human beings in heaven are like angels in this respect, but they are not angels. **Know this: Christians will no more become angels when they die than they will become birds or fish. Believers in Christ are called saints; they are never called angels in the Bible.** (God's Plan: Finding Yourself in His Grand Design)

#### Marriage In Heaven

When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. —Mark 12:25

Today's Scripture: Mark 12:18-27

When I was a student at a Christian high school, I knew a professor whose wife had died. Later he married the widow of his best friend. One day a student asked him, "Will your first wife know about your second marriage when you see her in heaven, and if so, how do you think she'll react?" The professor smiled and said, "Of course she will, and because she will be perfect she will not be jealous. Even though we will not live as marriage partners, I believe we will know each other. We will all be the best of friends forever."

In Mark 12, we read about some enemies of Jesus who invented a story about a woman whose husband died and left no son. Under Jewish law, the brother of the deceased had to marry the widow for the purpose of having a son (Deuteronomy 25:5). According to their story, this happened with seven brothers. Jesus' detractors asked, "When they rise, whose wife will she be?" He said they neither understood the Scriptures nor God's power to raise the dead to a glorious new existence without marriage.

I believe that in heaven we will have special feelings for one another. We will love perfectly and enjoy complete healing from all the hurts of our earthly relationships. That will be more fulfilling than any marriage. By: Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The love we've known while here below  
In heaven will find its highest joy,  
For we will know Christ's perfect love  
That memories cannot destroy.  
—D. De Haan

The pleasures of earth cannot compare to the joys of heaven.

**THOUGHT** - Do you really believe this? What difference should it make in your ongoing battle with lust? Be motivated to press on the power of the Spirit, for the glory of the Lamb, by pondering the following quote from one of America's greatest theologians. **Jonathan Edwards** wrote that in heaven "the glorified spiritual bodies of the saints shall be filled with pleasures of the most exquisite kind that such refined bodies are capable of....The sweetness and pleasure that shall be in the mind, shall put the spirits of the body into such a motion as shall cause a sweet sensation throughout the body, infinitely excelling any sensual pleasure here."

**Mark 12:26** "But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I [**AM**] THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, and the God of Jacob'?"

- **have:** Mk 12:10 Mt 22:31,32
- **in the book:** Ex 3:2-6,16 Lu 20:37 Ac 7:30-32
- **I am:** Ge 17:7,8 26:24 28:13 31:42 32:9 33:20 \*marg: Isa 41:8-10
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Exodus 3:6, 15+ He said also, "I am ([Lxx](#) = "ego eimi") the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. 15 God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.

Matthew 22:31+ "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: 32 'I AM ("ego eimi") - direct quote from [Lxx](#) of Ex 3:6 - see [note below](#)) THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

Luke 20:37+ "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB.

### JESUS PROVES LIFE AFTER DEAD IS IN THE PENTATEUCH

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection because they did not see it taught in the Pentateuch. Jesus is about to take them to school, so to speak!

There is a remarkable passage in Josephus, which proves that the best informed among the Jews believed in the immateriality and immortality of the soul, and that the souls of righteous men were in the presence of God in a state of happiness. **"They who lose their lives for the sake of God, live unto God, as do Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the rest of the patriarchs."** Not less remarkable is a passage in Shemoth Rabba, **"Why doth Moses say, Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? (Ex 32:13)**

Here is another "rabbinical writing" documenting that the Jews believed in resurrection based on writings in the Torah - R. Abin saith, The Lord said unto Moses, I look for ten men from thee, as I looked for that number in Sodom. Find me out ten righteous persons among the people, and I will not destroy thy people. Then saith Moses, Behold, here am I, and Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar, Phinehas, and Caleb, and Joshua; but, saith God, there are but seven: where are the other three? When Moses knew not what to do, he saith, O Eternal God, [hayim hem ha-metim] do those live who are dead? Yes, saith God. Then saith Moses, If those that are dead do live, remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."



**Bock** explains that "The argument advances further. Jesus has dealt with the Sadducees' question, but there is still one issue that needs to be addressed. Jesus wants to make sure that the Sadducees understand that resurrection is a scriptural teaching. Though he could have appealed to a prophetic passage like Dan. 12:2, Jesus opts for a text from the Pentateuch because the Sadducees held the Torah in highest regard. A text from that portion of Scripture would be most persuasive for them. Working with their presuppositions he makes his argument. Jesus begins his elaboration with the direct statement that the dead are raised, which he says Moses revealed." (Ibid)

**But regarding the fact that the dead rise again ([egeiro](#)) have you not read ([anaginosko](#)) in the book of Moses** - First note that Jesus' question implies an affirmative answer. Yes they had read, but no they did not understand what they read. And so Jesus states that the **book of Moses** alluded to the fact that the **dead rise again!** **Hiebert** comments that the **dead "rise** is the [present tense](#) of doctrinal certainty. Jesus left no doubt concerning the bodily resurrection of those who had died." ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Hiebert** - The **book of Moses** was the Pentateuch, the law. The natural implication of the designation is that Jesus accepted its Mosaic authorship. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

Note that in line with this chapter which continues the question of Jesus' authority from Mark 11:27-33+, Jesus appeals to the **AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURE**. The Sadducees had based their rejection of the doctrine of the resurrection on their belief that this truth was not found in the Torah (Gen-Deut). The Sadducees had quoted Moses from the Torah, and now Jesus also quotes Moses from the same Torah. They cannot accuse Him of using an invalid source! He is drawing the net tighter and this is the most powerful argument.

#### Related Resources:

- [Authority of the Scripture](#) - Richard Mayhue - 10 page article - excellent review
- [The New Testament Use of the Old Testament](#) - Robert Thomas

**In the passage about the burning bush** - So Jesus takes them to Exodus 3, to a passage which they had read. Why didn't Jesus say "Now turn to Exodus 3:6 (Ex 3:2-6) which is on page 100 of your pew Bibles?" The answer of course is that the Scriptures were not assigned chapter/verse designations until the mid-1500's (See [versification](#)). "Jesus used a common form of rabbinic citation here to refer to the passage in question." ([NET Note](#))

**How God spoke to him, saying, 'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, and the God of Jacob** - Don't miss the fact that Jesus is saying **God spoke** indicating that Scripture is truly God breathed (2 Ti 3:16+) or inspired ([What does it mean that the Bible is inspired?](#)). When we read the Scripture GOD IS SPEAKING TO US!!! Can you picture the faces of the Sadducees when Jesus quoted Exodus 3? They must have been thinking that Jesus is about to make a big mistake for resurrection is not taught in that passage. Their sense of superiority would immediately be squashed by Jesus "interpretation" of that famous passage (in v27).

See [Hiebert's note below](#) on the words "**I AM**," because Mark's Gospel actually does not have the Greek word for '**am**,' but it was added by the translators.

**Hiebert** - "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"—citing the very words of God declaring His covenant relations to these men (Exod. 3:6). The repetition of God with each name emphasizes the distinct personal relationship which God established with each of these patriarchs. In harmony with the covenant relationship which they enjoyed, testified to by their circumcision, specific promises were made to each. "As these patriarchs had in their bodies the sign of this covenant, the body is included in whatever promise is involved." In the Hebrew text quoted, no verb appears, as is normal in such statements. The italicized **am** in our text indicates that there is likewise no verb in the text as quoted in Mark. But in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) the verb **am** is supplied (**ED**: "EGO EIMI" WHERE EIMI IS PRESENT TENSE - I AM CONTINUALLY), indicating that the translators took the words of God to Moses not merely as pointing to a relationship in the historical past but as asserting God's abiding relationship to these patriarchs. (The verb **am** appears in the quotation as given in Mt. 22:32). In itself, the original statement might mean no more than that the God who spoke to Moses had in the past revealed Himself as the God of these patriarchs. But on the basis of His understanding of the nature of God, Jesus insisted that the statement had a deeper meaning. God's living relationship with His people is not terminated by their physical death. His living presence and the eternal life He bestows on believers assures that this relationship culminates in the resurrection life. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Hiebert** adds "Christ's argument clearly established the immortality of the soul, but it has been denied that it establishes the resurrection. Yet the truth of the resurrection follows when it is recognized that Hebrew thought regarded men as a unity; his corporeal and incorporeal nature are so perfectly fused that each is incomplete without the other. The Bible recognizes the



separation of the soul from the body at death but does not view this as man's final condition. "Even for the righteous the intermediate state is a time of imperfection, first, because the spirit is without a body, which for human beings is an abnormal condition; and, second, because the rewards promised to the saints are not given in their fulness until the second coming of Christ. See Luke 14:14 and 2 Tim. 4:8." They are in a state of incompleteness, awaiting the resurrection of their bodies (2 Cor. 5:1-8). Only when believers receive their resurrection bodies will they be fully like Christ (Phil. 3:21). "Everlasting life will not be realized in a fragmentary existence, as in an arch of being springing for ever in a half way up." The redemptive program of God extends even to the body of man, and He will not fail to bring to its full consummation the salvation which He has already begun in His saints. For man's body forever to remain in the grip of death would mean that death had not been conquered. The hope of the resurrection is based on God's faithfulness. Jesus' answer, while teaching the reality of the resurrection, said nothing about the manner of the resurrection or the nature of the resurrection body." ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Dwight Edwards** - The Lord then refers to Exodus 3:6 and 15 to prove that there is a resurrection since God says "I am" the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who were dead at that time. Thus Christ proves the doctrine of the resurrection on a single verb tense! Obviously He had nothing but the highest view of the inerrancy and authority of Scriptures (Matt 5:17-18). ([Mark Commentary](#))

We can set out the chain of logic as follows:

1. God is the God of the living, not of the dead.
2. God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the time that God speaks to Moses (cf. Exod. 3:6).
3. Therefore, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are "alive" at the time God speaks to Moses (follows from # 1 and # 2).
4. But, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died long before.
5. Therefore, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must have been resurrected in the meantime (follows from # 3 and # 4).
6. Therefore, there is a resurrection (follows from # 5). ([Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#))

**Lawrence Richards** - This is a fascinating passage for any who are uncertain about the integrity and full authority of Scripture. It's popular with some scholars to assume that the books attributed to Moses are a much later fiction: the name of a mythical Jewish hero, Moses, was attached in the 600 B.C.'s to give the editors' invention credibility. With scissors and paste many modern scholars romp through the Old Testament, cut up the Pentateuch and Prophets, and assign this verse to one supposed set of authors, and that to another. How different from the way Jesus viewed the Scriptures. **According to Christ, it was Moses who spoke what is recorded in Exodus, and even a seemingly minor thing like the tense of a verb is authoritative.** Do the dead really live again? They live now! The God of the Old Testament is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, long after their biological deaths. On this issue of Scripture, I suspect it's wiser to trust Jesus' pronouncement than to trust the theories of the self-proclaimed wise men of our day. When we do so, we rejoice in the confidence that we too will live forever with Abraham's and our God. (Borrow [365 Day Devotional Commentary](#) page 750)

#### Related Resource:

- [The New Testament Use of the Old Testament](#) - Robert Thomas
- [What does it mean that the Bible is inspired?](#)

**Mark 12:27 "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken."**

- **is not:** Ro 4:17 14:9 Heb 11:13-16
- **you:** Mk 12:24 Pr 19:27 Heb 3:10
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 22:32 'I AM (**ED**: GREEK = "EGO EIMI" WHERE EIMI IS PRESENT TENSE - I AM CONTINUALLY) THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." 33 When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

Luke 20:38+ "Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him." 39 Some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." 40 For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything.

## LOVING GOD OF THE LIVING HE LOVES

Matthew 22:34 says that "the Pharisees heard that Jesus had **silenced** ([phimoo](#) - "muzzled" ~ "speechless") **the Sadducees**" with His clear doctrine and pristine logic. And of course in this case since Pharisees and Sadducees were antagonistic toward each other, the Pharisees undoubtedly would have been pleased by Jesus' "beat down" of the Sadducees!

**He is not the God of the dead, but of the living**([zao](#) in the present tense) - God had said "I am" not "I was" indicating these men were alive. Note that the verb **"IS"** is present tense which corresponds perfectly to the present tense of "ego eimi" in the Septuagint of Ex 3:6+. To reiterate, the point the present tense makes is that if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not continue to live, God would not say that He **IS** continually their God, speaking in the present tense. He would have to say that He **WAS** their God, speaking in the past tense. In other words Jesus is affirming that God is continually the God of the **living**. The patriarchs are "**living**." Hence by deduction, the patriarchs were brought back to life from the dead.

**You are greatly mistaken** ([planao](#)) - Notice also how Jesus begins (Mk 12:24+) and ends by pointing out to the Sadducees that they were **mistaken** (same verb [planao](#) but now Jesus' adds **greatly** mistaken!) "Their self-confident assumption that they were discrediting the teaching of the resurrection was an open error. "The Sadducees are reckoning without their God." Their error was great and had far-reaching implications (cf. 1 Cor. 15:13–19)" (Hiebert)

**Hiebert** has an interesting comment on **greatly mistaken** - "Jesus ends his knockdown argument with a final blow: You are quite wrong (lit., much deceived)! " (Geddert) They had drawn a wrong deduction because they failed to understand the true nature of God and His relations to men. Jesus held that God's describing Himself to Moses as Abraham's God, Jacob's God, and Isaac's God referred not merely to a past relationship which no longer existed. By His very nature God is the God not **of the dead but of the living**. In calling these patriarchs into covenant relations with Himself, He had established a relationship with them that was not terminated with physical death. Death did not break the spiritual relationship into which they had been brought. The patriarchs were dead to the visible world, but they were still alive unto God in the invisible world. "Death is a change of relation to the world and to men; it does not change our relation to God." As the unchanging living God, He is the God of the living, of men who are characterized as having life because of their relationship with Him. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Swete** explains: "In quoting that passage (Ex 3) the Lord argues thus; In this place, God reveals Himself as standing in a real relation to men who were long dead. But the living God cannot be in relation with any who have ceased to exist; therefore the patriarchs were still living in His sight at the time of the Exodus; dead to the visible world, they were alive unto God ... This argument establishes the immortality of the soul, but not, at first sight or directly, the resurrection of the body. But the resurrection of the body follows, when it is understood that the body is a true part of human nature. God would not leave men with whom He maintained relations, in an imperfect condition; the living soul must in due time recover its partner; the death of the body could only be a suspension of vital activities which in some form would be resumed."

**Steven Cole** - Jesus taught that there is such a thing as doctrinal truth and doctrinal error, and that truth matters. He didn't say, "Hey, it really doesn't matter what you guys believe, just as long as you're sincere." He didn't say, "I love you guys! You're my brothers, even if we disagree over this little matter of the resurrection!" He didn't say, "I respect your views. Everyone is entitled to his own opinion." He told them authoritatively that **they were greatly mistaken** and He set forth the reasons why. As Allan Bloom pointed out a few years ago in his best seller, [The Closing of the American Mind](#) ([Simon and Schuster], p. 28), the intellectual community has relegated religion to the realm of opinion as opposed to knowledge. It is simply a matter of one subjective and uncertain opinion versus another. Undergirding this is the view that all truth is relative and that tolerance the chief virtue (pp. 25-27). He said, "**The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think you are right at all**" (p. 26). **The result of this is that you can have two people holding to opposite views in the spiritual realm and they both can be right, since religious "truth" is simply one's subjective ideas or experience of it.**

Luke's version records the reaction to Jesus' reply to the Sadducees...

Luke 20:39+ Some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." 40 For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything.

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### Vance Havner - God of the Living

When the Sadducees asked our Lord about the woman who had had seven husbands and wanted to know whose wife would she be in the resurrection, He answered by analyzing their trouble as error born of ignorance—ignorance of the Scriptures and the power of God. He declared that in the resurrection we neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the angels in heaven. Then He gave them God's own word, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" and ended with the declaration, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (see Matthew 22:32).

God did not say, "I WAS the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but "I AM...." Always the great I AM whose infinitudes never put Him in the past tense, in His sight nobody WAS but everybody IS. Nobody is dead and everybody who has ever lived is still living.

We are so accustomed to think of the dead as corpses lying in graveyards. But those bodies are only the remains, the temporary vehicles of their earthly stay. They themselves are still in existence somewhere. Moses and Elijah came back to the Mount of Transfiguration and the disciples recognized them. That raises questions as to what we will be like after death and before the resurrection but settles one major issue, we will still be living somewhere. God is not the God of the dead but of the living.

I found a dirt road behind the motel where I am staying this week in Michigan. I've been walking in the glorious September sunshine meditating on the God of the living. He does not deal in dead things. My loved ones are all alive on the other side. One of these days the trumpet will sound and their spirits will be joined to their new resurrection bodies and death will be swallowed up in victory. What a big swallow that will be! Corpses and funerals and cemeteries will be a thing of the past and we shall gather around the throne of the living God, the God of the living. He is the Author of life and there never would have been any death had not the devil invaded creation. But on that day Satan and his cohorts will be where they belong and we shall meet at the river of life around the tree of life to enjoy life everlasting.

But I need not wait for that day for my eternal life to begin. It started when I trusted my Saviour and I have it as surely as I will ever have it, though not as completely as when I see my Lord on that "Great Getting-up Morning." But now I have the promise of my inheritance and the foretaste of glory divine and if this be the first installment, what will it be like when I am paid in full! Until then I shall taste the powers of the age to come and work up an appetite for the Supper of the Lamb where the celebration never ends.

I worship the God of the living. My soul is not dwelling in the macabre realm of tombs and ghosts. Everybody past and present is alive. All who died in Christ are more alive than ever, they are but on His other side. We need to "come alive" in our thinking and walk with God in His Everlasting Now. (Though I Walk Through the Valley)

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#### **Mark 12:27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.**

Since God spoke of Himself as the God of the patriarchs, centuries after they had been borne to their graves, it stood to reason that they were yet living; and on this ground our Lord met the allegation that there is no life beyond death.

Death is not a state or condition, but an act. — We speak of the dead; but in point of fact there are none such. We should speak of those who have died. They were living up to the moment of death; but they were living quite as much afterwards. Death is like birth, an act, a transition, a passage into a freer life. Never think of a death as a state, but as resembling a bridge which, for a moment, casts its shadow on the express train, which flashes beneath, but does not stay.

All our dear ones are living. — As vividly, as keenly, as intensely as ever: with all the love and faith and intelligence with which we were wont to associate their beloved personality. It may be that they think of us as only half alive, compared with their own intense and vivid experience of the life which draws its breath from the manifested presence of God. Oh, do not fear that they will cease to recognize, know, or love you! Always it remains true, "Without us they cannot be made perfect."

Those who live on either side of death may meet in God. — Those who are present in the body, and those who are absent from it, meet in proportion as they approach God. When we count near Him in thought, and prayer, and love, we are come to the spirits of the just made perfect. God is the glorious center of all the lines that radiate into all worlds. "Ye are come to God, the Judge of all,... and to the spirits of the just made perfect." Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

**Mark 12:28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?"**

Wuest - And having come, one of the scribes having heard them questioning together, knowing that He had answered them well, asked Him, Of what sort is the first commandment of all?

- **one:** Mt 22:34-40
- **what:** Mt 5:19 19:18 23:23 Lu 11:42
- Mark 12:28-34 - Scribes
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Matthew 22:34 But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. 35 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

LUKE DOES NOT HAVE A DIRECT PARALLEL BUT DOES DISCUSS THIS COMMANDMENT IN Lk 10:25-28+ (WHICH MOST FEEL IS NOT A PARALLEL TO MARK AND MATTHEW'S VERSIONS).

## WHAT IS THE FOREMOST COMMANDMENT?

**One of the scribes came and heard them arguing** - Presumably this **arguing** refers to the "Resurrection Question" the Sadducees had posed to Jesus to trap Him (and he may have heard the dispute with the Sanhedrin in Mk 11:27ff and with the Pharisees and Herodians in Mk 12:13ff). Notice in Mt 22:34 it speaks of the group of Pharisees and then **one** which Matthew singles out and calls a **lawyer** (nomikos) who asks Jesus the question. "It may be inferred that "**scribes**" is a generic name, and the nomikoí, **lawyers**, are the specialized ones skilled in law and jurisprudence of the Law of Moses." (Zodhiates) This interaction with a religious leader seems different from the previous 3 if we read only Mark's version. However Mt 22:34 makes it clear that the scribe (lawyer) "asked Him a questions, **testing** ([peirazo](#) cf Mk 12:15+) Him."

**Broadus** adds the lawyer was "Putting him to the test, with the hope that he would say something unpopular, or perhaps that he might be drawn into a bitter and wrangling discussion."

**MacArthur** says "The purpose of this approach is to get Jesus to say something they're positive will not be in the writings of Moses because they all have concluded that He's against Moses, He's anti-Judaism, He's anti-Moses. He is setting Himself up as some supreme authority. He is saying things that are not like what we hear, what we teach and what we believe. And if they can get Him to elevate Himself above Moses, then the people will be more likely to turn from Him." ([Loving God](#))

[Utley](#) - The parallel in Matt. 22:34–35 seems to imply ulterior motives, but Mark's Gospel implies he was truly interested in the theological question.

On the other hand **Hiebert** says "The sequel shows that he did not ask his question with a malicious motive, but rather intended to "test" Jesus' skill in answering this much debated question." ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**William MacDonald** adds "It was an honest question, and, in some ways, life's most basic question. He was really asking for a concise statement of the chief aim of man's existence." (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Grassmick** agrees "He came with no apparent hostile or hidden motive to appraise Jesus' skill in answering a much-debated subject in scribal circles" (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Scribes** (1122) ([grammateus](#) from [grapho](#) = to write) was one skilled in Jewish law and theology. In short the **scribes** were the recognized experts in the law of Moses and in traditional laws and regulations. Of all the people present that day, the Scribes knew the Word of God better than anyone - except the Lord Jesus Christ. The moniker "experts in the law" comes closer to the meaning for the modern reader.

**MacArthur** on the relationship between **scribes** and **Pharisees** - **Not all Pharisees were scribes, but the scribes were primarily Pharisees**, who were interpreters and teachers of the law of Moses and the traditional rabbinic writings. Their teaching provided the theological framework for the Pharisees' legalistic system of works-righteousness. The scribes were the dominant force in Judaism, not only theologically, but socially. Their views affected every aspect of life, and they also handled all legal matters, including property, estates, and contracts. They were revered, and given the respectful title of Rabbi (Matt. 23:7). That title was sometimes given to Jesus because He was a teacher (cf. John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 6:25). It was commonly believed that Moses received the law, then gave it to Joshua, who gave it to the elders, who gave it to the prophets, who gave it to the scribes. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Arguing** (4802) ([suzeteo](#) from **sun** = together + **zeteo** = to seek, inquire) means to carry on a discussion, to inquire together and evolved to a negative meaning - to dispute, debate or argue (Mk 1:27, etc). Plato used it to mean to examine together. Of Pharisees arguing with Jesus (Mk 8:11), of Scribes arguing with Jesus' disciples (Mk 9:14), of Jews arguing with Stephen (Acts 6:9), of Paul (Saul at the time) arguing with the Hellenistic Jews (Acts 9:29).

**And recognizing that He had answered them well** - The scribe was attracted by Jesus' superior answers to the inferior questions of the other religious leaders.

**Asked Him, "What commandment ([entole](#)) is the foremost of all** - More literally, "What sort of commandment is first of all?" Note the **scribe** asked for one, but Jesus answers by giving two and summed it up with a passage found only in Matthew 22:40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." The Jews were fond of classifying the commandments as great and small, or weighty and light. (cf Mt 23:23.) **Foremost** is "First in rank and importance." (Robertson) Note that Matthew's version has "great" (Mt 22:36) instead of "foremost." **Robertson** adds ""First" and "great" in Greek do not differ essentially here."

**Geddert** - The question is not about chronology (which was given first?) and not strictly about priority (which is more important than the others?). It has more to do with centrality. Which commandment is at the heart of the law? Which commandment makes the keeping of all the others both possible and meaningful? Which commandment determines the proper application of all the others? ([Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#))

**Swete** says: "The Lord is not asked to select one commandment out of the Ten, but to specify a class of commandments, or a particular commandment as representative of a class, to which priority belongs."

**Akin** comments that "The rabbinic tradition had isolated 613 commandments in the first 5 books of the Bible, the Torah. 365 were negative and 248 were positive. Some were "light" making less demand, while others were viewed as "heavy" with severe repercussions for disobedience. Jesus himself appears to acknowledge this in Matt 5:19 where he says, "Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." So this scribe asked Jesus to "declare Himself." Our Lord gladly obliges and His answer takes us to the core of what really matters in life, what is of supreme importance. ([Mark 12:28-34 Two Great Commandments, Two Great Loves](#))

**MacArthur** on 613 commandments - "Well why would they come up with a number like that? Six-hundred and thirteen, why?" Because that's how many letters there were in the Decalogue. If you took the Ten Commandments in Hebrew, there's 613 letters so they said there had to be 613 laws. Pretty silly, but that's some of the rabbinical nonsense. (Sermon [Loving God](#))

**Alan Carr**: Of these laws, 248 are considered positives in nature while 365 are considered to be negative. That is, some compel men to do certain things while others forbid men from certain activities.

**Hiebert** has a similar comment - The scribe desired to know what kind of commandment was to be ranked in the highest place, what quality made a commandment of principal importance. While holding that all commandments were binding, the rabbis attempted to formulate a basic principle from which the rest of the law could be deduced as a corollary. The question of what commandments were "heavy" or "light" was much discussed. The rabbis counted 613 different commandments, 365 negatives and 248 positive. But their comparative importance was much debated. The scribe desired Jesus to indicate a principle of classification. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** adds that "Here is the dilemma that all legalists face. Knowing that they could not possibly keep all 613 laws, the rabbis focused on keeping the heavy or more important ones (as they saw them). They hoped vainly that doing so would satisfy God. But even that was a crushing, unbearable burden (Acts 15:5, 10), so they constantly sought to reduce their list of heavy laws to a few key ones. Unable to keep even those few laws, they focused instead on keeping their man-made traditions (cf. Mark 7:5–13), which were less difficult to observe. In their effort to trap Jesus, the Sanhedrin carried that reductionism still further. The scribe therefore asked Jesus what single commandment was the most important to God. Perhaps, like another frustrated legalist whom Jesus had encountered (Mark 10:17–22), he was seeking that elusive one good deed he could do to obtain eternal life (Matt. 19:16)." (See [Mark Commentary](#))

**Matthew Henry** - He does not mean the first in order, but the first in weight and dignity; "Which is that command which we ought to have in a special manner an eye to, and our obedience to which will lay a foundation for our obedience to all the rest?" Not that any commandment of God is little (they are all the commands of a great God), but some are greater than others, moral precepts than rituals, and of some we may say, They are the greatest of all. ([Mark 12 Commentary](#))

**Hendriksen**: the mezuzah was a rectangular piece of inscribed parchment enclosed in a metal or wooden case, and attached to the upper section of a Jewish dwelling's right hand door post. The inscribed material consists of the Shema in its longer form. It is written in twenty-two lines, in accordance with definite rules.

You cannot adequately obey the Commands of God  
without first understanding and embracing the Person of God.

-- Paul Apple

Then one of the scribes came, and . . . asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?” —Mark 12:28

Today's Scripture & Insight: Mark 12:28-34

Few people take time to study the US Internal Revenue Service income tax regulations—and for good reason. According to Forbes magazine, in 2013 tax codes surpassed the four million-word mark. In fact, the tax laws have become so complex that even the experts have a hard time processing all the regulations. It's burdensome in its complexity.

The religious leaders in ancient Israel did the same thing in their relationship with God. They made it too complex with laws. The growing burden of religious regulations had increased to the point where even an expert in Moses' law struggled to understand its core. When one such leader asked Jesus what mattered most in the Commandments, Jesus responded, “‘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 neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31).

The law of Moses was burdensome, but faith in Christ is simple and His “burden is light” (Matt. 11:30). It's light because God was willing to forgive us and love us. Now He enables us to love Him and our neighbor. By: Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### **My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine;**

for thee all the follies of sin I resign;  
my gracious Redeemer, my Savior art thou;  
if ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love thee because thou hast first loved me  
and purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree;  
I love thee for wearing the thorns on thy brow;  
if ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I'll love thee in life, I will love thee in death,  
and praise thee as long as thou lendest me breath,  
and say when the deathdew lies cold on my brow:  
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

In mansions of glory and endless delight,  
I'll ever adore thee in heaven so bright;  
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow:  
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

—Featherstone

God's love in our heart gives us a heart for Him and others.

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### **No Greater Love**

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. — John 15:13

Today's Scripture: Mark 12:28-34

You can't show a greater love for people than James Harrison demonstrated. And he did it for people he didn't even know.

Harrison, a member of the Ouachita Baptist University choir, was returning home from Europe with his fellow singers. As their plane was landing in Little Rock, Arkansas, it was hit by heavy rains and high winds. The jet skidded off the runway and hit a bank of lights, ripping open the fuselage.

As chaos reigned and flames broke out in the mangled plane, Harrison began to help others. Over and over, he pulled passengers to safety and ran back to the plane for more. On his last trip into the burning wreckage, he was overcome with smoke. He didn't make it out alive.

At his funeral, the choir director quoted John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.” Jesus was really speaking of His own death on our behalf, and the choir leader pointed out the value of this ultimate sacrifice.

We may never be called upon to make the kind of sacrifice James made during that horrible tragedy. Yet every day we have



opportunities to set aside our comfort to love our neighbors (Mk. 12:31). How much love do we show? By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The more Christ's love within us grows,  
The more His graciousness outflows;  
And when we face a fiery test,  
His love we then will manifest.  
—Hess

In a world that "couldn't care less," Christians should care more.

**Mark 12:29** Jesus answered, "The foremost is, '**HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD**;

- **Hear:** Mk 12:32,33 Dt 6:4-5 Dt 10:12 Dt 30:6 Pr 23:26 Mt 10:37 Lu 10:27 1Ti 1:5
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 6:4+ "Hear, O Israel! The LORD (YAHWEH) is our God (ELOHIM), the LORD (YAHWEH) is one!

MATTHEW SURPRISINGLY (SINCE IT IS MORE TOWARD A JEWISH AUDIENCE) LEAVES OUT JESUS QUOTE OF THE "SHEMA"

### THE SHEMA

**Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD** -The "[Shema](#)" (from first word "Hear") was recited by every devout Jew morning and evening and affirms the truth of [monotheism](#), one God. Notice that once again Jesus resorts to the written Word of God to answer the scribe's question, giving His disciples an excellent pattern to emulate.

**Geddert** - Jesus responds by accepting the scribe's assumption that there is a center to the law. But he also modifies it by clarifying that two commandments are located at the center. The commandments to love God (Deut. 6:4–5) and neighbor (Lev. 19:18) stand together at the heart of the Torah. The Hebrew [Shema](#) quoted here, **Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God ...**, was recited regularly in the synagogue. Thus Jesus says, "The center of the law is not some hidden key to be discovered by intricate exegetical maneuvers. The center of the law is the love command(s) repeated regularly in worship." ([Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#))

**Wuest** adds that this passage "was recited daily by every Jew, and written on the miniature roll which every scribe carried in his phylactery. This was a small case, made of parchment bound to the forehead or arm, in which was placed small pieces of parchment inscribed with scripture portions. Thus, the words were already considered of prime importance by the Jews. The words are found at the very beginning of this fundamental confession of faith and duty, thus testifying by their very position to their importance." ([Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader](#))

**Matthew Henry** - If he be one, our hearts must be one with him, and since there is no God besides, no rival must be admitted with him upon the throne. ([Mark 12 Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** - Obedience cannot be merely external; it must be internal, from the heart, motivated by faithful love for the **one** true God.

[Daniel Akin](#) - Yahweh is one. He is one in essence and existence. He alone is God and there is no other. This is a powerful statement of uniqueness and exclusivity. Our God is God alone and our God alone will only accept our exclusive worship, love, devotion and allegiance. Teachers of the Law and theologians could debate all they want but Jesus begins by bringing them back to the basics, the fundamental, nonnegotiables of the faith. We should love this God because of who He is

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#### Question: [What is the Shema?](#)

**Answer:** Shema ("hear") is the Hebrew word that begins the most important prayer in Judaism. It is found in Deuteronomy 6:4, which begins with the command to "Hear." The whole Shema prayer, which includes verses 4-9, is spoken daily in the Jewish tradition:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your

heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Later Jewish tradition developed a three-part Shema prayer that also included Deuteronomy 11:13–29 and Numbers 15:37–41. Tradition states these three parts cover all aspects of the Ten Commandments.

The Shema prayer was so influential and important that Jesus used it as the beginning of His answer to the “greatest commandment” question in Mark 12:28–30:

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.

When Jesus began His answer with the Shema prayer, He acknowledged the Lord God as most important and that complete devotion to Him is the most important of the commandments. It is no surprise that the scribe replied this way in verses 32–33:

You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Even today, Christians can look to the words of the Shema as a wonderful expression that the Lord is the one true God. As we acknowledge His lordship, our response remains to “hear” Him, love Him with all our heart, soul, and might, and love our neighbor as ourselves. (Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org))

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#### Related Resources:

- [What does it mean that the LORD is one \(Deuteronomy 6:4\)?](#)
- [How can Jesus be God if Deuteronomy 6:4 says that God is one?](#)
- [I am Jewish, can I become a Christian?](#)
- [Was Jesus a Jew?](#)

**Mark 12:30 AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'**

- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### LOVE GOD WITH YOUR WHOLE BEING

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 6:5+ “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Joshua 22:5+ “Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to **love the LORD your God** and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Matthew 22:37+ And He said to him, “ ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ 38 “This is the great and foremost commandment.

**AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD-** This is love which flows from one’s entire being toward the Eternal Being. Note He is “**your**” God which speaks of possession. Yes ultimately He possesses us but in an act of amazing grace, we possess Him as our “summum bonum,” our highest good. This call to love God calls for a supernaturally enabled unconditional commitment to God from a whole heart. Ultimately the only way a fallen creature can love God like this is by depending on the Holy Spirit to energize

that quality of love. This love is not "natural" but is "supernatural."

**NET Note** on **shall love** - The future indicative is used here with imperative (COMMAND) force.

**Joseph Alexander** notes that Jesus gives us a "comprehensive summary in Deut. 6:4, 5 and Lev. 19:18, the former passage summing up the first and the latter the second table (10 Commandments)."

**Wuest** - "The word for "love" is **agapaō** which speaks of that Holy Spirit generated love in the heart of the yielded saint, a divine love, which is due God from His creatures, not **phileō**, which speaks merely of a non-ethical fondness." ([Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader](#))

**Guzik** writes on **love the Lord** - In this we see that what God really wants from man is love. We can obey God without loving Him, but if we do love Him obedience will follow. ([Mark 12 Commentary](#))

**Love** (25)(**agapao** see related study of noun **agape**) means to love unconditionally and sacrificially (selflessly) as God Himself loves sinful men (John 3:16+), the way He loves the Son (Jn 17:26+ - the true in this verse is incomprehensible!). **MacArthur** says **agapao** "expresses the purest, noblest form of love, which is volitionally driven, not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship." This love is empowered by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the surrendered saint (Gal 5:16, 22+), is shown not just by words but deeds (1 Jn 3:17+), manifested by keeping God's commandments (Jn 14:15, 21, 23, 24+).

**WITH ALL YOUR HEART** (**kardia**), **AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL** (**psuche**), **AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND** (**dianoia**), **AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH** (**ischus**) - In short Jesus says "Love God with all you are." Note that each use of **with** is more literally "out of" (ex) and as Hiebert says this stresses the "source of our love. It must arise out of every area of their being—heart, soul, mind, strength—reference to each part extended with the adjective whole for equal emphasis. " ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary](#))

**Hiebert** - Love to God must possess the whole heart, the seat of personality, the whole soul, the self-conscious life, the whole mind, the rational faculties, and the whole strength, the entire active powers of man. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** - The heart in the Hebrew understanding is the core of a person's identity; it is the source of all thoughts, words, and actions. For that reason Proverbs 4:23 commands, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." Love for God must flow from the deepest part of a person's being. Soul adds the emotions. In Matthew 26:38 Jesus said, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death," speaking of His soul as the seat of emotion. Mind embraces the will, the intentions, and purposes. Strength refers to physical energy and function. The intellectual, emotional, volitional, and physical elements of personhood are all involved in loving God. Genuine love for God is an intelligent love, an emotional love, a willing love, and an active love. In short, it is a comprehensive, all-consuming love and singular adoration. God's wholehearted love for believers must not be reciprocated with half-hearted devotion. (See [Mark 9-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**Grassmick** describes this love as a "a volitional commitment to God that is personal, comprehensive, and wholehearted. This is emphasized by the repeated words with (ex, "out of," denoting source), all (holēs, "the whole of"), your (sing.), and the various terms relating to the human personality—heart (control center; cf. Mark 7:19), soul (self-conscious life; cf. 8:35–36), mind (thought capacity), and strength (bodily powers). " (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Matthew Henry** - That the great commandment of all, which is indeed inclusive of all, is, that of loving God with all our hearts. (1.) Where there is a commanding principle in the soul, there is a disposition to every other duty. Love is the leading affection of the soul; the love of God is the leading grace in the renewed soul. (2.) Where this is not, nothing else that is good is done, or done aright, or accepted, or done long. Loving God with all our heart, will effectually take us off from, and arm us against, all those things that are rivals with him for the throne in our souls, and will engage us to every thing by which he may be honoured, and with which he will be pleased; and no commandment will be grievous where this principle commands, and has the ascendant. ([Mark 12 Commentary](#))

**Daniel Akin** - What is called for is a total response of love and devotion to our Great God. Indeed the four-fold use of heart, soul, mind and strength is not intended as a "psychological analysis of human personality", but a call to love God wholly and completely. Kent Hughes says it so well, "It does not take much of a man to be a believer, but it takes all there is of him!" (Mark, vol. 2, 115) Heart speaks to our emotions, the real me on the inside (See Ex. 20:3). - Soul speaks to the spirit, the self-conscious life (See Ps. 42:1-2). - Mind speaks to our intelligence and thought life (See 2 Cor 10:3-5). - Strength speaks to our bodily powers, perhaps even the will (See Rom 12:1). - It is easy to see there is overlap in these categories of human personality.

**Sinclair Ferguson** says, "God is never satisfied with anything less than the devotion of our whole life for the whole duration of our lives" (Mark, 200).

**Daniel Akin** proposes a series of questions helps evaluate our "love life" when it comes to rightly loving God and

1. Is the Lord the all-consuming passion of my life?
2. Do I have a deep, intense and abiding affection for my Lord?
3. Am I loyal to my God with an exclusive love?
4. Do I resist and even oppose anything or anyone that seeks to do my Lord harm?
5. Am I zealous to, with grace, defend my Lord's name and honor?
6. Do I enjoy spending time with my Lord?
7. Do I do things that please my Lord and increase His joy?
8. Do I brag on my Lord to others?
9. Do I tell my Lord that I love him?
10. Do I talk with my Lord as much as I can?

**Akin** goes on to emphasize that "these are not things I do to get God to love me. They are things I do because I am loved by Him and because I love Him. I never lose sight of the fact that I do not love Him to get Him to love me. I love Him because He first loved me (1 John 4:10+) ([Mark 12:28-34 Two Great Commandments, Two Great Loves](#))

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### **The Little Evangelist**

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. —Mark 12:30

Today's Scripture: Mark 12:28-34

My 6-year-old neighbor Michael and I were talking in my front yard when two new neighbor kids stopped by. After I asked them their names, Michael's first question to them was: "Do you love God?" Sugar, a 5-year-old boy, quickly responded, "No!" Michael gave him a look of disapproval and concern. When 4-year-old Nana noticed he wasn't pleased with that answer, she said, "Yes!"

Michael's "witnessing strategy" may not be the most effective, but he does have an important question for the people he meets (and I've heard him ask it of several others as well).

Jesus was asked, "Which is the first commandment of all?" (Mark 12:28). He answered, "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'" (vv.29-30).

Jesus was referring to Old Testament times, when God had told the Israelites to place Him as the one and only God in their lives and nation. The pagan nations around them had many gods they loved and worshiped, but God's people were to be different.

Loving God is to be our top priority too. So, Michael wants to know, "Do you love God?" By: Anne Cetas [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

For Further Thought

Have you trusted in Jesus as your Savior?

What evidence is there in your life that you love God?

How are you showing God's love to others?

If you truly love the Lord, you'll want others to love Him too.

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### **An Important Command**

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. — Mark 12:30

Today's Scripture & Insight: Mark 12:28-34

When asked by a lawyer to identify the most important rule in life, Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). In those words, Jesus summed up what God most desires from us.

I wonder how I can possibly learn to love God with all my heart, soul, and mind. Neal Plantinga remarks on a subtle change in this commandment as recorded in the New Testament. Deuteronomy charges us to love God with all our heart, soul, and strength (Dt 6:5). Jesus added the word mind. Plantinga explains, "You shall love God with everything you have and everything you are. Everything."

That helps us change our perspective. As we learn to love God with everything, we begin to see our difficulties as "our light and momentary troubles"—just as the apostle Paul described his grueling ordeals. He had in mind a "far more exceeding and eternal . . .

glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

In the advanced school of prayer, where one loves God with the entire soul, doubts and struggles do not disappear, but their effect on us diminishes. "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19), and our urgent questions recede as we learn to trust His ultimate goodness. By: Philip Yancey ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Once earthly joy I craved, sought peace and rest;  
Now Thee alone I seek; give what is best.  
This all my prayer shall be:  
More love, O Christ, to Thee.  
—Prentiss

The most treasured gift we can give to God is one that He can never force us to give—our love.

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## **A Web Of Relationships**

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. —Mark 12:30

Today's Scripture: John 15:1-14

Several years ago, a Harvard Business School professor wrote an open letter to the nation's graduates. He told them that in one sense they needed to forget what they had learned in school. He said that schools tend to put too much emphasis on the idea that success comes as a result of passing tests and is based on individual performance rather than on group effort and cooperation. The professor pointed out, though, that in the workplace doing well depends largely on learning to succeed in what he called a "web of relationships."

This truth also applies to living the Christian life. We often think that spiritual maturity and success result from how much we know about biblical facts and principles. Christ showed us, however, that it comes from something else—from loving one another in the same way He loved us. He made it clear that we can do this only if we "abide" in Him (Jn. 15:7). This means we must stay close to Him through prayer, and that we will obey His commands (v.10). Our web of relationships must extend to God and then to others.

The secret of spiritual success is not just in acquiring individual knowledge—it's in coupling that knowledge with love in all our relationships. By: Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, help us learn from what You did  
When You lived on this earth;  
You spread Your love to all You met—  
You gave each one true worth.  
—JDB

When Christians draw close to Christ, they draw closer to one another.

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## **Private Property**

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. —Mk. 12:30

Today's Scripture: Mark 12:28-34

An editorial cartoon depicted the first nativity scene, but with a modern twist. As the shepherds were paying homage to the baby, one said, "This had better be happening on private property or we're in trouble!"

The cartoon pokes fun at laws banning the display of religious symbols on public property, but the phrase can be seen in another light. If we aren't worshiping the Christ of Christmas in the "private property" of our hearts, we are truly in trouble. The citadel of heart, soul, and mind is the ultimate in private property. No one can legislate what happens there. And love for others is the demonstration of God's presence in our lives. No law can banish that from public display.

When Jesus was questioned about the greatest commandment, He answered, "'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 neighbor as yourself'" (Mk. 12:30-31).

Whether we live under democracy or despotism, we are free to enthrone Jesus Christ in our hearts and express Him through our love. What is happening on your "private property"? Can others see Christ's presence in your life? By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Ah, dearest Jesus, Holy child!  
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,  
Within my heart, that it may be  
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.  
—Luther

If you honor Christ in your heart, He will be honored by your life.

**Mark 12:31 "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."**

- **You:** Lev 19:18 Mt 7:12 19:18,19 22:39 Lu 10:27,36,37 Ro 13:8,9 1Co 13:4-8 Ga 5:14 Jas 2:8-13 1Jn 3:17-19 4:7,8,21
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Leviticus 19:18+ 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

Matthew 22:39 "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' 40 (THIS VERSE IS NOT IN MARK) "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

1 John 4:19-21+ We love, because He first loved us. 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that **the one who loves God should love his brother also.**

## THE LOVE OF MAN

**The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE ([agapao](#)) YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'** - While shall love is future tense, the sense is clear that this is not a suggestion but a commandment (recall the original request "What commandment" Mk 12:29) Jesus quotes from the [Septuagint](#) of Leviticus 19:18+. As noted in John's first letter, clearly love of God (v30) is intimately intertwined with love of man (neighbor) (see 1 Jn 4:20 above). **Your neighbor** is literally "one who is nearby" and thus describes our fellow man, whoever and wherever we encounter them. It means anyone and everyone we have opportunity to meet in any way! This word ([plesion](#)) is "all inclusive." The dynamic in this passage is interesting -- we have no trouble (usually) loving ourselves, but this passage calls on us to love others with the same quality of love! Are you as convicted as I am? Jesus ratcheted this up in Mt 5:43-47 calling for love of our enemies! If you are not convicted now than you are deceiving yourself!

And this commandment we have from Him,  
that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

-- 1 John 4:21<sup>±</sup>

**MacArthur** points out that "The arrogant, prideful scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees did neither; they failed to love either God or their neighbor (as illustrated by Jesus in the Good Samaritan parable). This command must not be twisted into a call for self-love, which is natural; such is not its intent. The Lord's point is that we are to have the same love and care for neighbors, strangers, and enemies that we possess for ourselves." (See [Mark 9-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**Geddert** - Some have suggested that there is an implied third great commandment, to love ... yourself (Mk 12:31). This, however, misses the point of the passage. The text refers to an active, caring love that invests heart, soul, mind, and strength in the service of God and others. To love others adequately requires a redirection of these energies. Instead of active investment of our energies to serve ourselves, we are called to active investment of them in the service of God and others (cf. Mk 10:43-45). While a healthy self-esteem is compatible with (and perhaps necessary for) a self-giving love of God and others, that is not what this text is teaching. ([Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#))

**Gilbrant** - The first commandment actually guarantees the second; they cannot be separated. Note that Jesus did not command us



to love ourselves. It is assumed throughout the Bible that men love themselves. Love for self caused the fall of both Lucifer and man. Since the Fall, all men love themselves more than anything else until they are born of the Spirit and are filled with the love of God (Romans 5:5). One of the signs of the end times is that men will be "lovers of themselves" to an unusual degree (2 Timothy 3:2)....The fact that these are "thou shalt's" shows that "love" is more than "feelings." It involves one's will (ED: both uses of "shall love" are in [active voice](#) = choice of one's will - and I submit we need the Spirit's enablement - see "will" in Php 2:13 and nicely paraphrased in Php 2:13NLT+ ), shown in acts of kindness and mercy. To love is to will the highest eternal good for a person, and to demonstrate it in action. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Hiebert** - This command demands that he must exercise a love equal to that which he has for himself toward his neighbor, the "one near to him," the person with whom he comes into contact, whoever he may be. In Leviticus, neighbor meant a fellow-Israelite, but in the New Testament, it is given the widest possible extension of meaning (cf. Luke 10:29–37+). ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Utley** - It is impossible to love God and hate those made in His image (cf. 1 John 2:9–11; 3:15; 4:20).

**Joseph Alexander** - "Self-love, as being an original principle of our nature, and therefore not subject to the caprices of the will, is wisely made the standard of men's love for one another, which would otherwise be ever sinking far below the level of our natural regard for our own welfare.

**Daniel Akin** - Some hear the phrase "**you shall love your neighbor as yourself**" and wrongly think how narcissistic. Jesus, the unselfish one, actually tells me to selfishly love myself. How do we make sense of this? First, there is a healthy kind of self love that is cognizant of the truth that we are the objects both of the "creating" and "redeeming" love of our God. To hate myself is actually an offense to God and calls into question His wisdom and goodness. Second, the love a person naturally has for himself is now "turned out" toward others. The object of my affection and concern moves from me to others (cf. Phil 2:3-5). Third, the fact that this is a command makes clear that the primary focus is on our actions and not our feelings or emotions. Fourth, there is certainly a mysterious paradox in all this, for the same Jesus who tells us to love ourselves also tells us to deny ourselves and die to ourselves (Mark 8:34). In other words the more I truly love myself the more I will deny myself and love others. To love my neighbor as myself means I will serve the needs of others with all the energy, passion and zeal with which I serve and attempt to meet my own needs. However, only by loving my God supremely will I be able to love others, "all others," genuinely. And, as I love others genuinely I demonstrate that I love my God supremely. No wonder Jesus said, "There is no greater commandment than these."

**Akin** adds that "Don Carson preached a wonderful sermon at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Feb. 2012 at a large college conference that really helped us see what it means to love others genuinely. He also taught all of us a good lesson in hermeneutics or biblical interpretation. He encouraged us to examine the context in which Lev. 19:18 was located. There you discover that loving your neighbor as yourself means a lot! Among other things it means that you will 1) care for the poor (Lev 19:10), 2) not steal (Lev 19:11), 3) not lie (Lev 19:11), 4) be fair in business dealings (Lev 19:14), 5) care for the deaf (Lev 19:14), 6) care for the blind (Lev 19:14), 7) deal justly with all (Lev 19:15), 8) avoid slander (Lev 19:16), 9) not "jeopardize" (HCSB) the life of your neighbor (Lev 19:16), 10) not "hate your brother in your heart" (Lev 19:17), 11) rebuke your neighbor when necessary for his and your good (Lev 19:17), and 12) not take revenge or bear a grudge against others (Lev 19:18). Wow! God does not leave it to our imaginations as to what He means when He tells us to love our neighbors as yourself.

**Neighbor** (Near) ([4139](#))([plesion](#) from **pélas** = near, near to or from **plesios** = close by) literally means near (literal use only in Jn 4:5), quite near, nearby = position quite close to another position. Figuratively, **plesion** means to be near someone and thus be a neighbor. Generally, **plesion** refers to a fellow man, any other member of the human family. **TDNT** explains that "Ho plesion" is the "neighbor," the person next to one" then more generally the "fellow human being." Eight of 17 uses of **plesion** occur in a citation of or allusion to Leviticus 19:18: "You shall love your **neighbor** (Hebrew translated in [Septuagint](#) with plēsion) as yourself" (Mt 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mk 12:31; Luke 10:27; Ro 13:9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8). It should be noted that the **TDNT** entry states that "there is allusion to Lev. 19:18 in 12 instances." All uses of plesion - Matt. 5:43; Matt. 19:19; Matt. 22:39; Mk. 12:31; Mk. 12:33; Lk. 10:27; Lk. 10:29; Lk. 10:36; Jn. 4:5; Acts 7:27; Rom. 13:9; Rom. 13:10; Rom. 15:2; Gal. 5:14; Eph. 4:25; Jas. 2:8; Jas. 4:12

**There is no other commandment ([entole](#)) greater than these** - Notice Jesus uses "commandment" singular even though He has quoted two "commandments." There is no grammatical error because the two commandments are intimately related to each other. In short, the inevitable proof of our love for God is our love for men (especially fellow believers) (1 John 2:9-10; 3:17; 4:8, 12).

*To fulfill these commands is to fulfill all others.*

--Grassmick

Paul writes "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." (Ro 13:10)

*One's love for people reveals the degree of his love for God*

-- Gilbrant

**MacArthur** - In Matthew 22:40 He added, “**On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets**” Together, they sum up the entire Ten Commandments, the first four of which demand features related to love for God; the last six describe features of love for man. (See [Mark 9-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#) )

**Hiebert** - All other commands will be fulfilled to the measure that these two are fulfilled. The first commandment summarizes the first table of the Decalogue (Exod. 20:2–11+), a man’s duties to God, while the second summarizes the second table (Exod. 20:12–17+), man’s duties to his fellow man. Matthew recorded that Jesus went on to say, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (22:40). The prophetic as well as the legal Scriptures find their inspiration in love. This double love comprehends all righteousness. Thus the essence of the believer’s duty, both godward and manward, is moral and not ceremonial. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Wiersbe** - Jesus made love the most important thing in life, because “love is the fulfilling of the Law” (Rom. 13:8–10). If we love God, we will experience His love within and will express that love to others. We do not live by rules but by relationships, a loving relationship to God that enables us to have a loving relationship with others. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

**Dwight Edwards** - As we pursue our relationship with God in whole-hearted devotion, the immediate spill over of the fullness of that relationship will be into the lives of other men and women. Note also the significance of the order: first God, second people. We cannot give to others out of spiritual and emotional bankruptcy, thus our relationship with God must be the top priority of our life. ([Mark Commentary](#))

**THOUGHT** - If your horizontal relationships are "messed up," don't pretend to be in communion and fellowship with God (vertical relationship. John said it this way "If we say that we have fellowship with Him (VERTICAL) and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another (HORIZONTAL), and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:6-7+)

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## Driving Lessons

There is no other commandment greater than these. — Mark 12:31

Today's Scripture: Mark 12:28-34

One morning on my way to work, I began to wonder, Why should I obey God's laws? The answer played out as I approached a traffic light that had just turned yellow. A driver at the intersection waited to make sure I had fully stopped. Why did I stop? I asked myself. I could have made it.

Two reasons came to mind—survival and surveillance. I could be injured or killed. Or a police officer might see me and give me a ticket. Good reasons, don't you think? But are these the highest motives? Am I concerned about other drivers?

Obedying God's commands out of fear would reduce much of the wreckage strewn along life's highway due to adultery, murder, lying, stealing, and coveting. But there is a higher motive. When Jesus was asked, “Which is the first commandment of all?” He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart,” and second, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Then He said, “There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31).

Once we put our faith in Christ as our Savior and experience God's love, our motivation for obeying His commands changes. That means we slow down at God's “yellow lights,” stop at His “red lights,” and proceed at His “green lights” for the highest reason—love. By: Dennis J. DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

"We love You, Lord Jesus," we often may say,  
But are we as ready His will to obey?  
Let's heed what God's Spirit would have us to do,  
That's how we can show Him a love that is true.  
—DJD

To love God is to obey God.

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**Question:** [What does it mean to love your neighbor as you love yourself? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Answer:** An expert in the law tried to test the Lord Jesus by asking Him to declare what was the greatest commandment in the Law of Moses. In one masterful statement, Jesus condensed the entire law that God had given Moses: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40).

When we read the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, we are struck with the realization that they focus on these two issues. Certainly we are to love God supremely. But what does it mean to love our neighbor as ourselves?

Jesus is quoting here from Leviticus 19. Let’s look at its context:

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God. You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning. You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I am the LORD. You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor. You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:9–18).

Notice that loving our neighbor would include sharing with the poor and the alien; compassion and absolute honesty and justice in our relationships with others; impartiality; a refusal to be a party to gossip or slander; an absence of malice toward anyone and a refusal to bear a grudge; taking care never to put another’s life at risk and never taking private vengeance upon another. It is also interesting to note that when we have an issue with anyone, we should strive to make it right by going to him or her directly. James calls this the “royal law” (James 2:8). Our Lord taught that we should do to others as we would have them do to us (Matthew 7:12).

It is a fact that anyone who does not have a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ will die in his sins and face eternity in hell. Therefore, we owe it to our neighbors to lovingly share with them the good news of the gospel. True believers have been forgiven, possess eternal life, and have blessings forever as the result of others who have shared the gospel with them. God’s love is evidenced in us as we communicate this precious gospel and love others as we have been loved.

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**Question -** [What does the Bible say about self-love, loving self?](http://www.gotquestions.org/What-does-the-Bible-say-about-self-love-loving-self/) | [GotQuestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

**Answer:** Love as described in the Bible is quite different from the love as espoused by the world. Biblical love is selfless and unconditional, whereas the world’s love is characterized by selfishness. In the following passages, we see that love does not exist apart from God and that true love can only be experienced by one who has experienced God’s own love firsthand:

Romans 13:9–10, “The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

John 13:34–35, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

1 John 4:16–19, “And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.”

**The statement “love your neighbor as yourself” is not a command to love yourself.** It is natural and normal to love yourself—it is our default position. There is no lack of self-love in our world. The command to “love your neighbor as yourself” is essentially telling us to treat other people as well as we treat ourselves. **Scripture never commands us to love ourselves; it assumes we already do.** In fact, people in their unregenerate condition love themselves too much—that is our problem. (ED: compare 2 Ti 3:2+).

In Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan, there was only one who showed himself to be a true neighbor to the man in need: the Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37). There were two others, a priest and a Levite, who refused to help the man in need. Their failure to show love to the injured man was not the result of loving themselves too little; it was the result of loving themselves too much and therefore putting their interests first. The Samaritan showed true love—he gave of his time, resources, and money with no regard for

himself. His focus was outward, not inward. Jesus presented this story as an illustration of what it means to love one's neighbor as one's self (verse 27).

**We are to take our eyes off ourselves and care for others. Christian maturity demands it.** "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:3–4). According to this passage, loving others requires humility, a valuing of others, and a conscious effort to put others' interests first. Anything less than this is selfish and vain—and falls short of the standard of Christ.

**None of this should be taken to mean that we should see ourselves as "worthless."** The Bible teaches that we are created in the image of God, and that fact alone gives us great worth (see Luke 12:7). The balanced, biblical view is that we are God's unique creation, loved by God in spite of our sin, and redeemed by Christ. In His love, we can love others.

We love others based on God's abiding love for us in Christ. In response to this love, we share it with all whom we come in contact with—our "neighbors." Someone who is worried that he doesn't love himself enough has the wrong focus. His concern, biblically, should be his love for God and his love for his neighbor. "Self" is something we want out of the way so that we can love outwardly as we ought.

#### Related Resources:

- [How should a Christian view self-esteem?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about self-worth?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about self-image?](#)

**Mark 12:32 The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM;**

NET Mark 12:32 The expert in the law said to him, "That is true, Teacher; you are right to say that he is one, and there is no one else besides him.

NLT Mark 12:32 The teacher of religious law replied, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other.

ESV Mark 12:32 And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him.

NIV Mark 12:32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him.

- for: De 4:39 5:7 6:4 Isa 44:8 45:5,6,14,18,21,22 46:9 Jer 10:10-12
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

NO PARALLEL IN MATTHEW OR LUKE

**Hiebert** - The scribe's reaction revealed that he was an open-minded inquirer, ready to accept the truth even from Jesus. He was the most honest questioner during this day, and he alone received a commendation from Jesus. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary](#))

**The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher - Right** ([kalos](#)) means well or good and was used as " an exclamatory particle, used on hearing something which one approves, as one says "good."" (Wuest)

**You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM-** NIV "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him."

**Hiebert** - the scribe again regarded the reply of Jesus as admirable and did not hesitate to say so openly. He commended Him as an able Teacher: "Beautifully, Teacher; of a truth you said." Jesus' reply was excellent because He answered "of a truth," had based His answer on truth. Anderson notes, "Only here in the Gospel is a representative of Jewish religious officialdom found agreeing with Jesus." His omission of the divine name (GOD) (literally "he is one") is in keeping with the Jewish practice of avoiding any unnecessary usage of that name. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary](#))

**Expositors** says of the scribe's words: "There is a ring of conviction in the words. The varied expression of the law of the love to God also bears witness to sincerity and independent thought."

**Mark 12:33 AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."**

- **is much more:** 1Sa 15:22 Ps 50:8-15,23 Pr 21:3 Isa 1:11-17 58:5-7 Jer 7:21-23 Ho 6:6 Am 5:21-24 Mic 6:6-8 Mt 9:13 12:7 1Co 13:1-3
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passage:**

NO PARALLEL IN MATTHEW OR LUKE

**SCRIBE SEES SUPERIORITY  
MORAL OVER CEREMONIAL!**

**AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH-** The scribe repeats Jesus' words but substitutes "**understanding**" ([sunesis](#)) for "**mind**" ([dianoia](#)).

**AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF** - Identical to the words of Jesus. In both of these he emphasizes the crucial verb "love!"

**Is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices** - This is quite a declaration by this scribe and runs counter to the mindset of almost all of the Jewish hierarchy! It recalls the words of the prophet Samuel to disobedient King Saul "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams." (1 Sa 15:22) In Proverbs 21:3 God says "To do righteousness and justice Is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice." (cf Isa. 1:11-20; Jer. 7:22-23; Hos. 6:6, Amos 5:21-24, Mic. 6:6-8). He is not necessarily depreciating temple ritual, but to assert that proper motive and faith are crucial so that the "ritual" is motivated and energized by relationship. Offerings and sacrifices should be one's delight, not an onerous obligation or duty.

**Constable** - Mark alone recorded the scribe's response and Jesus' comment (v. 34). These words underscore the importance of Jesus' teaching. The scribe believed Jesus' answer was correct. He, too, viewed love as more important than the observance of religious ritual (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6). This was not typical of the Pharisees who regarded ritual observance as more important than attitude, and ceremony as more important than morality.

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**Mark 12:33** The [Welsh Revival](#) of 1904 was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the churches and people of Wales that spread around the world and can be called the last great revival of global proportions. By some accounts it had its beginning in the village of New Quay, fifteen miles from the nearest railway station. The local pastor, Rev. Joseph Jenkins, had read Andrew Murray's book *With Christ in the School of Prayer*. He began pleading for an awakening in his own heart and in those of others. In that spirit, he assembled the young people of the village for a Sunday morning prayer service. When Jenkins asked for testimonies, a new convert named Florrie Evans stood and said with a tremor in her voice: "I love Jesus Christ—with all my heart." Those words struck the group like an electrical charge. It was later described as a fire igniting right in the room. Soon those young people, ages sixteen to eighteen, began traveling through Wales as the human conveyers of a burning revival that brought an estimated one hundred thousand people into the kingdom. One young man, Evan Roberts, became the primary vehicle of revival; but the revival spark was provided by young Florrie Evans. And if we would say her words as earnestly as she said them that day, we'd all have a bit of the Welsh revival in us. "I love Jesus Christ—with all my heart." ([My All in All - Robert J Morgan](#))

**Mark 12:34 When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.**

- **You:** Mt 12:20 Ro 3:20 7:9 Ga 2:19
- **After that no one:** Job 32:15,16 Mt 22:46 Lu 20:40 Ro 3:19 Col 4:6 Tit 1:9-11
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## Related Passage:

NO PARALLEL IN MATTHEW OR LUKE

## NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM

**When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently** - **Intelligently** is *nounechos* (*nous* = mind + *echo* = to have) found only here in the Bible and means sensibly, wisely, thoughtfully. In other words the scribe's reply was from a sincere heart. **Vincent** says *nounechos* depicts one "having his mind in possession, having his wits about him."

**He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."** Jesus is saying in essence he is not far from being saved, for entrance into the kingdom of God was another way of saying one became a believer in Jesus and was saved. Jesus is not telling the man "you are close, so you need to try harder," for the religious legalists had already mastered that maneuver and utterly failed to enter the Kingdom of God. See Jesus words to another religious Jew named Nicodemus (John 3:3-8+) Jesus first used this phrase in Mark 1:15+ saying "The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom of God** is at hand; **repent** and **believe** in the Gospel." Will we see him in Heaven? Perhaps.

It is a matter of heart devotion not hard duty.

-- Daniel Akin

**Hiebert** notes that Jesus' reply is "a compliment as well as an appeal to the scribe. His realization of the primary importance of love had placed him spiritually near the kingdom of God, the reign of God in the lives of His people (cf. 1:15). He had come a long way for a scribe, but not far from made clear that he must go further and accept that love in the Person of Him who was "the kingdom incarnate." "Whether or not he ever actually entered it, is written on the yet unread page of its history." Jones remarks, " 'Not far from the Kingdom,' how aptly it describes the condition of many in our own midst." ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Swete** - "What the Lord observed in reference to the man was the intelligence displayed by his answer. It was shown not only in accepting the Lord's judgment as to the two primary commandments, but in detecting and admitting the principle on which the judgment rested, namely, the superiority of moral over ritual obligations ... Under the old theocracy those far off are either exiled Jews (Isaiah 57:19), or Gentiles (Eph. 2:13); distance from the new Kingdom is measured neither by miles, nor by ceremonial standards, but by spiritual conditions. The man was to some extent intellectually qualified for admission to the Kingdom; certainly he grasped one of its fundamental principles. It would be interesting to work out a comparison between this scribe and the ruler of 10:17. In both cases something was wanting to convert admiration into discipleship. If wealth was the bar in the one case, pride of intellect may have been fatal in the other. The mental acumen which detects and approves spiritual truth may, in the tragedy of human life, keep its possessor from entering the Kingdom of God."

**After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions** - The barrage of questions meant to trip Jesus up had finally stalled out so to speak. They realized that their testing questions only came back on them like "spiritual boomerangs!"

**Wiersbe** - What does it mean when a person is "**not far from the kingdom of God**"? It means he or she is facing truth honestly and is not interested in defending a "party line" or even personal prejudices. It means the person is testing his or her faith by what the Word of God says and not by what some religious group demands. People close to the kingdom have the courage to stand up for what is true even if they lose some friends and make some new enemies. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

**Geddert - Not Far from the Kingdom** - Jesus declares that the scribe is not far from the kingdom of God. Mark's point is that in God's economy, there is something more important than all the technicalities of law-keeping (the preoccupation of Pharisees and many of the scribes). There is something more important than all the sacrifices and ceremonies (the preoccupation of the chief priests, the entire priesthood, and the rest of the scribes). What really matters is the condition of the heart. What matters is the quality of one's relationship to God. What matters is the quality of relationships within the community and with those in need. Love, not legalism or ceremonialism, is the way of God's kingdom. **Why is the scribe declared not far from the kingdom? How far is not far?** Two points are worth considering. First, nowhere in Mark is anyone ever said to fully enter the kingdom. That experience awaits the kingdom's full consummation. Second, Mark may well be saying that one is positioned near God's kingdom when priorities are correctly set. However, life within God's kingdom depends not just on setting right priorities, but on living them out. Jesus is not critiquing this scribe for being not far away (= "still outside"). Instead, Jesus is implicitly inviting him (and all others, then and now) to accept and practice the priorities Jesus teaches, thus participating in God's reign. ([Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#))



When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." —Mark 12:34

Today's Scripture: Mark 12:28-34

I react negatively to high-pressure sales people, whether it be in a clothing store, on a car lot, or over the phone. Nonbelievers may react in a similar way to Christians who try to pressure them into making a decision to trust Jesus as Savior.

Our Lord showed us a better way. He patiently taught truth, plainly declared the dire consequences of deliberate unbelief, and tenderly invited the lost to come to Him for salvation. He never manipulated or coerced.

The scribe who came to Jesus with a sincere question was delighted with the Lord's answer (Mk. 12:28-34). He also greatly admired Jesus, unlike most of his colleagues. All that remained for him to do was to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and place his trust in Him. The Lord encouraged him by saying, "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (v.34). We don't know if the scribe ever took that step of faith in Jesus, but enough had been said, and the decision was the scribe's to make.

We can learn from Jesus' example. Our role is to speak the truth lovingly so that people can clearly see what they need to do to be saved. God's Spirit does the rest by moving a person to trust Christ. We can't make people believe, but we can make sure they hear about Jesus. By: Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I love to tell the story—  
'Tis pleasant to repeat  
What seems, each time I tell it,  
More wonderfully sweet.  
—Hankey

You can introduce a person to Christ, but you can't make him believe.

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#### **Mark 12:44**

THE Lord Jesus was sitting in the temple watching people put their money into the treasury. The rich dropped in large amounts, making the bucket resound with the clang of their coins. Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two tiny copper coins worth less than a penny. They made only a slight tinkling sound, impressing no one—except Jesus. He called His disciples to Him and said that she had given more than the rest, for she had given "her whole livelihood."

Speaking of this incident, missionary Paul Beals made a distinction between contributions and sacrifices. The wealthy people, he explained, were making contributions, but the widow was making a sacrifice, for she was giving "out of her poverty." Then he paused and said quietly, "I don't know if my wife and I have ever given sacrificially. Oh, we thought we were. Once we even took some money out of savings to give to a special project. But it didn't jeopardize our livelihood. I guess I have to say we really don't know what it means to give sacrificially. We've been making contributions." Our Daily Bread

I appreciate Beals's distinction and admire his honesty. When it comes to giving, a good principle to remember is this: While humans are impressed by how much we give, God is impressed by how little we keep for ourselves. —D C Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**Mark 12:34 - So Near and Yet So Far** - John Bunyan in Pilgrim's Progress perceived that "there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven." Jesus said to a scribe who had agreed with the two greatest commandments, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34). But a miss is as bad as a mile. One may know the Scriptures and yet not know Jesus. He said in essence, "You search the Scriptures but you will not come unto me." One may be as near as sound doctrine and miss Jesus. Martha believed in the resurrection, but she needed to move from the doctrinal to the personal. "I am the life," Jesus told her (John 11:25). One may call Him Lord and say one day, "We have prophesied and cast out demons in your name," only to hear Him say, "Depart, you workers of iniquity; I never knew you" (cf. Matt. 7:22, 23). One may be an enquirer, as was the rich young ruler, and never be a disciple. Some are confused when they hear all this and then read that some of Jesus' disciples failed miserably, even to forsaking Him for the moment. Simon Peter was a disgrace to the cause he espoused on several occasions, but he had the root of the matter in him and loved his Lord. Old Mister Fearing in Pilgrim's Progress lived his life afraid he wouldn't get to heaven, but he got there anyway, because deep inside he trusted—though with a feeble faith.

It takes more than close proximity to the Lord to save us. Near is not close enough. Only simple faith, as of a little child, can save us. (Vance Havner)

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TO the scribe who spoke well the heart of the Law, Jesus said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34). But one may almost reach salvation and still be lost. A soldier, after going through the war in France, was killed in a wreck when he had almost reached his home in America. Almost, but lost! Some get as far as the church. The father brought his demonized boy to the disciples but they could not heal him. Then Jesus came and said, "Bring him to Me" (Matt. 17:14-21). Today a powerless church stands before needy souls, and all too often it must be said of us disciples, "And they could not." We can do no mighty works because of unbelief. And men lambaste the church and talk of the mistakes and failures of the church. But back of the church stands the Lord saying, "Bring him to Me. I have not failed. The church cannot save. You must get through to Me." To be sure, this does not excuse the weakness of the church. Such power comes only by prayer and fasting and the church will not fast and pray today. But men need to know that it is not enough to get as far as the church and into the church. Press through to Jesus!

Some get as far as doctrine. At the grave of Lazarus, Jesus said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again." She said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Martha was orthodox; she was correct in her doctrine, a good fundamentalist. But our Lord changed the emphasis from the doctrinal to the person: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" He made the resurrection not something to believe but someone to believe, and it brought personal confession from Martha: "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." One may know doctrine and not know Him. It is not he that believes in the resurrection but he that believes in Him who rose who is saved.

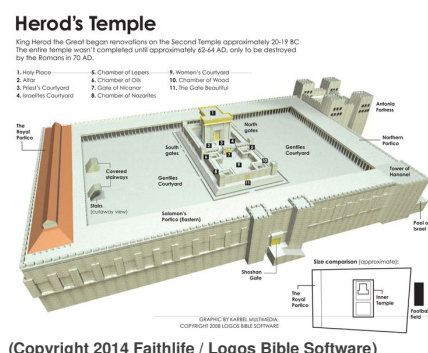
Certainly one who comes to Him will belong to the church, read the Bible and believe doctrine. But back of all these stands Christ Himself. The devil will have men join the church and become theologically orthodox if only they do not touch Christ. And one may come almost to Christ! Jostle Him in the crowd but never touch Him and feel His virtue: this is almost. Be sure you get through to Jesus! (Vance Havner)

**Mark 12:35** And Jesus began to say, as He taught in the temple, "How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?"

- **as:** Mk 11:27 Lu 19:47 20:1 21:37 Joh 18:20
- **How:** Mt 22:41,42 Lu 20:41-44 Joh 7:42
- Mark 12:35-37 - Scribes
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Matthew 22:41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: 42 “What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?” They \*said to Him, “The son of David.” 43 He \*said to them, “Then how does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying,

Luke 20:41+ Then He said to them, “How is it that they say the Christ is David’s son?”



## MESSIAH IS

## SON OF DAVID

In this section we see that now it is Jesus asking the question to His questioners and it is not surprising, His hearers are left speechless (see Mt 22:46)..Those listening include the Pharisees (Mt 22:41) and a **large crowd** (Mk 12:38) which would place Him in the large Court of the Gentiles in the Temple Complex (click picture above).

**Hiebert** refers to Mark 12:35-40 as "Counterattack by Jesus explaining "Having brought the enemy attacks to a halt, Jesus now took the offensive against the religious leaders. With His question concerning Messiah's Sonship, He exposed the inadequacy of the scribes as teachers (vv. 35-37) and then uttered His solemn condemnation of their conduct (vv. 38-40). ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary](#))

**Geddert** - Jesus has not usually taken the initiative in his debates with his opponents. They have posed the questions (Mk 11:28; 12:14-15; 12:23; 12:28), and he has responded. This time Jesus takes the initiative. Jesus' question implies a critique against the scribes. They claim that the Messiah is the son of David. [Mark Believers Church Bible Commentary](#)

**And Jesus began to say** ([imperfect tense](#)), **as He taught** ([didasko](#)) **in the temple** ([hieros](#) - the temple complex) - Presumably He is teaching in the spacious court of the Gentiles. In Mt 22:41-42 we see Jesus directly addresses the Pharisees and **"asked them a question: What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "The son of David."** Mark does not include this interchange.

**"How is it that the scribes** ([grammateus](#)) **say that the Christ is the son of David?**- The **scribes** were the recognized experts in the law. It was the firm teaching of the scribes that the Christ is the son of David. Jesus' use of the name Christ is used in the sense of Messiah. Some translations render it with that meaning, as in the CSB "How can the scribes say that the **Messiah** is the Son of David? (Mk 12:35CSB).

**Hiebert** makes an interesting comment - That no questions were raised on this point against Jesus as Messiah proves that His Davidic descent was unassailable. Only two days before, the crowd had acclaimed Him as **"the son of David"** (Matt. 21:9; Luke 19:38). But the Jewish masses, following the lead of the scribes, understood the term to mean a human being who would be a triumphant warrior-king. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary](#))

**NET Note**- It was a common belief in Judaism that Messiah would be David's son in that he would come from the lineage of David. On this point the Pharisees agreed and were correct. But their understanding was nonetheless incomplete, for Messiah is also David's Lord. With this statement Jesus was affirming that, as the Messiah, he is both God and man.

**Akin** - The Davidic sonship of the Messiah was a common and almost universally accepted belief in Israel in Jesus' day. It is still a popular belief today among orthodox Jews. For example in John 7:42 we read, "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" Indeed the Davidic sonship of the Messiah is firmly and widely established in Old Testament scripture: - 2 Sam 7:1-17 - Jere. 23:5-6 -Hosea 3:5 - Ps. 89:3-4 - Jere. 30:9 - Amos 9:11 - Isa. 9:1-7 - Jere. 33:15-17, 22 - Micah 5:2-5 3 - Isa. 11:1-9 - Ezk. 34:23-24 The Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One of God, will be a human descendant of David. This was expected. This was a long hoped for reality among the Jewish people. On this they could all agree.

**Wuest** - Before considering the implication of our Lord's words here, we need to define certain terms. The word **'Christ'** is the transliteration of the Greek word christos, which means "the Anointed One," and this Greek word is the translation of the Hebrew word transliterated into English in the word **"Messiah."** The latter word has a definite connotation, namely, the future King of Israel who will someday reign on the throne of David. The word **"son"** as used here is a Hebraism speaking of a descendant. The word **"Lord"** is the translation of the Greek word kurios which in itself means "master, one who has power over another," and is the translation in the LXX of the august title of God in the Hebrew Old Testament, Jehovah. It has implications of deity. ([Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader](#))

**Christ** (5547) **Christos** from **chrío** = to rub or anoint, consecrate to an office) describes one who has been anointed with oil, one who has been consecrated. The majority of the NT uses refer to Jesus (exceptions = "false Christs" - Mt 24:24, Mk 13:22).Christos describes one who has been anointed, symbolizing appointment to a task. It is used here as the title "Anointed One" and is the Greek synonym for "Messiah." Christos is used in the [Septuagint](#) describing everyone anointed with the holy oil, especially the priesthood (Lev. 4:5+, Lev 4:16+) and it is also a name applied to those who were acting as redeemers like Cyrus.**Gilbrant** writes that "Hamilton suggests a fourfold significance to such anointing ("māshach," Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, 1:530): (1) separation unto God, (2) authorization by God, (3) divine enablement, and (4) the coming Deliverer. Christos in Mark - Mk. 1:1; Mk. 8:29; Mk. 9:41; Mk. 12:35; Mk. 13:21; Mk. 14:61; Mk. 15:32;

**Related Resources:**

- See also [Messiah - Anointed One](#)
- [Messianic Prophecy](#)

**Mark 12:36 "David himself said in the Holy Spirit, 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.'"**

- **by:** 2Sa 23:2 Ne 9:30 Mt 22:43-45 Ac 1:16 28:25 2Ti 3:16 Heb 3:7,8 Heb 4:7 1Pe 1:11 2Pe 1:21
- **The Lord:** Ps 110:1 Ac 2:34-36 1Co 15:25 Heb 1:13 Heb 10:12,13
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Psalm 110:1+ A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."

Matthew 22:44+ 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET"'? 45 "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" 46 No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.

Luke 20:42+ "For David himself says in the book of Psalms, 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, 43 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.'"

### DAVID'S PROPHECY OF OF HIS GREATER SON THE MESSIAH

Jesus is as we might say in a law court, "leading the witnesses," extending the question so that the inevitable answer one must arrive at from a logical look at Psalm 110.

**Akin** notes that "Psalm 110 is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament. Verse 1, which Jesus cites here, is quoted or alluded to 33 times in the New Testament. Luther so loved the psalm he wrote 120 pages of commentary on it." ([Mark 12:28-34 Two Great Commandments, Two Great Loves](#))

**David himself said in the Holy Spirit-** **David himself** emphasizes these are David's own words received from the Spirit and transcribed by his hand. Note the title above in Ps 110:1 is "A Psalm of David." He wrote it. The Spirit inspired it. This passages attests to the Spirit's Authorship of the Scriptures. Peter wrote that "no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men (LIKE DAVID) **moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God** (2 Peter 1:21+).

**As an aside, it is worth noting that the Holy**([hagios](#)) **Spirit** ([pneuma](#)) spoke in many passages in the New Testament

- Hebrews 9:8+ = "The Holy Spirit is signifying this"
- Hebrews 10:15+ = "the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying"
- Matthew 10:20+ = "but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you"
- Matthew 22:43+ = "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord';
- Mark 12:36+ = "David himself said in the Holy Spirit"
- Acts 1:16+ = "the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas";
- Acts 28:25+ = "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers"
- 1 Timothy 4:1+ = "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times..."
- Revelation 2:7+ = "let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"
- Also in Rev 2:11 Rev 2:17 Rev 2:29 Rev 3:6 Rev 3:13 Rev 3:22
- (IN THE OT) 2 Sa 23:2+ = "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me"

**'THE LORD** ([kurios](#)) **SAID TO MY** (David's) **LORD** ([kurios](#)) - The first "LORD" in the original Hebrew is Jehovah or Yahweh ([Jehovah](#)) and refers to God the Father and the second "LORD" in Hebrew is Adonai ([adonay](#)) and refers to God the Son. And since David calls the Son "MY LORD" he is attesting to His deity.

**Hiebert** - It is clear that both names refer to Persons of the Godhead. It is obvious that the scribes accepted the pictures as messianic; otherwise they would immediately have repudiated the argument of Jesus. While there is no evidence for this

interpretation in rabbinic literature until two hundred years later, “the silence is due to anti-Christian polemic stimulated by the freedom with which the Psalm was quoted in the primitive Church.” Aside from this event, the Psalm is quoted directly five times in the New Testament (Acts 2:34–35; Heb. 1:13; 5:6; 7:17, 21), and numerous allusions to the thought contained in it reveal the profound influence it had upon the teaching of the Christian church (cf. 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20–22; Phil. 2:9–11; Col. 3:1; Heb. 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22). The Christian church accepted the exaltation and enthronement of the risen Christ as the fulfillment of this prophetic invitation to the Messiah by Jehovah: “Sit thou on my right hand,” assume the place of honor and authority. Till I make thine enemies thy footstool indicates that the enthronement in heaven would follow Messiah’s rejection by His enemies. The Jewish leaders had clearly shown themselves the enemies of Jesus through their efforts during the day. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary](#))

**SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET-** The Father decrees that the Son first will sit at His right hand which clearly indicates His deity. The word “until” indicates that the Son will sit for a period unspecified, but after that period is fulfilled (the “until”) the Son will conquer His enemies, which is the picture of “enemies beneath” His feet (“YOUR FEET” is the Son’s feet).

**UNTIL** - See discussion of this important expression of time The preposition **UNTIL** can indicate the time before an event takes place (Ezek 33:22), the time until it takes place (Ps 104:23), or occasionally the time during which an event takes place (2 KI 9:22). It can also “mark a relative limit beyond which the activity of the main clause still continues” as it does in Psalm 112:8. In Psalm 110 **UNTIL** signifies the time until an event occurs. Stated another way, **UNTIL** indicates enemies will be active up to a point and then it will not happen. The point that it will not happen is when Jesus reigns over and subjugates all His enemies. **Deffinbaugh** elaborates on another aspect of **UNTIL** - “While the Messiah was to share in the power and prestige of Yahweh’s reign, there was a **GAP OF TIME** indicated **between the time of His exaltation (“Sit ...”) and His triumph (“UNTIL”)**. There is both a present and a future dimension to the prophetic oracle of Yahweh. The enemies of the Messiah will, at a later time, be subjected to Him, but not immediately. To make someone **“the footstool for their feet”** (v. 1c) was to completely subject him (cf. Ps. 8:6; 18:39), an expression probably based upon the practice of military conquerors who placed their feet on the necks of their defeated foes (cf. Josh. 10:24-25). Messiah was elevated to a position of equality with Yahweh, yet the outworking of His power was yet viewed as future.” ([Ref](#)) (Bold font added)

Jesus answered the high priest shortly before He went to the Cross - And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see **THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER**, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” (Mark 14:62+)

We see an allusion to this prophecy in Psalm 2:7-9<sup>+</sup>

“But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.” 7 “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8’ Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. 9 ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’”

Peter reiterates this truth in his great evangelistic sermon

Acts 2:34-36+ “For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, 35 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.”’ 36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both **Lord** and **Christ** (MESSIAH)—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Paul writes

1 Corinthians 15:24-27+ then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign until **He has put all His enemies under His feet**. 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death. 27 For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.

The writer of Hebrews also affirms this truth

Hebrews 10:12; 13+ but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, **SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD**, 13 waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.

**Wuest** - Both the scribes and the people believed that the Jewish Messiah would come from the royal line of David. **David was human, so would the Messiah be human.** Thus, He would be David’s son. Our Lord reminds His hearers that David calls the Messiah his **Lord** ([kurios](#)) (Ps. 110:1). That is, David recognizes Him as Deity, the Jehovah of the Old Testament. ([Mark in the Greek](#))

All glory, laud and honor,  
To Thee, Redeemer, King,  
To Whom the lips of children  
Made sweet hosannas ring.

Thou art the King of Israel,  
Thou David's royal Son,  
Who in the Lord's Name comest,  
The King and Blessèd One.

**Mark 12:37 "David himself calls Him 'Lord'; so in what sense is He his son?" And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.**

- and whence: Mt 1:23 Ro 1:3,4 9:5 1Ti 3:16 Rev 22:16
- And the: Mt 11:5,25 21:46 Lu 19:48 21:38 Joh 7:46-49 Jas 2:5
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passage:**

Matthew 22:45 "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" 46 No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.

Luke 20:44 "Therefore David calls Him 'Lord,' and how is He his son?"

## THE SIXTY-FOUR DOLLAR QUESTION

**Sixty Four Dollar Question** - A question that is very important and difficult or complex to answer. Taken from the title of the 1940s radio program Take It or Leave It, in which the big prize was 64 silver dollars. James Edwards says He puts before them "the question of the day" while Akin calls it "the question of the ages" As [Akin](#) says "It is the question of the identity of the Messiah. What our Lord had raised privately with the disciples at Caesarea Philippi (8:27) He now takes public. He knows this raises the stakes. He also knows the cross is just 3 days away. Again, a moment of truth has arrived."

One could also refer to this as a "radical riddle" It is radical because the answer is that the son of David is not just a Man but He is God, God in the flesh, the mystery of mysteries which is hidden in David's Spirit inspired words of Psalm 110:1. It is a riddle because it makes no sense to the human mind which tries to reason out how any person could be 100% Man and 100% God. It is a riddle for the natural mind, and its solution can only be provided by the Spirit of Christ opening the eyes of one's heart to see the truth of Messiah, Son of David, fully God and fully Man, and then to receive that incredible truth by grace through faith. Tragically it will remain a "radical riddle" to the natural, unbelieving mind for as Paul explains "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." (1 Cor 2:14+)

**David himself calls Him 'Lord'; so in what sense is He his son?**- Jesus makes a restatement of the unassailable fact which the scribes did not dare try to contradict. They knew that is what Psalm 110:1 clearly stated! This is the "**Sixty Four Dollar Question!**" Matthew says "No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question." (Mt 22:45). This is almost like a parabolic statement, a sacred riddle.

**A T Robertson** - Mark alone has this item. The Sanhedrin had begun the formal attack that morning to destroy the influence of Jesus with the crowds whose hero he now was since the Triumphal Entry. It had been a colossal failure. The crowds were drawn closer to him than before.

**William Kelly** asks ""How are the these two things to be put together, the lower truth with which the scribes were occupied, and the higher one on which the Holy Ghost specially insists?"

**Akin** - The Messiah is not simply David's son, he is David's sovereign. He is not just David's son, 4 he is God's Son who reigns as King seated at His Father's, His heavenly Father's, right hand. David's words will not work if Messiah is just a human being. He must be more. This is where Jesus is trying to take them. This is what they had failed to see. Tragically, they still don't see it. ([Mark 12:28-34 Two Great Commandments, Two Great Loves](#))



**Geddert** - Jesus' argument depends on clearly separating between the two appearances of the word **my** in the verse he quotes. The first refers to David, the author, who speaks of **my** Lord. The second refers to God, whom David is quoting: Sit at **my** right hand. It also depends on clearly separating between two occurrences of the word **Lord**. The first refers to God (Yahweh). The second refers to the Messiah (the one who sits at God's right hand). Jesus interprets the verse, The LORD [= Yahweh, God] says to **my** lord [= David's lord, the Messiah], "Sit at **my** (God's) right hand until I make your enemies your footstool." (Ps. 110:1) The **Messiah** is thus **David's Lord**, sitting at God's right hand until God wins the victory over all the enemies of the Messiah. This much seems clear. But why does Mark include this incident? Is he denying that the Messiah is also David's son? Probably not, for Son of David is an acceptable designation for the Messiah (cf. Mark 10:47–48). More likely he is critiquing the view that the Messiah is merely David's son and not also David's Lord. The Messiah far surpasses David's greatness, reigning as king over an entirely different order (cf. Mark 14:61–62; 15:2, 18, 26, 32). In this text, Jesus is not directly claiming to be the Messiah.

**Deffinbaugh** - Psalm 110 confronts the Israelite with a very perplexing problem, a problem which is central and foundational to the Israelite leaders' rejection of Jesus as the Christ. The Psalm clearly teaches both the **humanity** of Messiah (**a son of David**) and His **deity** (**David's Lord**). This was the fundamental problem which the leaders of Israel had with Jesus. If you could sum up the grievance of the Jewish leaders with Jesus, I believe it would be this: **ALTHOUGH JESUS WAS MERELY A MAN** (in the eyes of the Jews who rejected Him), **HE HAD THE AUDACITY TO ACT LIKE GOD**

**Wuest** - The difficulty our Lord puts before His listeners and at the same time tosses into the lap of the Pharisees, is as to how, since Messiah is Jehovah, **deity**, He can also be **human**. At once the **incarnation** is brought before them. One of the charges brought against the Lord Jesus was that He called God His (His private, unique) Father, making Himself equal with God, thus deity (John 5:18). Thus, the Jewish leaders rejected the teaching of the incarnation, and Jesus' claim to deity. It is well to notice our Lord's testimony to the **divine inspiration of David**, also the recognition by David of the two other Persons of the Trinity, the **Father** saying to the **Son**, "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." Thus, we have the Trinity mentioned in an Old Testament setting in verse 36. ([Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader](#))

**Hiebert** adds "The purpose of Jesus in raising this question was not merely to confound the scribes, but to show that to be accepted as reliable interpreters of their own Scriptures, they must have a higher view of the true nature of the Messiah. **Their view that the Messiah was simply a human being, the descendant of David, though a conquering king, did not do justice to the teaching of Scripture. For the Messiah to be David's Lord, He must be more than a man** "Jesus is more than Son of David; He is Son of Man, i.e., the representative of all humanity and not just the Jews, who had to suffer and then be exalted at God's right hand. Still more important He is Son of God!" Christianity saw that the solution lay in the reality of the incarnation. **While Jesus made no attempt to explain to them that the solution lay in the recognition of the divine-human nature of the Messiah, His question pointed His enemies in that direction.** In rejecting His claims to be more than just a man, they were blinding themselves to the true solution to the problem. Their own Scripture condemned their rejection of the view. The question of Caiaphas in Mark 14:61 suggests that the Jewish leaders understood what Jesus intended to teach." ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary](#))

**Brian Bell** adds that "Jesus is both "the **root** and **offspring** of David" (Rev 22:16-[note](#)). As the "root of David," He brought David into existence; but As the "offspring of David," David brought Him into the world. He is David's son, thus affirming his humanity. He is David's Lord, thus affirming his deity. ([Commentary](#))

**And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him** - While the great multitude of "regular folks" **enjoyed listening to** Jesus, we doubt the religious leaders **enjoyed listening to Him**. D A Carson says "The teacher who never attended the right schools (John 7:15-18) confounds the greatest theologians in the land." (Borrow [The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#) - 1994 edition - Abridged - New Testament)

**Utley** makes a good point that "The people of the land, who were often ridiculed and overlooked by the religious elite (cf. Mk 12:38–40), enjoyed seeing Jesus turn the tables on the arrogant religionists using their very method."

**Hiebert** says enjoyed "indicates the keen relish and delight with which they received His teaching. They appreciated the intelligence and power of His answers and the freshness of His method in dealing with these problems. **Heard** is imperfect tense, indicating their continued pleasure in the teaching which He was giving. It was a sustained favorable response." ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary](#))

**Listening** (191)(**akouo**) means they were physical hearing Jesus words, but as discussed above, **akouo** has a number of nuances depending on the context. In this context it appears they were listening, enjoying what Jesus had been saying, but most of them were not necessarily listening with a desire to believe in Him or obey Him. Doubtless many who were listening now, would soon be crying out "Crucify! Crucify!" Applying this picture of their listening which was more like "in one ear and out the other," it recalls times when I read His Scripture and I am like those in the crowd, enjoying the words, but only superficially listening. It strikes me that when

Jesus is speaking (when we are in His written Word), we need to be listening carefully with a heart ready to heed and obey what He says. Otherwise, we are really wasting our time and sadly we only have a finite amount of time we can spend with Him on earth because life is so short. Father, by Thy Spirit give us ears to hear and hearts to obey and have a desire to be pleasing to Thee, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

## WHO DO YOU SAY THAT JESUS IS? IS HE SON OF DAVID AND DAVID'S LORD TO YOU?

**Mark 12:38** In His teaching He was saying: '**Beware** of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places,

- **said:** Mk 4:2
- **Beware:** Mt 10:17 Mt 23:1-7 Lu 20:45-47
- **who:** Mt 6:5 Lu 11:43 14:7-11 3 Jn 1:9
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Matthew 23:1-7 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, 2 saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; 3 therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. 4 "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. 5 "But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.

Luke 20:45-47+ And while all the people were listening, He said to the disciples, 46 '**Beware** of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets,

## LAST WORDS A WARNING

This is the third consecutive episode directly related to scribes (Mk 12:28-34, Mk 12:35-37) and in this third episode Jesus speaks condemnation against some of the scribes' abuses. Mark gives us Jesus' final warning. **Last words** should always be carefully heeded especially if they are the words of Jesus! And these words are two-fold - words of warning and condemnation.

**Hiebert** sets the context explaining that "All the synoptics report that Jesus, having exposed the inadequacy of the scribes as interpreters, solemnly pronounced His condemnation upon the scribes themselves. Matthew reported His words at length (23:1–39), but Mark and Luke (20:45–47) gave only representative fragments. Luke recorded similar words of condemnation on a previous occasion (11:37–52). Christ's condemnation made clear His complete break with the religious leaders." ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

Luke 20:46-47 and the parallel account in Mark 12:38-40 are in a sense a summary of Jesus' in depth denunciation of these hypocritical religious leaders recorded by Matthew in Mt 23:1-36. Given the fact that Scripture is always the best commentary on Scripture, the reader is strongly encouraged to read Jesus' blistering diatribe to give one a fuller sense of what Luke and Mark only summarize, keeping in mind that this is the end of His public ministry. Luke 20:45 says "**And while all the people were listening, He said to the disciples.**" The parallel section in Matthew 23:1 has "Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples." After Jesus' scathing rebuke of the Scribes and Pharisees (with 8 Woes!), Mt 24:1 says "**Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.**" The point is that these passages mark the end of Jesus' public ministry to the nation of Israel and the beginning of His pronouncement of judgment on the Jewish religious leaders, and the coming desolation of their entire religious system, including the destruction of the symbol of their apostate system, Herod's Temple and the city of Jerusalem some 40 years later. Matthew ends Jesus 8 woe warning to the religious leaders with His famous lament

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. "**Behold**, your house (THE TEMPLE, THE CITY) is being left to you desolate! "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me [UNTIL](#) (NOTICE THIS WORD IS A SMALL RAY OF HOPE) you say, 'BLESSED IS HE

WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!" (Mt 23:37-39)

Recall that this is a repeat of an almost identical lament earlier in His ministry Luke recording

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! "**Behold**, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me UNTIL the time comes (THIS IS A PROPHECY THAT THIS "TIME" WILL COME - IT WILL BE AT MESSIAH'S SECOND COMING) when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'" (Lk 13:34-35-note)

**In His teaching He was saying -Was saying** is in the [imperfect tense](#) "indicates that Mark is giving only specimens of what was said." (Hiebert) In fact Mark takes 3 verses to say what Matthew says in 39 verses! (see Mt 23:1-39)!

**Rod Mattoon** - Jesus cautions or warns all the people to beware of the scribes. Guard yourself and watch out for these guys! They were like snakes in the grass or foxes in the chicken coop. He condemns them for their attitudes and actions.

**Beware of the scribes - Beware** is [present imperative](#) calling for continual attention (see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)). The idea is be discerning and perceptive in order not to be fooled! In Mark 8:15+ Jesus warned against their false teaching ("leaven of the Pharisees") and now warns against the men themselves. Mark 12:38 introduces this warning with the phrase "In His teaching He was saying." Matthew's parallel adds "Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples." (Mt 23:1) Matthew adds that the warning is against "The **scribes** and the **Pharisees**." (Mt 23:2) Recall that not all **Pharisees** were **Scribes**, but the **Scribes** were primarily Pharisees, and were the interpreters and teachers of the law of Moses and the traditional rabbinic writings.

[Adam Clarke](#) - Take heed that ye be not seduced by those who **should show** you the way of salvation. (**ED: INSTEAD THEY SHOW THE WAY TO HELL!** See Mt 23:15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, **you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.**")

The disciples are to continually beware of them because they are ungodly, do not truly know God, have no true spiritual wisdom. As **MacArthur** says "They are agents of Satan sent to fight the purposes of God....False religion never restrains the flesh. So these people operate like the worst of the unregenerate, except that it is not apparent on the surface. But false religion cannot subdue their wretched heart, for that can only be subdued by regeneration by means of the truth of the Gospel. So these men are to be avoided because they are always one thing on the outside and something else on the inside. They have nothing to offer spiritually and are destructive...deadly...dangerous. Do not get near them, because you will get singed, stained." (Sermon [Confronting Error with Condemnation, Not Conversation](#))

**Beware** (991)([blepo](#)) basically means to have sight, to see, to look at, then to observe, to discern, to perceive with the eye, and frequently implies special contemplation. Have your eye on so as to beware of. - to watch, to take heed, to take care. Vine says **blepo** expresses "a more intentional, earnest contemplation." **Blepos** is used over 116x in the NT and is translated beware(5), careful(1), careful\*(1), consider(1), facing(1), guard(1), keep on seeing(2), look(7), looking(5), looks(1), partial\*(2), saw(12), see(54), seeing(8), seen(8), sees(8), sight(2), take care(5), take heed(5), watch(1).

**Luke** earlier issued a similar warning regarding the **HYPOCRISY** of the Pharisees...

Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, "**Beware** ([prosecho](#) in present imperative) of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is **hypocrisy** ([hupokrisis](#)). (Lk. 12:1-note)

**Wuest** on the Greek word hypokrisis - It "is made up of hupo under, and krinō "to judge" and referred originally to "one who **judged** from **under** the cover of a mask," thus, assuming an identity and a character which he was not. This person was the actor on the Greek stage, one who took the part of another. The true identity of the person is covered up. It refers to acts of impersonation or deception. Christianity requires that believers should be open and above-board. They should be themselves. Their lives should be like an open book, easily read. This begs the question beloved - IS YOUR LIFE AN "OPEN BOOK?" IS WHAT PEOPLE SEE REALLY WHO YOU ARE? ([Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader](#))

Scribe in Long Robe

**Who like** ([thelo](#) in the [present tense](#)) **to walk around in long robes - Thelo** speaks of them continually exercising their will from a motive of a desire to be seen. Ironically they vainly think that their long robes will hide their pious pretensions. I was raised on a farm and used to watch the rooster strut about the barnyard and that is the picture that comes to my mind every time I think of these men

filled with hubris and hypocrisy -- "spiritual roosters" strutting around the Temple yard!

They like to shine before other men, but not before God!

**Hiebert - walk** points to their needless locomotion for the purpose of display. They took pleasure in walking around in long robes, the long flowing **tallith** which was regarded as the sign of piety and scholarship. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Utley** - The Talmud taught that one is required to stand in the presence of a rabbi. These men liked this special treatment (i.e. distinctive prayer shawls, respectful greetings, best seats in worship, and place of honor at meals). They had it all, but missed Christ!

**Brian Bell** - They loved their uniform because it indicated their office wherever they went! ([Commentary](#)) (Are there any parallels today? Rhetorical question of course!)

**Ryle** - This expression either refers to garments of an extravagantly large size, on which the Scribes prided themselves, or else to the fringes and borders to their garments, which they put on in obedience to the law. (Nu 15:38.) These fringes they made excessively large, in order to impress on the minds of the common people an opinion of their own holiness, and their great reverence for the law.

**Wiersbe** - Experts in management tell us that most people wear an invisible sign that reads, "Please make me feel important"; if we heed that sign, we can succeed in human relations. On the other hand, if we say or do things that make others feel insignificant, we will fail. Then people will respond by becoming angry and resentful, because everybody wants to be noticed and made to feel important. In Jesus' day, as today, there were "status symbols" that helped people enhance and protect their high standing in society. If you were invited to the "right homes" and if you were seated in the "right places," then people would know how important you really were. The emphasis was on reputation, not character. It was more important to sit in the right places than to live the right kind of life. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

**MacArthur** comments that these men "began to develop robes that were very different than other people's robes. They were robes that had certain little markings. They were unique, fancy, expensive robes that would identify them as the "holy people.: They "lengthened the tassels on their robes," Matthew 23:5 says. And that comes from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, back in Numbers 15:38-40, God had ordained that the Jews could put little tassels on the bottom of the robe, and it was a wonderful symbol to remind them of the law of God. Everywhere they went one would see the tassels and it reminded one of the law of God. Even Jesus had them on His robe according to Matthew 9:20. But the scribes and the Pharisees lengthened their tassels, not for the sake of a better memory device, but for the sake of ostentation and appearance. They were not trying to bring attention to God and His Word, but were trying to bring attention to themselves as if they were "holy." ([Confronting Error with Condemnation, Not Conversation](#))

**Long robes** (4749) (stole from **stello** = to prepare, arrange, gather up) means to equipping, fitting out; by metonymy dress, clothes; in the NT robe, especially long flowing garment or robe worn as an upper or outer garment. A scribe's robe had a long mantle reaching to the feet and was decorated with long fringe. Refers to the robes of believers in Revelation (Rev. 6:11; Rev. 7:9; Rev. 7:13; Rev. 7:14; Rev. 22:14).

**Morris** - The long robes the scribes wore ('flowing robes', NIV) were a sign of distinction and marked the wearers as gentlemen of leisure, for anyone who worked for his living would not be cumbered with such clothing. (TNTC-Luke)

**And like respectful greetings in the market places** - They loved attention their "holy facades" fostered but they were fakes and frauds spiritually speaking. They expected to be addressed with titles of dignity.

**Bock** - Extrabiblical material makes clear that rabbis and other religious authorities received special greetings in the marketplace. In fact, in the Talmud such greetings were required for teachers of the law (y. Ber. 4b [2.1] [= Neusner et al. 1982-93: 1.66]; Windisch, TDNT 1:498; SB 1:382 §f). Jesus had earlier rebuked Pharisees for this practice (Luke 11:43+). (Ibid)

**MacArthur** - If you were called "rabbi," you were so exalted that in the Talmud, Sanhedrin 88 says that "It is more punishable to act against the words of a scribe than the words of Scripture." They wanted to be called "excellency, elevated one, most knowledgeable one, exalted one." They wanted to be "**leader**." That is the one who determines direction, the one who determines destiny, the one who sets the course. ([Confronting Error with Condemnation, Not Conversation](#))

**Kent Hughes** - Hearers could sense the disgust in Jesus' voice as he described his antagonists to their faces as gliding about in their resplendent power outfits, receiving the obeisance of the masses in the marketplace, sitting facing the congregation with other-world expressions on their faces, reading the Torah in sonorous Hebrew. Masters of ecclesiastical cant, they were proud lovers of self!....As Joseph Bayly observed, "No person can foster the impression that he/she is great, then exalt a great God." (See [Luke](#):

**Respectful greetings** (salutation)(783)(**aspasmos** from **aspazomai** = welcome, greet, to salute) describes the use of set words or phrases to express a welcome or farewell -- salutation, greeting, either orally or by letter. Acknowledgement or expression of good will on meeting. All NT uses - Matt. 23:7; Mk. 12:38; Lk. 1:29; Lk. 1:41; Lk. 1:44; Lk. 11:43; Lk. 20:46; 1 Co. 16:21; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17

**Market places** (58)(**agora**) was the town-square where the people assembled in public.

#### Mark 12:39 and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets,

- Mark 12:38-40 - Scribes
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

**James 2:2; 3** For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, 3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,"

Matthew 23:6 "They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

Luke 20:46+ **Beware** of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets,

### SITTING AT THE HEAD OF THE TABLE

**and chief seats in the synagogues** - Hiebert says the **chief seats** "refers to the bench at the end of the synagogue before the "ark" or chest where the sacred scrolls were kept. It faced the audience and was reserved for the leaders and people of distinction. It gratified them to receive such deferential recognition at religious services." ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

"Those were the seats in front of the raised platform on which stood the prayer leader and the reader of the Scriptures. Thus seated, a man had the double advantage of being near the person reading or leading in prayer, and of facing the congregation and thus being able to see everybody. Besides, being ushered to such a seat was regarded as a mark of honor." (Kistemaker)

**Wuest** - They were fond of the chief seats in the synagogues. These were benches up in front facing the congregation, and were reserved for officials and persons of distinction. The scribes claimed the places of honor also at social gatherings. They were fond of the uppermost places at feasts. The word here is *protoklisia*, "the first reclining place." This is the place of the most honored guest at a feast. The orientals reclined on couches around the table instead of sitting on chairs as we do. ([Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader](#))

**THOUGHT** - Let's stop for a second. Do you find yourself entertaining the same attitudes and desires? Do you insist on titles, positioning, and symbols of authority? Are you more motivated by service or by receiving attention and adulation? Do you dress in a sloppy fashion or immodestly to cause men or women to notice you? Do you crave attention at any cost? (**Mattoon**)

**and places of honor at banquets** - To sit next to the host was an honor the scribes loved. The typical dinner table of Jesus' day was usually not a classic rectangular table as in most modern kitchens and dining rooms. Instead the ancient tables were often 3 tables (each table a couch for 3 or so-called [triclinium](#)) in somewhat of a U-shape with guests reclining on their left elbows. One can almost picture these hypocrites jostling one another as they seek the "hottest spots" of honor! Do we ever seek man's approval more than God's like these men? Jesus addressed this same problem in Luke 14:7-14+ at the house of a Pharisee.

**Geddert** comments that "They think they deserve great respect, special seats of honor. We remember that not long before, the disciples have been thinking similar thoughts (Mk 9:33-34+; Mk 10:35-37+)."

**The places of honor** ("first seats")(441)(**protoklisia** from **protos** = first, preeminent + **klisia** = place for reclining from **klino** = to cause to bend) means the first place, the chief seats, the first position or space of



preeminent honor for reclining at a dining table or banquet (usually the places besides the host). **Protoklisia** is used 5x in the NT - Matt. 23:6; Mk. 12:39; Lk. 14:7; Lk. 14:8; Lk. 20:46 with no uses in the Septuagint. In a group of three cushions or couches used for reclining, the one in the center was the place of honor (see "lectus medius" below) Precedence in seating was usually based on rank, reputation, or age.

The typical dinner table of Jesus' day was usually not a classic rectangular table as in most modern kitchens and dining rooms. Instead the ancient tables were often 3 tables (each table a couch for 3 or so-called [triclinium](#)) in somewhat of a U-shape (which may have resembled the Roman counterpart below) with guests reclining on their left elbows. One can almost picture these hypocrites jostling one another as they race to the "hottest spots" of honor! Do we ever seek man's approval more than God's like these men? In ancient Rome the classic dining arrangement in wealthy homes was the [triclinium](#) ([see picture](#))

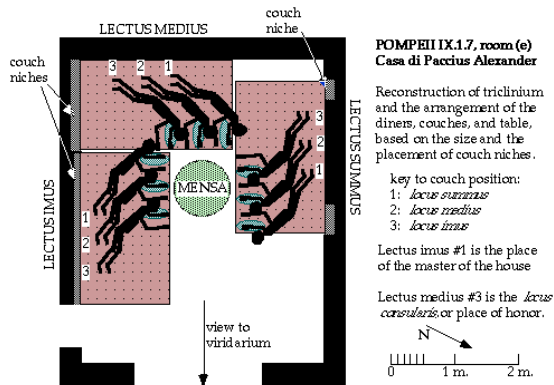


Fig. 1.27: Reconstruction of the Standard Order of Reclining Diners in Triclinium (e) of the Casa di Paccius Alexander, IX.1.7. Diners (Stick Figures in Black) are Shown Three to a Couch, Supporting Themselves on their Left Elbows, Which Rest on Ovals That Signify Cushions.

[Click picture to enlarge](#)  
[Click here for further explanation](#)

The scribes and Pharisees sought acclaim from men, not from God, an example of their [inveterate](#) arrogance, which Jesus repeatedly [chastised](#) as exemplified by the following quotes. Notice the repetition of the verb "love"

Matthew 23:6-7 "They **love** ([phileo](#) in [present tense](#) = their lifestyle) **the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues**, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men

Luke 20:46-47 "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and **love** ([phileo](#) in [present tense](#) = their lifestyle) **respectful greetings** in the market places, and **chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets**, who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

Luke 11:43+ "Woe ([ouai](#)) to you Pharisees! For **you love** ([agapao](#) in [present tense](#) = their lifestyle) **the chief seats** in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places.

In addition, these religious hypocrites "**scratched each others' backs**" ([see description of this idiom](#)) so to speak, as Jesus alluded to in John

"How can you believe, when **you receive glory from one another** and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? (John 5:44)

These men were masters of [self-promotion](#)!

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**Edersheim's note on dining** - In regard to the position of the guests, we know that the uppermost seats were occupied by the Rabbis. The Talmud formulates it in this manner: That the worthiest lies down first, on his left side, with his feet stretching back. If there are two 'cushions' (divans), the next worthiest reclines above him, at his left hand; if there are three cushions, the third worthiest lies below him who had lain down first (at his right), so that the chief person is in the middle (between the worthiest guest at his left and the less worthy one at his right hand). The water before eating is first handed to the worthiest, and so in regard to the washing after meat. But if a very large number are present, you begin after dinner with the least worthy, till you come to the last five, when the worthiest in the company washes his hands, and the other four after him. The guests being thus arranged, the head of the house, or the chief person at table, speaks the blessing, and then cuts the bread. By some it was not deemed etiquette to begin eating till after he who had said the prayer had done so, but this does not seem to have been the rule among the Palestinian Jews. Then, generally, the bread was dipped into salt, or something salted, etiquette demanding that where there were two they should wait one for the other, but not where there were three or more.



## Mattoon - When We Exalt Ourselves....

1. A Problem with Pride is Demonstrated
2. A Passion for Prestige is Displayed
3. We are Pre-occupied and Neglect the Needs of Others

We are focused on selfish needs.

4. We Puff Up the Estimation of Ourselves

By comparing ourselves with others, we conclude we are better or more important.

5. We get Pigheaded and Principles of Wisdom are Rejected

6. We Put Off or Turn Off other People

Our arrogance repulses people and makes them sick. If you are not careful, you make yourself a target to be destroyed.

7. We Produce Hindrances to Being Used of God

God resisteth the proud, but gives grace to the humble.<sup>68</sup>

8. We Position Ourselves for Demotion or Embarrassment

Our arrogance leads to a fall and shame. Solomon warned about this.

Proverbs 25:6-7... Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: [7] For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

9. Our Peace is Rare as we Struggle or Compete with Others

We are in constant "struggle or competition" mode with other people, always trying to get our own way.

10. Proper Actions are Neglected

In our quest to exalt ourselves, we tend to be rude, unreasonable, rebellious, and resistant toward the counsel of others.

**Mark 12:40 who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation."**

- devour: Eze 22:25 Mic 2:2 3:1-4 Mt 23:14 Lu 20:47 2Ti 3:6
- long: Mt 6:7 11:22-24 23:33 Lu 12:47,48
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Luke 20:47+ who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

## GREATER CONDEMNATION FOR GREATER SIN IN GREATER LIGHT

**Who devour widows' houses - Devour** ([katesthio](#)) is in the [present tense](#) indicating this was their continual evil practice! What does this mean? Clearly it alludes to their greed and their unscrupulous practices concerning widows.

**Wuest** explains that "People often left their whole fortunes to the Temple, and a good part of the money went finally to the scribes and Pharisees. The scribes were employed to make out wills and conveyances of property. They inveigled widows to give their homes to the Temple, and then took the proceeds of the sale for themselves. In order to do this, they offered long prayers in the homes of these widows and for them. Thus, they bent the widows to their will. Our Lord calls these prayers, a pretence. They could not be true prayers when offered with such an ulterior purpose. Swete says: "Men who rob widows, and use prayer as a means of

securing opportunities for committing a crime, shall receive a sentence in excess of that which falls to the lot of the dishonest man who makes no pretence to piety; to the sentence of the robber will be added in their case the sentence on the hypocrite.” ([Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader](#))

**McKenna** elaborates, “As one of their functions, scribes serve as consultants in estate planning for widows. Their role gives them the opportunity to convince lonely and susceptible women that their money and property should either be given to the scribe for his holy work or to the Temple for its holy ministries. In either case the scribe gains personally.” (Ibid)

**Utley** - This may be metaphorical language referring to (1) the burden of alms-giving that these leaders required of all the people or (2) the practice of convincing widows to give their inheritance (i.e. livelihood) to the temple. This thereby refers to the manipulative fundraising techniques of the religious leaders.

**Geddert** - “These impressive-looking scribes,” says Jesus, “are hypocrites. They pray long public prayers, but it is all a sham. They act pious, yet secretly commit one of the sins most viciously condemned by the prophets: defrauding the poor.” Widow’s houses may refer to the property of those for whom they act as legal representatives. Instead of protecting the rights of their clients, they find ways of robbing them. When the Lord suddenly comes to his temple (Mal. 3:1; see previous section), among those judged will be those oppressing widows (Mal. 3:5). “Don’t be fooled,” Jesus warns his hearers, especially his disciples (12:43). “Things are not always as they seem. The scribes are highly respected; they seem to have earned it with their superior piety. Yet underneath a beautiful exterior is hypocrisy and deceit.” This theme continues through the next several episodes. “Don’t be fooled! Some gifts look impressive, but it is the widow’s gift, worth a penny, that truly pleases God” (12:41–44). “Don’t be fooled! The temple looks impressive and indestructible, but it will soon be a heap of rubble” (13:1–4). “Don’t be fooled! Messianic pretenders and apocalyptic deceivers will soon be making extravagant claims, but you must guard yourselves against their deceptions” (13:5–22).

**Daniel Akin** - “They devour” and take advantage of the vulnerable, in this context widows. Like some televangelist and religious charlatans in our own day they preyed on the weak exploiting the generosity of others for their own profit. Taking the meager means of a widow’s Social Security check did not faze them or trouble their conscious one wit. “More for me” was their motto. There is “money to be made in ministry” was their philosophy. The prophets condemned in the strongest terms those who took advantage of widows and orphans (Isa 10:2; Amos 2: Micah 3) and Jesus joined their chorus. Had they not read Lev 19:18?! Did they not hear Jesus when He spoke of the 2 great commandments, the 2 great loves? ([Mark 12:35-40 Turning Theologians On Their Head](#))

**John MacArthur** - They go after the most defenseless. Like the false teachers of whom Paul writes to Timothy, they go after silly women. They go after the unprotected and the weak. Widows are the easiest ones to get to....Widows were to be protected in the Old Testament, pure religion, says James 1:27, is to care for widows. Ex 22:22, Dt 10:18, Mal 3:5, etc call upon the people of God to care for widows. God cares for widows. These Scribes devour them. How do they do that? Now keep in mind that they were the lawyers of the system. So when a woman who was a widow needed someone to protect her, she would turn to the lawyer with the idea that he would protect her home and her property. There is an interesting study on the kind of behavior that was going on. First, the lawyers would take money for themselves from widows although it was forbidden. Knowledge without price. That was the code of a true rabbi, certainly with regard to widows. They would disobey that and whatever wisdom they would give to widows, they would charge exorbitantly. What could a widow do? Secondly, they would cheat widows of their estate by getting into the legal machinations under the guise that they would provide legal protection, and would literally begin to “eat away” the estate. Thirdly, they would leach on them and abuse their hospitality, taking advantage of room, board, food. There are some stories about gluttony and excessive drinking, taking that from poor widows. Another way, by mismanaging the property of widows, so that out of complete carelessness a widow was absolutely made destitute. One of the popular ones was to take money from older widows with deficient mental powers, taking advantage of those who were unable to defend themselves mentally. And maybe the worst, they would accumulate debts the widow would owe them, and be unable to pay and would take the widow’s home as pledge for the debt, and thus “devour” the house. When the widow could not pay, they threw her out. That is why they are characterized in Luke 11:39 as “full of robbery and wickedness.” Or Luke 16:14, “The Pharisees....were lovers of money.” ([Sermon](#))

**Devour** (consume) (2719)([katesthio](#) from **kata** = down + **esthio** = to eat) means to eat up, totally consume, devour (Lk 8:5). Figuratively [katesthio](#) means to destroy by fire (consume, burn up) (Rev 11.5), by illegal exploitation (rob, take complete advantage of )(Mk 12.40) or by strife within a group which cause great division (destroys division)(Gal 5.15).

**And for appearance's sake offer long prayers** ([proseuchomai](#) in [present tense](#) = their continual hypocritical practice) - Pretentious prayers seeking to impress! And in context they may have done so before widows to win their esteem making them easier to “devour.” They were like the feathers of a peacock - for show! It was “all for show” not for substance. There is nothing wrong with a long prayer, but it is wrong if one is praying pretense, praying just to be seen. Jesus warned against this type of praying in Mt 6:5+ “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”

**Akin** - the religious hirelings were experts in pseudo piety that was vacuous with no substance. They could “make long prayers” in public but their private prayer closet was littered with dust for lack of use. I have no doubt that their prayers were eloquent. Jesus, however, judged them empty. Better a few fumbling words from a humble heart than a marvelous oration from a proud heart.

**Utle** - They prayed to be seen by others, not heard by God. Their religion was an outward show (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 7:21–23; Col. 2:16–23), but they did not recognize God’s greatest gift!

They prayed to be seen by others, not heard by God.

-- Bob Utle

**Brian Bell on long prayers** - Samuel Chadwick (minister during the late 1800’s & early 1900’s) said when he went away from his home, he wrote every day to his wife. And when he was going a short journey their letters were short; and the further away he went, the longer his letters were; & that reminded him of some people. He thought “some people must be a long distance from God because their prayers were so long!” The inspiration of all their activity was self-centered. God is seeking servants, not celebrities; He sees the heart! Listen,...those people who seem “too spiritual to be true”...usually aren’t! ([Commentary](#))

**Hughes** - When pride is paired with greed, prayers will be ostentatious...Prayers like these are not from the heart, regardless of their length. Such intercessory offerings can come from the most eminent sources, like the archbishop who died of surprise when God answered him back!

**For appearance's sake** (pretense) (4392)(**prophasis** from **prophaino** = to cause to shine before, to appear before, be apparent <> **pró** = before, + **phaino** = to appear) is that which is alleged as the cause, an allegation, plea. In other words it denotes something put forward for appearance to conceal what lies behind it. In the NT it is used only in a bad sense and with the idea is That which is put out in front to hide the true state of things.” **Pretense** means pretending with intention to deceive.

Jesus alluded to the practice of pretense by the Scribes and Pharisees...

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. 26 “You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. 27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. 28 “So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Mt 23:25-28)

You could almost here the clap of thunder in the Temple when Jesus spoke these words of judgment on the religious hypocrites! Woe!

**These will receive greater condemnation** - These of course refers to the religious leaders, those who should have known the Way and shown the Way to Jesus’ compassion (cf Lk 19:41, etc) has now become condemnation (not that He was not always compassionate even when He was condemning). Why greater? Because they are “religious.” They had more light. Passages like this make me very nervous even as a believer for James writes “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.” (James 3:1+)

**Ryle** - He says of those who live and die hypocrites, “the same shall receive greater damnation.” The subject opened up in these words is a deeply painful one. The reality and eternity of future punishment are among the great foundation truths of revealed religion, which it is hard to think upon without a shudder. But it is well to have all that the Bible teaches about heaven and hell firmly fixed on our minds. The Bible teaches distinctly that there will be degrees of glory in heaven. It teaches with no less distinctness, both here and elsewhere, that there will be degrees of misery in hell. Who, after all, are those who will finally receive condemnation? This is the practical point that concerns us most. All who will not come to Christ,—all who know not God and obey not the Gospel,—all who refuse to repent, and go on still in wickedness, all such will be finally condemned. They will reap according as they have sown. God willeth not their eternal ruin. But if they will not hear His voice, they must die in their sins.

**John MacArthur** - The idea is clear. If you’re in the wrong religion, you’re going to be condemned. If you’re a purveyor of the wrong religion, you’re going to receive a far greater suffering and damnation in hell. They’re dangerous. Be warned. They’re hypocrites. They’re worthy of condemnation. Compassion? Yes. Gospel? Give them the gospel. Pray for their salvation. Have a sad heart. But in the end, we have nothing to learn from false teachers and false religions. And they must know that they are under sentence of divine condemnation. They must know for their sake and the sake of those who need to be protected from them. ([Confronting Error with Condemnation, Not Conversation](#))

**Robertson** - It was a solemn climax to this last public appearance of Christ in the temple when Jesus poured out the vials of his indignation as he had done before (Matt. 6:12; Luke 11:12; 15–18).

**Hughes** applies this principle to those who preach and teach (of course not meaning that they will go to hell) -The Apostle James, the Lord's brother, wrote similarly, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" (James 3:1). If we claim to have a full knowledge of God's Word for his people, and further claim that we are charged to deliver it, we are more responsible to deliver it clearly and obey it. I, by virtue of my professed calling and study of God's Word and having had the privilege of receiving more knowledge of God's Word than many Christians, will undergo a stricter judgment. Increased responsibility means increased accountability. (ED: IT IS TRUTH LIKE THIS THAT MAKES ME CONSIDER QUITTING WRITING ON THE WEBSITE!) (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

Here is the principle to which **Hughes** is referring

From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. (Luke 12:48+).

**THE PRINCIPLE OF DEGREES OF PUNISHMENT** is found in a number of NT passages -

Mt 10:15 Jn 19:11 Mt 11:20-24 Luke 10:12-16, Luke 11:31,32, Mt 12:41,42 Mk 12:38,39,40 Luke 20:45,46,47 Luke 12:47,48, Heb 10:29

**Greater** (4053) (**perissos** from **peri** = over and above) properly means beyond what is anticipated, exceeding the expected limit.

**Condemnation** (Judgment) (2917) (**krima** form **krino** = to judge, suffix **-ma** = the result of the judging, result of making a decision) describes a judicial sentence from a magistrate (his pronouncement). It describes one deciding a question of legal right or wrong, and thus determining the innocence or guilt of the accused and assigning appropriate punishment. **Krima** is usually the decision which results from an investigation.

**Ryle** asks "But who among those who are condemned will receive the heaviest condemnation? It will not fall on heathens who never heard the truth. It will not fall on ignorant and neglected Englishmen, for whose souls, however sunk in profligacy, no man cared. It will fall on those who had great light and knowledge, but made no proper use of it. It will fall on those who professed great sanctity and religiousness, but in reality clung to their sins. In one word, the hypocrite will have the lowest place in hell. These are awful things. But they are true."

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[Daniel Akin](#) - The Bible says, "to whom much is given much is required" (Luke 12:48). The greater our revelation the greater our accountability. To know what is right and not do it invites "the greater condemnation" in judgment. No wonder James, our Lord's half-brother, would write in James 3:1, "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness." Heaven will not be equally delightful for all though all will be fully satisfied. And hell will not meet out equal punishment for all though all will be punished. Indeed God will judge with special severity hypocritical religious leaders who prance like show ponies, strut like peacocks, abuse the less fortunate and traffic in false worship that is a show with no substance. Such wickedness in motive and action makes plain they never embraced the greatest servant of all, the greater Son of David, Jesus the Christ, the Messiah-Son of God.

In his classic Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis takes us to the heart of our faith when he addresses the identity of Jesus Christ and the response we all must give. The trilemma of Lord, Liar or Lunatic has become famous and right so. "*I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.*" (pgs. 55-56). 2) It is so clear isn't it! Jesus is both David's Son and David's Savior. Jesus is both David's Son and God's Son. Jesus is both human and divine. Jesus is both man and God. 3) So now you know who He is. There is no evading the issue. There is no sitting on the fence. You must decide for Him or against Him. Your accountability has never been greater. To say no now is only to invite greater judgment when you stand before God and explain to Him why you rejected His Son. Please make sure you choose wisely. Your eternal destiny is at stake!

**Mark 12:41 And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums.**

NET Mark 12:41 Then he sat down opposite the offering box, and watched the crowd putting coins into it. Many rich people were throwing in large amounts.

NLT Mark 12:41 Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts.

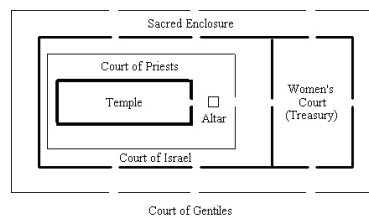
ESV Mark 12:41 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums.

NIV Mark 12:41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.

- **sat down opposite the treasury:** Mt 27:6 Lu 21:2-4 Joh 8:20
- **putting money:** Mt 10:9."
- **the treasury:** 2Ki 12:9
- Mark 12:41-44 - Widow
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Luke 21:1-4+ And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury.



Note on interpretation of this familiar passage - **Paul Apple** in his [commentary on Mark](#) (which is very good) made the interesting statement that the "commentary by John MacArthur on this section convinced me to move away from the traditional understanding that this was teaching sacrificial giving." ( Here is the sermon from Mark - [Mark 12:38-44 Religion and Its Victims](#) and here is the related sermon from Luke - [Luke 21:1-4 Abusing the Poor](#)) If you keep the immediate context in mind (Mark 12:40) this familiar story could indeed be seen as example of the exploitation of widows by the false system of worship that had been devised by the Jewish religious leaders. (ED: I consider this a difficult passage to interpret and discuss the problem of interpretation in the notes on Luke 21:1 if you are interested in why the passage is so difficult.)

Note the shift in location from the Court of the Gentiles (large, open area where thousands could hear his teaching) to the smaller **Court of the Women** which contained the thirteen **Treasury-chests** or '**trumpets**'. He was observing the offerings (**how** they offered their money). The Scribes and Pharisees made a great show strutting around like peacocks to attract men's attention. Jesus focuses on the contrast of a poor woman presenting her offering.

Extra-Biblical sources describe 13 offering jars were in the **Court of the Women**. From the diagram above (or perhaps better seen in the one below), notice that the outermost court is called the **Court of the Gentiles** - which was a vast area the size of 10 football fields. This is where the money changing took place which Jesus had **cleansed** the previous day. Surrounding the Court of the Gentiles were a series of "porches" or cloisters through which ran double rows of Corinthian pillars, each cut from marble and measuring 37 feet in height and covered by a flat roof. The entire court was paved with marble. The southern porch was known as ["Solomon's Porch"](#) ("Portico") (Acts 3:11). Gentiles were permitted into this area provided they conducted themselves in a reverent manner. A low wall ran completely around the Temple structure (Temple Balustrade) beyond which Gentiles could not venture on penalty of death (In the diagram, it is immediately around the main Temple area, but somewhat difficult to see). This Temple Balustrade had periodic gates and a stone inscription located at each gate. In 1871 archaeologists discovered a ["Temple Warning Inscription"](#) ([another note](#)) which read "*No Foreigner Is To Go Beyond The Balustrade And The Plaza Of The Temple Zone Whoever Is Caught Doing So*



*Will Have Himself To Blame For His Death Which Will Follow*"). Beyond the Temple Balustrade or Dividing Wall was a flight of 14 steps that led up to a terrace on which stood the inner wall of the Temple. This inner wall had a number of gates, but the main gate was located on the eastern side. This was the "[Beautiful Gate](#)" (Acts 3:2). There were 12 steps leading up to this gate. The doors of the gate were made of Corinthian brass and mounted on massive hinges. Entering through this gate brought one into the **Court of the Women**. ([#9 on diagram](#)) was as far within the Temple as women were permitted to enter. **The Court of Women** was surrounded by colonnades. Along the walls there were thirteen jars which served as receptacles for various offerings where the people would drop their offerings. Each jar had an inscription that stated its purpose. Nine of the offering jars were for [mandatory](#) or [compulsory](#) offerings and four were for voluntary offerings (See [tabular summary below](#)).

**Edersheim** - The **Court of the Women** obtained its name, not from its appropriation to the exclusive use of women, but because they were not allowed to proceed farther, except for sacrificial purposes. Indeed, this was probably the common place for worship, the females occupying, according to Jewish tradition, only a raised gallery along three sides of the court. This court covered a space upwards of 200 feet square. All around ran a simple colonnade, and within it, against the wall, the thirteen chests, or 'trumpets,' for charitable contributions were placed. ([The Temple: Its Ministry and Services - Chapter 2 - Within the Holy Place](#))

**And He sat down opposite the treasury ([gazophulakion](#)) , and began observing ([thoreo](#)) how the people were putting ([ballo](#)) money into the treasury ([gazophulakion](#))** - NET and ESV translate "treasury" as "offering box." NASB adds the word '**how**' which is not in the most other translations. The word **how** gives a slight misconception for **how** means in what way or manner (e.g., were they smiling or frowning when they tossed in their coins, etc). While Jesus in His omniscience undoubtedly did assess the manner and motive of their casting, the more literal sense is that He was simply watching them toss their coins in the receptacles.

**THOUGHT** - Jesus is always attentively **OBSERVING** when we give (whether our time, our talents, our treasures), especially examining our heart [motives](#) (our reasons for doing something, especially reasons that are hidden or not obvious to others or **even to ourselves!**) which one day will be revealed (Mk 4:22+, Lk 8:17+). Paul writes in a passage that always deeply convicts me "Therefore **do not go on passing judgment** ([present imperative with a negative](#)) before the time, [*but wait*] until the Lord comes Who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose ([phaneroo](#) - make visible what has been hidden) the **motives** ([boule](#) = an inward thought process leading toward a decision) of men's hearts (OUR HEART IS SOURCE OF OUR MOTIVE - TO PLEASE GOD OR SELF); and then each man's praise will come to him from God." (1 Cor 4:5). This begs the question - Why do you (I) do what you (I) do in any aspect of ministry? It is a searching question, we must continually keep in mind, and seeking God's help as in Psalm 139:23-24+.

**Putting ([ballo](#)) money ([chalkos](#)) into the treasury ([gazophulakion](#))** - This is an interesting picture - Mark uses the [imperfect tense](#) indicating over and over they were **putting** (casting) coins in the jars. Putting (throwing) would produce more noise than a gentle dropping of the coins into the jars. Many of the Jews relished showing off their "religiosity."

**Adam Clarke** - It is worthy of observation, that the money put into the treasury, even by the rich, is termed by the evangelist χαλκον, brass money, probably that species of small brass coin which was called [prutah](#) among the Jews, two of which make a [farthing](#), and twenty-four an Italian assarius, which assarion is the twenty-fourth part of a silver penny. We call this, [mite](#), from the French, *mieste*, which signifies a crumb, or very small morsel. The prutah was the smallest coin in use among the Jews: and there is a canon among the rabbins that no person shall put less than two prutahs into the treasury.

**And many rich ([plousios](#)) people were putting ([ballo](#)) in large sums** - **Luke** says "the rich putting their **gifts** into the treasury." Although Jesus had been castigating Scribes and Pharisees, He actually does not identify these givers as from either group, but only as the **rich**. Likewise, while we might suppose they were doing their giving for show, Jesus does not say that this was their motive. Yes, He had just finished issuing a series of "**Woes**" to the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:1-36, even saying in verse 5 that "they do all their deeds to be noticed by men." While one might postulate that is what these rich were doing, Jesus does not specifically say that in this section.

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**Treasury** ([1049](#)) ([gazophulakion](#) from **gaza** = treasure + **phulake** = a place where something is guarded) means place of deposit for the public treasure. It is translated "treasury" in all the NT uses (Mk. 12:41; Mk. 12:43; Lk. 21:1; Jn. 8:20). **Lenski** notes that historical records say there were "Thirteen trumpet-shaped, metal receptacles (shapharoth), each marked with a Hebrew letter, stood in the court of the women to receive the gifts of the worshipers for the benefit of the Temple and for the Temple tax. The singular , the [gazophulakion](#), "the treasury," may refer to all of them. (The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel) **Zodhiates** - Among the Jews this was the sacred treasury kept in one of the courts of the temple (Neh. 10:37, 38; 13:4, 5, 7, 8; Esth. 3:9). According to the Talmudists, the treasury was in the court of the women where stood thirteen chests, called from their shape "trumpets," into which the Jews cast their offerings (Ex. 30:13f.) (Borrow [The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament](#) )



**Observing** ([imperfect tense](#))([2334](#)) [theoreo](#) from [theaomai](#) = to look at closely, attentively or contemplatively) usually refers to physical sight but also means to gaze with interest and purpose, carefully examining and giving attention to details.

**Putting** ([906](#))([ballo](#)) means they were throwing or casting their coins into the Temple treasury jars.

**Money** (bronze, copper)([5475](#)) [chalkos](#) Eng [chalcography](#) = art of engraving copper) refers to the metal itself such as copper, brass (alloy of copper and zinc - 1 Cor 13:1), bronze (alloy of copper and tin) (Rev 18:12). **Chalkos** was used of anything made of this metal, such as gong (1Cor 13:1), copper coins (Mt 10:9); more generally money (Mk 12:41) Moulton and Milligan speak of chalkos as a word meaning "bronze-money." From two quotations of the second and third centuries, it appears that the word was used of money in general. All NT uses -Matt. 10:9; Mk. 6:8; Mk. 12:41; 1 Co. 13:1; Rev. 18:12

**Rich** ([4145](#))([plousios](#) from [ploutos](#) = wealth, abundance, riches) is an adjective which defines that which exists in a large amount with implication of its being valuable. Literally **plousios** refers to having an abundance of earthly possessions that exceeds normal experience.

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#### Related Resource:

- [What does the Bible say about prosperity? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Mark 12:42 A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent.**

- **two small copper coins:** Mk 12:42
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Luke 21:2+ And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins.

James Tissot - The Widow's Mite

Notice that **Tissot** adds to the Scripture by painting this scene with the woman carrying a child on her arm.

[GotQuestions.org](#) comments that "It is interesting that, just before Jesus commented on the widow's mite, He commented on the scribes "who devour widows' houses" (Mark 12:40). The religious officials of the day, instead of helping the widows in need, were perfectly content to rob them of their livelihood and inheritance. The system was corrupt, and the darkness of the scribes' greed makes the widow's sacrifice shine even more brightly. "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7), and He is faithful to take care of His own."

**A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent** - Some writers say this was the smallest offering that it was legal to give (but see Morris' comment below). She was unaware Jesus was watching (as best we can tell from the text). You had to strain to hear the faint, "Plink, plink."

**Geddert** - Her piety and personal sacrifice are to be applauded, but what is the cause of her poverty, and what will be done with her gift? Mark has just pictured Jesus condemning religious leaders who reduce widows to poverty (Mk 12:38-40).

**Leon Morris** - Commentators often say that worshippers were not allowed to make gifts of less than two lepta, so that this was the minimum offering. But the relevant Talmudic passage does not say that a gift of one lepton is forbidden. It simply says that one should not put one lepton into the charity box unless it is under proper supervision (Baba Bathra 10b). (TNTC-Luke)

**Lenski** - This was not a guess but an exercise of that supernatural knowledge which Jesus always employed wherever he needed it for his work. Let us remember, too, that God always has a special eye on widows and on orphans, and so Jesus does here also. This widow "threw in there two lepta," which were called so from their smallness, each was an eighth of an assarion, the two making a quadrans, about the fourth of a cent in value. Bengel remarks that she might have retained one of the two lepta. She has been judged by worldly wisdom which declares that she should have kept the money for her support, and that, as far as the Temple was concerned, her gift amounted to nothing. (Borrow [The interpretation of St. John's gospel](#))

**Gotquestions** make an interesting comment that "God sees what man overlooks. The big gifts in the temple were surely noticed by people; that's probably what the disciples were watching. But Jesus saw what no one else did: He saw the humble gift of a poor widow. This was the gift that Jesus thought worthy of comment; this was the gift that the disciples needed to be aware of. The other

gifts in the treasury that day made a lot of noise as they jingled into the receptacles, but the widow's mites were heard in heaven." ([Ref](#))

**Bock** - This is Luke's fourth "silent" example (the woman who anoints Jesus, Mary, and Lazarus). She says nothing, but her actions speak volumes. On widows, see the exegesis of Luke 18:3+. Luke has much to say about widows and the poor (Luke 2:37; 4:25–26; 7:12; 21:1–4; Acts 6:1–7; 9:39). (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT: Luke)

**Copper coins** ([3016](#))(**leptos** from from **leptós** = thin) means something scaled down or light, a small coin, mite. Leptos denotes a small Jewish coin which is the only Jewish coin mentioned in the New Testament. Only in Mk. 12:42; Lk. 12:59; Lk. 21:2. Used in Genesis of Pharaoh's dream of gaunt cows and thin ears of corn (Ge. 41:3-4; 41:6-7, et al). "Ellis (1974: 239) computes the value (OF LEPTOS) as one one-hundredth of a denarius, thus one one-hundredth of the average daily wage—a very small sum indeed!" (Bock)

**Wikipedia** - In Jesus' times in Judea, the small copper coin was called a **lepton**; there was no coin called by the English term "**mite**" at that time. However, there was a **mite** in the time of the creation of the King James Bible, as indeed there had been at the time of earliest modern English translation of the New Testament by William Tyndale in 1525. The denomination was well known in the Southern Netherlands. Both the duke of Brabant and the count of Flanders issued them and they were sometimes imitated in the North. English poet Geoffrey Chaucer refers to the myte in his unfinished poem Anelida and Arcite (c. 1370).[8] Originally, the Brabant mijt (maille in French) was 1/76 stuiver, the Flemish mijt 1/48 stuiver. When the two areas were united under the dukes of Burgundy and later under the Habsburgs, the rate of the mijt was set at 1/32 stuiver. More important, they were the very smallest copper coins. By 1611, they were no longer minted, but they were still in circulation.

#### Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about how widows are to be treated? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- Torrey's Topical Textbook [Widows](#)
- American Tract Society [Widow](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Widow](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Widow](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Widows](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Widow](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Poor, Orphan, Widow](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Widow](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Widow Widows](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Widow](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Widow](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Widow](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Widow](#)
- [Should we tithe off our gross or net income?](#)
- [How can I become a more cheerful giver?](#)
- [What is the difference between tithes and offerings?](#)
- [What was the firstfruits offering? Should Christians give a firstfruits offering today?](#)
- [If you have a lot of debt, can you temporarily stop tithing while paying off the debt?](#)

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Below is a table describing what is thought to be the **prescribed Temple offerings** which were to be placed in the thirteen trumpet-shaped collection boxes, each with an inscription indicating the use to which its contents would be put (e.g., "The Half-Shekel Tribute", etc). Notice that 9 offerings were mandated and four were voluntary. Historians describe the treasury as having 13 chests for money collection. Each chest had a different purpose:

1. To pay this year's taxes.
2. To pay last year's taxes.
3. To pay for the offering of two birds.
4. To make a donation for other birds. S. For work at the altar.
6. To purchase frankincense.
7. For gold for the interior of the holy of holies.
8. For money left over from the sacrifice of sin.
9. For money left over from the transgression or guilt offering.

10. For money left over from the bird sacrifice for a woman with blood.
11. For offerings required after a Nazarite vow.
12. For money left over for leper sacrifices.
13. For money to be used for burnt offerings.

	1		<b>Offerings</b>	8	Sin offering
		Half-shekel tribute	<b>left over</b>		
	2		<b>from</b>	9	Trespass offering
			<b>sacrifices</b>		
<b>Mandated Offerings</b>	3	Turtledove offering		10	Offerings of birds
	4	Pigeon offering		11	Nazarite offering
	5	Wood	<b>Voluntary Offerings</b>	12	Cleansed leper
	6	Incense			
				13	General offering
	7	Golden vessels			

**Mark 12:43 Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury;**

- **this poor widow:** Ex 35:21-29 Mt 10:42 Ac 11:29 2Co 8:2,12 9:6-8
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Luke 21:3+ And He said, "**Truly** (alethos) I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them;

**Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you-** Truly ( [amen](#)) expresses the importance and authority to what follows!

**This poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury-** She literally put in less, but Jesus assesses her gift as more. He does not say it is better, but just that it is more than all the others. He will explain this "quantifying" statement in the next verse.

**Poor** (Lk 21:3+ uses a different Greek word for **poor** = penichros)([4434](#))([ptochos](#) from **ptosso** = crouch, cringe, cower down or hide oneself for fear, a picture of one crouching and cowering like a beggar with a tin cup to receive the pennies dropped in!) is an adjective which describes one who crouches and cowers and is used as a noun to mean **beggar**. These poor were unable to meet their basic needs and so were forced to depend on others or on society. Classical Greek used the **ptochos** to refer to a person reduced to total destitution, who crouched in a corner begging. As he held out one hand for alms he often hid his face with the other hand, because he was ashamed of being recognized. **Ptochos** describes not simply honest poverty, and the struggle of the laboring man to make ends meet but also describes abject poverty, which has literally nothing and which is in imminent danger of real starvation. Uses in Mark - Mk. 10:21; Mk. 12:42; Mk. 12:43; Mk. 14:5; Mk. 14:7;

**Widow** ([5503](#))([chera](#) = feminine of **cheros** = bereft of one's spouse) means bereaved as would be a widow whose husband had died. The idea of neediness is often associated with **chera**, and it is also often linked with orphans (Mt 23:14; Mk 12:40, 42-44).

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**Question -** [What does Jesus want us to learn from what He said about the widow's mite?](#)

**Answer:** The Gospels of Mark and Luke both relay an incident involving a widow's gift to God. She didn't give much—just two mites—or did she?

The story is often called the story of the widow's mite or the story of the widow's offering. One day, Jesus was sitting with His disciples near the temple treasury watching people depositing money into the offering receptacles. The court of women held thirteen such receptacles, and people could cast their money in as they walked by. Jesus watched as the rich were contributing large sums of money, but then along came a widow with two small coins in her hand. The ESV calls them "two small copper coins, which make a penny" (Mark 12:41). The KJV calls the coins "mites." These were the smallest denomination of coins. The widow put her coins into the box, and Jesus called His disciples to Him and pointed out her action: "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on" (Mark 12:43–44; cf. Luke 21:1–4).

There are several things that the story of the widow's mite teaches us. First, God sees what man overlooks. The big gifts in the temple were surely noticed by people; that's probably what the disciples were watching. But Jesus saw what no one else did: He saw the humble gift of a poor widow. This was the gift that Jesus thought worthy of comment; this was the gift that the disciples needed to be aware of. The other gifts in the treasury that day made a lot of noise as they jingled into the receptacles, but the widow's mites were heard in heaven.

Second, God's evaluation is different from man's. The widow's two mites added up to a penny, according to man's tabulation. But Jesus said that she had given more than anyone else that day (Mark 12:43). How could this be, when "many rich people threw in large amounts" (Mark 12:41)? The difference is one of proportion. The rich were giving large sums, but they still retained their fortunes; the widow "put in everything—all she had to live on" (Mark 12:42). Hers was a true sacrifice; the rich had not begun to give to the level of her sacrifice.

Third, God commends giving in faith. Here was a woman in need of receiving charity, yet she had a heart to give. Even though the amount was negligible—what could a widow's mite buy?—she gave it in faith that God could use it. The widow's faith is also evident in the fact that she gave the last of her money. Like the widow of Zarephath, who gave her last meal to Elijah (see 1 Kings 17:7–16), the widow in the temple gave away her last means of self-support. Does that mean the widow left the temple completely destitute, went home, and died of starvation? No. The Bible teaches that God provides for our needs (Matthew 6:25–34). We don't know the details of this particular widow's future, but we can be certain that she was provided for. Just as God provided for the widow and her son in Elijah's day (1 Kings 17:15–16), God also provided for the widow in Jesus' day.

It is interesting that, just before Jesus commented on the widow's mite, He commented on the scribes "who devour widows' houses" (Mark 12:40). The religious officials of the day, instead of helping the widows in need, were perfectly content to rob them of their livelihood and inheritance. The system was corrupt, and the darkness of the scribes' greed makes the widow's sacrifice shine even more brightly. "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7), and He is faithful to take care of His own. (Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org))

**Mark 12:44 for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."**

- **put in out of** Mk 14:8 1Ch 29:2-17 2Ch 24:10-14 31:5-10 35:7,8 Ezr 2:68,69 Ne 7:70-72 2Co 8:2,3 Php 4:10-17
- **all she owned:** De 24:6 Lu 8:43 15:12,30 21:2-4 1Jn 3:17
- **Mark 12 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Luke 21:4+ for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

**For (gar)** - Term of explanation.. Explains what He means that she **put in more than all the contributors**. In this case Jesus is explaining how He could make the paradoxical statement that even though she gave less than others, she really gave more. Of course, the only way He could know this fact (that she gave all she had to live on) is by His omniscience.

**they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on-** So the reason she gave more is not because of the quantity she gave, but the proportion she gave. Notice Jesus neither condemns the rich for not giving like the poor widow. But neither does He laud the poor widow for giving a greater proportion (literally 100%). He is simply stating the contrast between the givers.

**Geoffrey Smith** writes "She possesses what God loves: **faith**. She **believes** he will meet all of her needs." ([A Closer Look at the Widow's Offering](#)) Read the passage again. Does Jesus say ANYTHING about her great faith (as He often did in other situations -cf Mt 8:10, 15:28, Lk 7:9)? Does He turn to His disciples and tell them they need this kind of faith so that God will meet all their needs? He does not say that so Smith seems to be "reading between the lines" interpreting the text as saying something it does not actually

say. Again, it seems that the interpretation of Lk 21:1-4 of the widow in a positive light is so fixed in the writings of Christendom that it is difficult to even consider the alternative possibility that it might not be as positive as it has been interpreted over the years.

The poor widow's degree of sacrifice is given great weight, but history is replete with stories of those who have given great sacrifice for a cause they believed in. Given that she is casting money in the Temple treasury, it seems fair to say that she is supportive of the religious system that her money will go to undergird. So sacrifice by itself is no indicator of one's faith in Jesus. Here is an example of great sacrifice from the daily readings of the Joshua project that literally shocked me...

The Bishnoi are a community of nature worshippers. The guru who founded the sect directed the worship of lord Vishnu (Bishnu), hence the name Bishnoi. **On one day in the year 1730, 363 Bishnoi individuals voluntarily gave up their own lives in order to spare the cutting of trees growing near their village.** The first lady to resist the tree cutters said, "If a tree is saved even at the cost of one's head, it's worth it." The axe intended for the tree severed her head, the first of 363 sacrifices! ([Reference](#))

The point is that the degree of one's sacrifice does not necessarily equate with the certainty of one's salvation. Generally conservative and otherwise good observers of the Biblical text seem to be adding many assumptions to this poor widow's "spiritual portfolio," but doing so without definitive Biblical support. The statements by many seem to be based on their presuppositions rather than on the text. Here is another example:

**Thomas Constable** - This incident contrasts the spiritual poverty and physical prosperity of the scribes with the physical poverty and spiritual prosperity of the widow.

**Comment:** There is no question there are striking contrasts between the religious hypocrites who devour widow's houses and this poor widow, but to say she has gained "**spiritual prosperity**" based on her giving is not a "kosher" conclusion! In fact, if we look just at the facts of the text, the main facts are - she is poor, she is a widow, she gives all she has to live on. To then conclude that this warrants us assigning her "**spiritual prosperity**" (or even status as a genuine believer or a disciple or one who has gained entrance into the Kingdom of God) sounds more like works based righteousness than it does grace based righteousness. To reiterate, we simply cannot discern the motive of her heart for giving all she had. Jesus simply did not comment on the state of heart but just on the degree or proportion of her giving. And He did not tell the disciples "Go and do likewise."

**Moody Bible Commentary** has an interesting note -

Jesus noticed and commented the others gave out of their **surplus** (Lk 21:4a)—that is, they gave what they could easily spare. However, she gave out of her **poverty** (Lk 21:4b)—that is, she gave what she could not really spare. She gave all that she had to live on. She gave sacrificially. **The actions of this poor widow are not to be seen as a "requirement" to get right with God.** (AMEN TO THAT STATEMENT! GIVING DOES NOT GET ONE INTO HEAVEN!) **One does not earn a right standing with God by giving—sacrificially or otherwise.** But these are the actions of one who is right with God. They prove one's standing with God.

**Comment:** BUT CAN SAY ONE SAY WITHOUT ANY RESERVATION OR DOUBT THAT BASED ONLY ON THE TEXT THIS WIDOW WAS IN "**RIGHT STANDING**" WITH GOD? WAS SHE REALLY? DOES GIVING WHETHER A LITTLE OR ALL DEMONSTRATE THAT ONE IS IN RIGHT STANDING WITH GOD? THAT IS A "STRETCH" OF THE TEXT AS JESUS SAYS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ABOUT HER **STANDING** BEFORE GOD. HE SIMPLY STATES SHE IS POOR AND HAS GIVEN ALL SHE HAD TO LIVE ON. BUT HER GIVING DOES NOT MAKE HER A BELIEVER IN JESUS NOR DOES IT PROVE SHE WAS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS. WE HAVE TO CAREFUL TO NOT MAKE AN INTERPRETATION THAT IS NOT JUSTIFIED BY A SIMPLE READING OF THE TEXT. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE WHEN WE HAVE HEARD A STORY INTERPRETED ONLY ONE WAY ALL OUR LIFE.

Below are some of the "traditional" interpretations from a variety of commentaries (old and new), and clearly almost everyone sees this poor widow's giving of all she has to live on in a positive and challenging light. Note that however one chooses to interpret Luke 21:1-4, these assessments below regarding giving are generally true.

- **Alfred Plummer's conclusion** - "The means of the giver and the motive are the measure of true generosity."
- **William Kelly's conclusion** - "The test of liberality is not what is given, but what is left."
- **Marshall** - what matters is not the amount that one gives but the amount that one keeps for oneself'
- **Darrell Bock** - Sometimes little gifts cost a great deal more than big gifts do, and their merit is in the sacrifice they represent. In fact, real giving happens when one gives sacrificially. Interestingly, research has shown that when people's income increases their proportion of charitable contributions tends to drop. We tend to give less the more we are blessed. How would

Jesus assess this trend? In contrast to the scribes' pride and hypocrisy stands this woman who has sacrificed out of her life to honor God. (IVP NT Commentary - Luke)

- **Leon Morris** - Jesus shows that the monetary value of a gift is not everything. There is a sense in which the widow made the biggest gift of all. (TNTC-Luke)
- **John Stott** - Her total devotion, which no-one but Jesus would have realized, is the exact opposite of the Jewish leaders' religion, all show and no heart. (The Message of Luke: The Saviour of the World.)
- **William Kistemaker** - Having just now exposed the hypocrisy of the scribes (20:45-47), Jesus proceeds to reveal the sincerity of a certain widow. He places her genuine religion over against the sham religion of the law-interpreters...Total commitment to God and his cause is the lesson she has taught us. (Baker New Testament Commentary)
- **Broadman Bible Commentary** - Her gift was a genuine expression of her faith that God in his providence would supply her future needs. (CAN YOU REALLY DRAW THIS CONCLUSION SOLELY FROM THE TEXT?) The rich had shown no such faith. They had not forfeited any of their financial security. At the same time, they believed that they had earned God's favor with an offering of money.
- **R C H Lenski** - It is the quality that makes a gift more or less in Jesus' eyes....Gifts that are given out of our superfluous income and gifts that are given out of want and necessity are not on the same level. To give the latter requires much more in our hearts than to give the former...No man lives by the bread he is able to buy; millionaires die as did Dives with his tables loaded—not only beggars like Lazarus. We live only by the word that goes forth out of God's mouth, by his will that is expressed in that word. When this widow gave all the living she had she gave herself completely into the hands of God. Her last act with the final bit of her living was an act of worship in true faith that now looked only unto God who cares for the destitute who trust in him. Did the widow starve? I do not think so. But let us not overdraw the picture. She has been pictured as going home with a heart singing with joy. Let us rather say that she was ready to starve if that were God's will. She was ready to accept that from the God she trusted. And if God did not let her starve, she took what he sent her as being sent only by him. To live thus and to give thus with such a faith means to earn the highest commendation of Jesus. (Borrow [The interpretation of St. Luke's gospel](#))
- **Life Application Commentary** - She gave everything and trusted God to care for her. Jesus wanted the disciples to see this lesson in total surrender of self, commitment to God, and willingness to trust in God's provision.
- **David Guzik** - Jesus' principle here shows us that before God, the spirit of giving determines the value of the gift more than the amount. God doesn't want grudgingly given money or guilt money. God loves the cheerful giver. The widow's gift and Jesus' comment on it also shows us that the value of a gift is determined by what it costs the giver. This is what made the widow's gift so valuable. David refused to give God that which cost me nothing (2 Samuel 24:24). ([Mark 12 Commentary](#))
- **Apologetics Study Bible** - While this verse has doubtless been used by unscrupulous persons to squeeze money out of others, Jesus commended the piety demonstrated by the widow's action. He was not recommending that everyone should demonstrate piety in exactly the same manner as this woman.
- **Lawrence Richards** - It's not how much we give, but our willingness to surrender all. Undoubtedly Luke purposely placed the ragged, humble widow beside the posturing, well-dressed politicians whose pretensions Jesus had just exposed. Luke wanted us to see others as God sees them. He wants us to realize that the mighty are seldom high on God's scale of values. (365 Day Devotional Commentary)
- **Concise Bible Commentary** - He considered that the widow gave more than anyone else, because he measured the gift not by its commercial value but by the degree of sacrifice of the giver. A heart of true devotion, not money, was the valuable thing in his kingdom
- **Tom Constable's conclusion** - Here is another instructive example of a person with a servant's attitude who gave her all, as little as that was, to God (cf. Mark 10:45). Jesus and Mark taught disciples how God values wholehearted commitment to Himself with this incident.
- **Warren Wiersbe** - When it comes to our giving, God sees more than the portion; He also sees the proportion. Men see what is given, but God sees what is left, and by that He measures the gift and the condition of our hearts. Winston Churchill said, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." He may have learned that from Jesus (Luke 6:38) or perhaps from Paul (2 Cor. 8:1–15). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

**NET Note** Comments - The contrast between this passage, Mk 12:41–44, and what has come before in Mk 11:27–12:40 is remarkable. The woman is set in stark contrast to the religious leaders. She was a poor widow, they were rich. She was uneducated in the law, they were well educated in the law. She was a woman, they were men. But whereas they evidenced no faith and actually stole money from God and men (cf. Mk 11:17), **she evidenced great faith** (WHERE DOES THE TEXT MAKE THIS STATEMENT???) and gave out of her extreme poverty everything she had (THE TEXT DOES SUPPORT THIS CONCLUSION).

**COMMENT:** The points of contrast the NET Note makes are valid observations based on the text and context, but the text does not allow one to make a statement regarding her **FAITH**. This type of statement reminds one of those religious hucksters in our day who say demonstrate your FAITH by sending me your widow's pension



just like this poor widow did in Luke 21:1-4 and I will pray over it and you will get back far more that you sent in and you will be pleasing to and blessed of God just as was this poor widow. And there are people in America today who have sent **all they have to live on to the religious charlatans** but this act is clearly not a reflection of their faith in God nor is it a faith based on the Word of God! It is important to observe that Jesus does not conclude as He sometimes does, "**How great is your faith**, in giving everything you have to live on." (Compare Mt 8:10, 15:28, Lk 7:9). One reasonable question in fact to ask is does **God really want us to given EVERYTHING we have to live on** regarding which **John MacArthur** comments "**It was literally her life. She'll go home and die.**" ([Sermon](#)) While I am not sure I totally agree with MacArthur that she was definitively destined to die (because she could have gone out and begged as the word **ptochos** suggests she had already done), if we take this passage to a logical practical conclusion as some have done, we should give everything we have to live on. **That does not at seem to be what this passage is teaching**

**Summary** - I began this section thinking that it is a **difficult section to interpret**. I initially discounted John MacArthur's **negative** view of the widow as a bit harsh and not supported by the text. I prayed over this passage and went back and examined the context which did lend some support to MacArthur's interpretation. In fairness, I have included a number of interpretations that view the poor widow's action in a **positive** light. But in fairness to the text, I have questioned many of the positive statements made about this poor widow as being largely based on the opinion of the writer and not on the Biblical text. If you have not read MacArthur's sermon on this passage [here is the link](#) and I would suggest you read it even if you do not agree with his interpretation.

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**Mark 12:44 Tithing** - I've read stories about prisoners in concentration camps, death camps, and POW camps who were given scraps of bread and watery bowls of soup, and that's all they had. But they found a way of tithing from it. One man took a tenth of his bread every day and gave it to a fellow prisoner, and another man fasted every tenth day and gave his full meal on that day to someone else. The principle of the Bible is proportional giving—this passage says that we are to give "as God has prospered us." (Robert J Morgan - Donelson Fellowship)