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Mark 12:1 - 12:27



Gospel of Mark - Steve Gregg

In this discourse, Steve Gregg examines the confrontations between Jesus and those who attempted to ensnare Him with their trickery. Jesus relates two parables that illustrate the rejection of God's messengers and the coming destruction of Jerusalem, and later addresses the question of whether Jews should pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus emphasizes the importance of giving back to both God and the state what is due to them. He also defends the doctrine of resurrection and highlights the significance of studying Scripture and recognizing the sovereignty of God.

Transcript

Now we're in Mark chapter 12. Moving right along. What we have in this chapter, I love this chapter, frankly, because it's made up of a series of confrontations between Jesus and people trying to beat Him in debate or trying to get Him to trap Himself with statements that will embarrass Him later.

And quite a few people have a whack at it, but no one seems to be able to defeat Him. And I believe it begins with Him kind of firing the first shot. He aggravates the confrontation immediately, although they have, in one sense you could say they have done so by asking by what authority He does things.

And that's what got the conversation going. But He inspired the question by doing something, cleansing the temple. By going in there when everyone is minding their own business, doing what they always do, He goes in there and upsets the apple cart and causes a big scene.

And so the Pharisees come to Him and say, by what authority did you do this? And we have that exchange at the end of chapter 11. Then chapter 12, verse 1, He began to speak to them in parables. A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower.

And he leased it to vine dressers and he went into a far country. So the picture is a fairly familiar one. A landowner who's rich enough that he doesn't have to work his own land.

In fact, he's rich enough to go to another country once he can travel, but he's got property that is income producing property. And there are people who don't have their own land, but they know how to work. And so they lease his land from him and they work it for a profit themselves.

And they pay him the lease price. They pay the rent out of the produce. So one time a year he gets his rent.

In a case like this, it's a vineyard, so he would get a certain percentage of the wine or of the grapes. So he goes away to the far country and just figures that at vintage time he'll get paid for what these people are leasing his property to produce. Now, at vintage time, he sent a servant to the vine dressers that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vine dressers.

And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty handed. Now, that's so outrageous. I mean, that's unexpected.

They've got a contract here. You work on my land. I get some of the fruit.

When it's time for you to pay up, I send my collector to get my rent paid. And you beat up the rent collector and throw them out of the vineyard. I mean, that's outrageous.

You would expect there to be some kind of legal or even military action against them, but there's not. Again, he sent them another servant, gives them another chance. And at him, they threw stones and wounded him in the head and sent him away shamefully treated.

And again, he sent another and him, they killed and many others beating some killing some. Therefore, still having one son, his beloved. He also sent him to them last saying they will respect my son.

I'm not sure why he thought that. But I think what it means is they wouldn't dare treat him that way. Servants are one thing.

Servants are slaves. They're low ranking officials. I mean, they're not officials.

They're low ranking members of the household. You know, free men might be arrogant against servants, but they're not be arrogant against another free man, the son of the owner who's coming to collect. But those fine dressers said among themselves, this is the heir.

Come, let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours. And they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. Now, Jesus.

I mean, think of how outrageous this story is. It's hard to imagine this story could ever really happen. The interesting thing is it did in the case that he's describing, which was

Israel.

The vineyard is Israel, as in the case of Isaiah, chapter five. Now, there's this vineyard story in Isaiah five that begins just the same way. This one, a man plants a vineyard.

He cultivates it. He builds a hedge around it. He builds a wine press in it.

He does all these things. All of those things are in the same story in the story that is told in Isaiah five. And of course, Jesus intends that his listeners will recognize he's alluding to that.

But he throws in something that Isaiah five doesn't. And that is the role of the vine dressers, the tenants of the vineyard. Isaiah doesn't mention that Isaiah just mentioned that God did all these things, had his vineyard and expected good wine, but he didn't.

He got sour grapes, got wild grapes instead of cultivating grapes. So he didn't get what he wanted. Jesus here puts the finger on the leaders of Israel, the ones who are put in charge to produce the fruit.

Now, the leaders of Israel were the priests and the other religious and political leaders. It was a religious nation. And therefore, all the leaders were supposed to be religious, all the leaders were supposed to be godly.

And they were their role as the leaders of Israel was to lead Israel into a path of justice and righteousness and piety to God. But the leaders actually didn't do that. The ones who are actual religious leaders, like the priests, had turned it into a racket for them to make money off the people.

The Pharisees were also religious leaders of a sort, though they didn't hold official office. They were certainly respected religious spokespeople. They were hypocrites in their behavior and they gave religion a bad name.

The political rulers at this time weren't even Jews. They were, of course, the Romans, and therefore they weren't going to produce anything good. But the point here is that the leaders that God appointed over Israel were supposed to bring forth from Israel the fruit of justice and righteousness that God was seeking.

Now, the sending of these servants, one after another, who each get abused and rejected and thrown out of the vineyard and in some cases killed, obviously refers to the whole history of Israel prior to Jesus. We know this because at the end of the story, the son is sent to them and that is Jesus. So everything that happens before the owner sends his son is things that happen in the Old Testament.

And those servants clearly are the prophets that God sent to Israel saying, hey, where's the fruit? And that was the message of the prophets. They said, listen, God ordained

Israel to be a special people, to be holy unto the Lord and to produce justice and mercy and righteousness. And the prophet message was always a complaint that Israel was not being just and righteous, and therefore they were calling upon Israel to produce the fruit the owner expects.

But all the prophets were treated this way. Not all of them. There were a few that were not.

The post-exilic prophets like Zechariah and Haggai apparently were heeded. The other prophets were pretty much this way, treated. And so at the end of this series of messengers comes the son himself.

Now, it's interesting that the leaders of Israel are represented as recognizing the son for who he is. This is the heir. They know this isn't just another servant.

They know this is not an imposter. They know it's the true heir of the vineyard. This is the owner's son.

When the owner dies, this guy will inherit the vineyard. This is the rightful heir. However, if we get rid of him, he won't be around to inherit the vineyard and we can maintain our control of it permanently.

That's what they're saying. Here comes the heir. Let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours.

He is, after all, the owner's only son. There'll be no one else for the owner to leave it to. When the owner dies, we'll just, you know, possess nine tenths of the law.

We're here. We'll just hold on to it. We'll own the property.

Now, they were not originally there as owners. They were originally there as workers, as they were, for the owner. But now they want to be owners themselves.

And they recognize the owner has a son who has a rightful claim to ownership. But they say, well, he's our only competitor to inherit this thing. And so we'll kill him and then we'll be in charge.

Now, this obviously is how Jesus is representing the motives of his enemies, the ones who are going to kill him. They see him as God's son. They see that he is the Messiah.

They're not acknowledging it quite so boldly as the men in this parable do, but they recognize he is the one threatening them. Threatening their position because they are the undisputed leaders in charge of the religious system of Israel and thus of the country itself, apart from what the Romans restrict them in. And so they are.

They have political power over other people, over the vineyard, over Israel. But if Jesus

comes as the Messiah, then he's going to be the one in charge. He's going to be the king.

And they can pretty well tell that when he sets up his cabinet, he's not going to choose them. They've been opposing him the whole time. He's got his own cabinet he's bringing in.

He's got other guys. He's going to throw these guys out. If he takes over, they lose their position.

But if they can kill him, they can hold their position. That's what they think. That's the motivation of those who killed Jesus as Jesus represents it in this parable.

And they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. Therefore, Jesus says to the listeners, what will the owner of the vineyard do? He says, OK, you make a call about this. And in this place, Mark represents it as if Jesus answers his own question.

In the parallel in Matthew, chapter 21, Jesus asked this question, what will the owner do to these people? And the listeners answer the question themselves and give the answer that we have here recorded as if Jesus gave it. He will come and destroy the vine dressers and give the vineyard to others. That answer that here is represented as if it's Jesus answering his own question really was supplied by his listeners.

He let them answer it. Now, he may have repeated it or maybe his agreement with it is represented as if he's the one who gives the answer because he approved of their answer. But you see, I like the way it's worded in Matthew 21.

It's instructive because he asked the question in Matthew 21, 40. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes. OK, the owner is going to come.

And what will he do to those vine dressers? And they said to him, Matthew 21, 41, they said to him, he will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease his vineyard to other vine dressers who will render to him their fruits, the fruits in their seasons. Now, what's interesting about this is that Jesus is talking about what the owner is going to do when he comes. And yet the destruction of Jerusalem is what he's going to do when he comes.

And he's going to turn the kingdom over to a new batch of people, the church, a new nation. That will bring forth the fruits of it. And Jesus actually confirmed that they were right.

And said in verse 43, therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. That happened with the destruction of the old covenant and the coming of the new covenant and the new covenant community now has the kingdom and will bear the fruits of it. But you see, what's interesting is that in the parable, the destruction of Jerusalem, the destruction of the vine dressers and the

taking of it from them and given to someone else happens when the owner comes.

Now, I only bring that out because. We are going to find references to Jesus coming in some of the things that Jesus teaches, even in Matthew 13 or in Mark 13 when we get there. And we Christians who live after the event of Christ's ascension.

Always think in terms of the second coming in and while we should, because Jesus is going to come again at the end of the world, we anticipate that. But his listeners would have had no reason to understand it that way. Him coming doesn't mean after he goes away.

They didn't know he's going away. In this case, the coming of the owner is simply when he shows up to judge the wicked people who killed his son. And it is using the term coming in the sense that the prophets often spoke of God coming.

Namely, he's coming in judgment. He's not. This is not literally Jesus coming back, but it's rather God visiting with judgment those who killed his son.

And so the reference here to him judging the people of Jerusalem is referred to in the parable as the owner coming. And so also in the Olivet Discourse, we find this expression of him coming, but it's going to be associated apparently with the destruction of Jerusalem. It's not the second coming.

The second coming is future still. But there was a coming in the figurative sense of God bringing judgment through the Roman armies upon Jerusalem, and that was the coming of God's judgment upon them. Just as we've seen in Isaiah chapter 19 verse one, the coming of the Assyrian armies to conquer Egypt is referred to in Isaiah 19 one as God coming to Egypt.

But it wasn't the second coming or even the first coming of Christ. It was the coming of the Assyrian armies as agents of God's judgment to Egypt. It says in Isaiah 19 one, the Lord rides on a swift cloud and will come to Egypt.

Well, that's just an Old Testament way of saying he's going to judge Egypt. It's as if he shows up to settle the score there. But this showing up is really just the armies of the Assyrians coming and destroying Egypt or conquering Egypt.

So also when the Lord of the vineyard comes and destroys those wicked men, it's really not the second coming. It's the Roman armies coming at the behest of God. God sends his armies.

And actually, although Mark doesn't record that parable right after this one in Matthew. And I just turn you there because of this. It's the immediate context of this same parable.

Matthew's version we see this parable about the vineyard and the vine dressers and so

forth is at the end of Matthew 21. And then immediately at the beginning of chapter 22, there's this parable. And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged the marriage for his son.

And he sent out his servants to invite people to the wedding, but they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants saying, tell those who are invited. See, I've prepared dinner.

My oxen, fatted cattle are killed and all things are ready. Come to the wedding. And they made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his business, etc.

Now this is talking about the same thing in a different image. In the previous parable, it's a vineyard where the owner sends messengers to get the fruit. In the second parable, it's a king sending his messengers to invite people to come to the wedding, to come into the kingdom of God.

And in both cases, the response is negative. He sent the prophets to Israel, like messengers of the vineyard owner to get the fruit, and they were mistreated. And the messengers that were sent to invite people to the wedding, they are ignored.

They are disrespected. Their message is treated as if it's not an important thing to them. And look at verse seven, Matthew 27.

But when the king heard about it, he was furious and he sent out his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. Now, destroying those murderers parallels Matthew 21, verse 41. He will utterly destroy those wicked men miserably.

And leave his vineyard to other vinedressers. Well, look at 22, 7. He destroyed those murderers, burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, the wedding is ready.

Those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore, go out to the highways and as many as you find, bring in. That is, the Jews who are nearby.

The Jews who are God's friends were the first ones invited into the kingdom of God. But they were murderers. What's interesting about this is that they murdered the servants that came first, which are like the prophets that were killed first.

This doesn't make them murdering the king's son because the parable, the wedding doesn't really lend itself to the son being killed. So that doesn't come up as a part of this parable. But in both parables, the Jews reject the messengers of God consistently.

And the result is he destroys them in the parable, the vineyard. He destroys those men and gives the vineyard to someone else. In this parable, he burns up their city and then he sends the messengers out to invite the Gentiles in instead.

What Matthew 21 refers to as the owner coming. Chapter 22 refers to him sending his

armies. Now, those armies are the Roman armies.

The Roman armies are the ones that destroyed their city and burned down their city and destroyed those murderers. But they're the king's armies. The king himself, God, who has been slighted, whose son has been slighted since his armies.

That's the Roman armies, God's armies. It's interesting because God's sovereignty over the Roman armies here or the Assyrian armies back in Isaiah 19. It's spoken of as if God is coming when those armies come.

It's coming in judgment. So back to Mark, our present passage, it is predicted that because of what has happened, the just those wicked people will be destroyed. Mark 12, nine, and the vineyard will be leased out to others.

Now, there's not as much said about it here as there is in Matthew 12. But here it does say, verse 10, Have you not read the scriptures? The stone which the builders rejected has become chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it's marvelous in our eyes.

That's a reference to Psalm 118, verses 22 through 23. The stone which the builders rejected. What's that talking about? Well, obviously, Jesus is the stone in the song.

The builders rejected. Who are the builders? Shifting the metaphor again, the leaders of Israel are supposed to be building God's kingdom, building God's city, God's temple. They're supposed to be building God's edifice.

Here comes the chief stone, the most important stone. The builders don't see any use for it, so it doesn't fit their pattern. They're building their own building.

The stone that God made to be the chief cornerstone. It doesn't even fit in the blueprint of these guys. These guys have a different plan for the building.

And so when the chief stone comes, they reject the stone doesn't fit their plan. So they discard him. However, he has a future.

Anyway, he becomes the chief cornerstone, obviously, of a different building. The leaders of Israel were building their own kingdom, their own empire, their own agenda, their own thing they're doing. And Jesus comes and he's the one that God sends to be really the cornerstone of the project.

But he doesn't match with their plans, so they reject him. But that's not the end of him. He just becomes the cornerstone of another building.

God builds his own building separate. And the builders that were originally building, they're out. Their building is going down.

Their building is by the wrong blueprint. And although they rejected him, it's they that

will be rejected ultimately, because he's still the founder and the cornerstone of the building that God's going to do it. This is God's doing.

God's building. Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain to build it. And this is the Lord's doing.

It's marvelous in our eyes. He's building this house around this cornerstone. And the builders who do it without the Lord, they're building in vain.

Now, what I want to point out about this is, although it's not as clear in Mark as it is in Matthew, in the parallel, Jesus asked him a question of what will the owner do to those blind dressers? And they give an honest answer because they don't know it's them. People give a much more honest answer and just answer, more objective answer when they think they're judging someone else than themselves. Remember when Nathan the prophet came to David and said, you know, there's this this these two people who live down the street here, one's rich, one's poor, one has a whole bunch of sheep, the other is a poor man has only one little lamb.

It's like a family pet. And the man who had a big flock of sheep had a guest come over. He wanted to feed him some mutton, so he goes over and steals the sheep from the neighbor, the one sheep he's got.

Now, Nathan knew how to craft a good story to get at David because David was a shepherd. Not anymore, but he had spent many years as a shepherd. And one thing shepherds don't have any talents for is people who steal sheep.

You don't steal a sheep from a shepherd and live to tell the tale. It's like horse thieves in the Old West. You know, that's a hanging offense, you know.

And especially when a shepherd is devoting all his time and his energy to keep those sheep safe from lions and bears and thieves and wolves. I mean, he's got his total investment of his energy is caring for the sheep. And if one of them gets stolen, that's not something you're going to be easy on that guy who took it.

And so Nathan, knowing that David had the heart of a shepherd, said this man had a whole bunch of sheep, but he stole the only sheep this guy had. And he's presented as if it's an actual case, as if, you know, this is a case that needs to be adjudicated. You're the king.

What do you think should be done? And David said, the man shall die. That's a hanging offense. That's too good for him.

And then, of course, Nathan said, well, you're the man, because he had framed a story in which David was able to see the justice of the situation without knowing that he was the one on trial. If he if it had been just OK, there was a man who lived next door to his

neighbor and he slept with his wife and killed the man. What do you think should be done? You know, David would say, well, depends on the circumstances, you know, there might have been extenuated circumstances.

Was the man the king by any chance? Did he have does he have authority, unlike other men to do this kind of thing? I mean, you know, you tell the story so the man knows it's him and he's going to give sort of a favorable verdict to himself. But tell it as if it's someone else and you're going to get an objective answer. And that's what Jesus did here to the Pharisees that this situation happens.

What do you think should be done to these people? And not knowing that they're giving the verdict against themselves, they should be miserably destroyed in the vineyard taken from them. And that's where, although it doesn't come out in Mark's version in Matthew, Jesus said, that's right. And therefore, the kingdom is taken from you.

You're the man. You're the man. And therefore, it's taken from you and given to someone else.

So now in Mark 12, 12, it says, And they sought to lay hold of him, but they feared the multitude, for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them. So they left him and went away. However, a series of inquisitors came to him, you know, serially one after another to bring hard questions to him, controversial questions, and to try to get him to get hung up, to alienate himself from the people or whatever by saying things that would be embarrassing to use against him later on.

And the first question comes about paying tribute to Caesar. And in verse 13, they then they sent to him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, because these two would be on opposite sides of this question, and therefore, there'd be witnesses. So he said who would object to what he would say from one side or the other.

They sent some Pharisees and Herodians to catch him in his words. When they had come, they said to him, Teacher, we know that you are true and care about no one. That means you're not going to be, you know, tilting your judgment in favor of some pre some prejudice that you have towards somebody, you'll give a true answer.

For you do not regard the person of men, nor but you teach the way of God in truth. Now, these guys were Pharisees and Herodians. How could they think that Jesus would accept this flattery at face value? It's obvious they were setting them up.

But it may be that they were disguised as something else so that they were just they just appear to be truth seekers. We know you'll speak the truth of God. We want to know this is a big controversy.

We want to have it settled. Like the woman at the well. I said, oh, I see your prophet.

Our people say we should worship, but it's not you people say in Jerusalem, which is it? Now, she was sincere and he gave her a sincere answer. But these guys were just trying to trap him because if they said they said, is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? The reason this was a trap is because all the Jews tended or most of them tend to decide with you that they shouldn't pay taxes to Caesar. And the reason was that in 86, a man named Judas of Galilee had started the movement that was called the zealots.

You know, one of Jesus disciples had come out of that movement to become a Christian. Simon, the zealot was one of them. It was an actual party.

It was actually a very militant party in Israel that had been started about when Jesus was about 10 years old, actually, by this guy named Judas of Galilee. Judas had been killed, but his movement had continued and it was his contention that it's not lawful for Jews to pay tribute to a pagan king because the Jews are God's people. God is their king.

And by paying tribute to Caesar, they were acknowledging Caesar as their king and that that would be blasphemy for a Jew. And therefore, Judas of Galilee, his idea was it's not lawful for a Jew to pay tribute to Caesar, as, of course, the Romans were requiring them to do. And so this became a hot controversy, hot enough to be a fighting war.

People were crucified over this in large numbers. And it was it was the zealots, eventually that same party that later started the Jewish war in 86, which led to the destruction of Jerusalem. It was also the zealots who made the last stand up on Masada and died in 73.

They all committed suicide because they were going to be captured and so forth. But this was a pretty militant movement. And even though most of the Jews would not join the zealot party because it's too dangerous, if you were known to be a zealot, the Romans would hunt you down and crucify you.

But a lot of people were kind of favorable toward it. I mean, the Jews obviously didn't like the idea of paying tribute to Caesar, not only because everyone hates to pay taxes, but because they really didn't like what it represented. It spoke to them of them being still in exile, that the Babylonian exile had not yet ended, that the Jews were still, although back in their land, they were still not free people.

And the Messiah had not yet come and to pay tribute to Caesar was a galling, offensive thing to them because it spoke not only it didn't only hit him in the pocketbook, but hit him in their national pride and their religious pride. That they were under the heel of a pagan, a worship of false gods, and yet their God was the true God. And here they are subjected to Rome and paying tribute was their way of saying it.

And the zealots said it's not lawful to do that. And the average Jew went ahead and did it, but didn't want to and kind of felt sympathetic toward the zealot cause. Now, on the

other hand, the Romans said, do you have to pay tribute? So they asked Jesus, should you pay tribute or not? Now, the Herodians, one of these parties that was coming to Jesus, were on the side of Rome.

That's why they're called Herodians. They were they belonged to Herod's household. Herod was the Roman appointed ruler of Galilee.

And the Pharisees, on the other hand, would be on the side of the zealots in this respect. They are patriotic Jews objecting to the Roman presence. So here they are, the Herodians and the Pharisees, on different sides of the issue themselves, asking Jesus to side one way or the other.

Now, if Jesus had said, no, don't pay tribute to Caesar. The Herodians would have said, oh, he's advocating rebellion against Rome and that would get Jesus in trouble. In fact, when he was accused before Pilate by the Jews, falsely accused, he was accused of telling people not to pay tribute to Caesar.

That was a damnable sin, a crime against Rome. And so the Herodians were just waiting for him to say, don't pay tribute to Caesar so that they could go report it for that. On the other hand, if he said yes, do pay tribute to Caesar, it is lawful.

Well, then the Pharisees would spread abroad to the Jews. This guy's advocating paying tribute to Caesar. He's on Rome's side, not our side.

And so Jesus would be trapped on the horns of a dilemma, they thought. And they said, shall we pay or shall we not pay? Verse 15. But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, why do you test me? Bring me a denarius that I may see it.

A denarius was a coin that would be used for paying the tribute. And it was a minted coin. Like our coins, our coins have people's faces on them, dead white men.

Well, they had a living white man on their coin, Caesar. And so they brought it and he said to them, whose image and inscription is this? And they said to him, Caesar's. There was no other right answer to give.

Then Jesus answered and said to them, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at him. They marveled that he had been able to give them a direct answer that seemed to evade the trouble on both sides.

Give Caesar what is his in saying that Caesar couldn't complain, give God what is his. Well, then the loyal Jews couldn't complain either. You see, the word render, it doesn't mean give the word render in the Greek means give back, like return an article to a trifle owner.

That's what the word render means. It doesn't mean to simply give a gift. It means to

return something to a trifle owner, give it back.

And Jesus said, now this appears to be a man's face. Who is this? Oh, Caesar, you say, well, then this looks like it belongs to him. Give him his face back, you know, give him back what's his.

This must have come from him, right? I mean, Jews don't mint coins with Roman rulers faces on. This must be one of Caesar's coins. Give it back to him if he wants it back.

It came from him. The interesting thing about that is that Jews, pious Jews would not carry a coin with a face on it. Because it's a graven image.

Jesus didn't have one. They did. He said, show me a coin.

He didn't have one on it. He didn't carry those kinds of coins, but they did. It was a graven image.

And the face on it was the one of the gods of Rome, the emperor. And he says, well, that face, if that's Caesar's face, I guess you should give him his face back. The coin has his image on it.

It obviously came from him. Give it back. It's his.

Now, however, you have you are made in God's image. The coin bears the image of Caesar. You bear the image of God.

You give Caesar what belongs to him. You give God back what belongs to him. If the coin has Caesar's image, it must have come from Caesar.

Give it back. You have God's image. You came from him.

You give yourself back to him. You give God what he deserves and what he owns rightfully. And I mean, it's quite an amazing statement.

Just off the top of his head to be able to make that, because he was really kind of trapped. There was no right answer that he could give, it seemed. But he gave an answer that no one could really I mean, they marveled.

This is they marveled at him because he had slipped right through their trap and he'd done so quite legitimately. He made a very profound and true and obvious statement that no one could object to. What are you doing with Caesar's face on your coin anyway? What do you have that coin for? You're a Jew.

Give it back to him. You don't want to carry that thing. Give him back his money.

And give God back his. Give God what belongs to him. And that's you.

You have his image like that coin has Caesar's image on it. Now, of course, as a teaching to Christians generally, that does provide something of a balance. It does mean that there is a legitimate something that is owed to the secular government.

We Christians live under governments that are not particularly Christian. I mean, there are some Christians in our government, but it's not a Christian government. Certainly the inhabitants of the highest offices in our country are not Christian people with Christian convictions.

So we live under like Caesar. Or at least we live in a society that is that where the leader taxes us, imposes taxes for services. And it would seem that paying taxes is required of Christians.

But but I think when he says give Caesar was Caesar's and give God was God, putting that second place of the emphasis on that. OK, you're asking about the money and Caesar will give it, give it to him. But here's what I want to tell you to make sure God gets what his is his.

I'm not so concerned about what happens to Caesar's money. That's his concern and yours. But I'm concerned about what God gets.

Does God get back from you what he owns? Are you giving yourself back to him? Are you giving him all the loyalty he deserves? And the important thing, of course, is not that we staged like a tax revolt. Some Christians actually will not pay their taxes for various reasons. Christian convictions in some cases.

A lot of them say, well, the income tax is unconstitutional, so we're not going to pay it. Although even if it is true that the income tax is unconstitutional, there's nothing in the Bible that forbids us to pay it. I don't think it's very wise for Christians to all of us, after all, have to pick our battles.

I don't think picking a battle with the IRS is the smartest thing to do. The IRS does not always win, by the way. I have friends who pick their battles with the IRS and beat them in court.

And it's always kind of feels good to know of a case like that. But I, for one, would much rather pay whatever they asked me to send them and just keep them out of my hair so I can go about and give to God what's his. You know, I mean, some people just as a matter of principle, I'm not going to pay those taxes because it's unconstitutional.

Well, the Constitution doesn't say I can't send that money to IRS. I mean, it doesn't it maybe they don't have any constitutional right to require it. But Jesus gives everyone who asks you, so I'll give it to them.

Keep them off my back. That's why I'm about that. But some Christians have more

convictions against paying the taxes because they say the tax money is used for things that Christians cannot countenance.

In many cases, these are people who are pacifists and don't approve of, say, the war in Iraq or the war in Afghanistan or any wars. And I knew some pacifist Christians who actually when they paid their taxes, they sent a letter to the IRS and said, since X percentage of the national budget is going to support the war, that's the percentage of our taxes we're not sending you. And we're sending you the remainder for the other service you provide.

But that percentage that would go toward the war, we're donating that to a nonprofit organization that promotes peace, you know, and they consider that to be making a Christian statement and so forth. And maybe maybe that is making a Christian statement. Maybe they'll be able to make it in jail, too.

Maybe they'll have a prison ministry next. And that may be what they should do. But the problem is they're acting on the assumption that if the government does the wrong things with the money, that we should withhold the money from them.

And that's not really very biblical. Caesar certainly was not doing all the right godly things with his money. Caesar was oppressing the Jews, for one thing.

I mean, from the money they paid to Caesar, that was paying pilot salary and the soldiers that were occupying their country. That was not very nice. But Jesus said, give Caesar what's his.

Don't get yourself locked into a battle over taxes with Caesar. Just give it back to him if he wants it and live your life for God. And that's, you know, after you pay what Caesar demands from you, it's Caesar's responsibility before God, what he does with the money.

After all, your taxes are taken from you at gunpoint, you know, if a guy robs you in an alley at gunpoint and takes all your money and he goes out and buys drugs with it, are you responsible for buying that guy drugs? No, he took your money forcibly against your will. And he's doing with it what he's going to do with it, not what you would have done with it. Likewise, the government takes your money at gunpoint.

It's not literal gunpoint, but they'll put you in jail if you don't pay it. Kind of like gunpoint. And it's under duress.

And therefore, I don't think you're responsible for what they do with it. I mean, you can play the hero and say, over my dead body, they're going to take this money. But to me, money is not enough things to lay my dead body down over.

Money is just not that important. Apparently, some people it is. And for many people, it's a matter of principle, Christian principle.

But I think they're mistaken because Jesus did not say, render to Caesar that portion of the taxes that he does, that he uses for legitimate civic projects. But there is a portion he uses for military actions, even for paying his own boy prostitutes that we don't approve of that. So we're going to, you know, we're going to not pay that part of the tribute.

Jesus, you know, he didn't say you have to be a number cruncher in order to be a disciple and figure out what percentage of this money is being used in ways Christians can approve and what percentage is going to help support Planned Parenthood and so forth. We're going to have to not pay that part. You give to Caesar what he demands from you.

Caesar mints the money. We have money in our pockets with George Washington's face on it and other presidents and other white dead men. And and basically, they're the government mints it.

Actually, the government doesn't. The Federal Reserve does. But it's a complex issue here.

And the point is, it's got Caesar's face on it. And if Caesar says, we want it back, give it to him. Don't pick a fight with the government.

Just give it to him and go your way and make sure that God has your total loyalty and that you're doing God's will. You don't have to worry about what Caesar does with the money once you give it to him. That's something God will judge Caesar for.

It's not your responsibility. Verse 18, then some Sadducees, you know, they're the ones who say there's no resurrection. They came to him and they asked him, saying, Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man dies and leaves his wife behind and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring to his brother.

This is called the law of leave right marriage. It's actually repeated a number of times in the Old Testament. It's a very strange law to us because we think of marriage is primarily for love and for romance.

And, you know, a woman marries a man. That doesn't mean she's going to love his brother or all his brothers. If it comes to that, a lot of people may fall in love with someone.

They're not in love with their sister or the brother and want to marry them, too. But the issue here was that marriage marriage was for the purpose of perpetuating the race and leaving an heir to inherit what you've accomplished in life. And a man who died without an heir.

You know, he had no way to perpetuate his the product of his life to another generation. So that was considered to be tragic. And the purpose of a wife, among other things, but

mostly was thought to be to give the man an heir.

And that's one of the reasons that polygamy was practiced, that sometimes the first wife was barren and so a man would take a second wife. So it was necessary to have an heir. Now, in a case where a man died without an heir, if that man had a brother or someone else very close to him in kinship, then that man would have to marry the widowed wife.

And hopefully she would have a baby with the brother's seed and the first baby of that union, there might be others later, but the first one belonged officially to the deceased brother. Now, the reason it was the brother is that's the closest you could get to the man himself. There's really no one who has a closer genetic tie to the deceased man than his nearest brother.

So if you didn't have a brother, it could be perhaps a cousin or something like that. But the idea was whoever's nearest to being the same thing as the dead man should be the one who brings up an heir for the dead man. So this is just a law that would be strange and objectionable in our society.

But it was with the view of making sure that someone had an heir, if possible, his brother would step in. Now, they make reference to that law. And verse 20, it says, Now there were seven brothers, the first took a wife and dying, left her no offspring.

And so the second took her and he died, nor did he leave any offspring and the third. Likewise, so all seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all, the woman died also.

It was inevitable. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as a wife. Now, the reason for this question was that they didn't believe there was a resurrection.

And they felt like if you say there's a resurrection, you create this kind of a bizarre situation. A woman has had seven husbands in her lifetime. And they all die, but then they all rise again in the resurrection, you're telling me.

And now what? We've got one woman and seven men who all have had her as a wife legitimately because Moses commanded it. It's not that they did this, you know, you know, that they have to pay some penalty for having done the wrong thing. They did exactly what God commanded in the law to do.

And now through God's own arrangement, we have this situation where these people are all raised from the dead and seven men lay claim on the same woman. That's not going to work. Now, by the way, in the Jewish mind, it wouldn't seem so strange if seven women were shared by one man.

That happened all the time, but seven men sharing one woman, that was unacceptable. And so they thought that this scenario itself proved that the resurrection doctrine, which,

by the way, the Pharisees and Jesus believed in the resurrection, but the Sadducees didn't. It was an ongoing controversy like between, you know, the Pentecostals, non-Pentecostals about tongues or something like that.

It was that it was a hot theological discussion that was ongoing between these two different denominations. And I'm sure that this question was, first of all, a hypothetical case, though it's not impossible that a scenario like that could actually materialize. It's not necessary to believe it was true.

They're setting up a situation that is plausible, which would, if true, would prove the resurrection doctrine to be problematic. I'm of the opinion that this was their favorite argument against the resurrection. We're not told that.

But here's the thing. They had been locked in debate with the Pharisees over this doctrine a lot. I'm sure each side had their favorite arguments, just like Calvinists, Armenians, whenever they debate, they have favorite arguments.

They use and reuse and reuse. No, they never convince each other, but they have their favorite arguments. They're always passing back and forth.

I'm sure that the Pharisees and the Sadducees in their ongoing debate had their favorite arguments they made for and against the resurrection. Now, this was one which apparently had never been answerable. If the Pharisees had ever given a good answer to this, the Sadducees would be unable to use it.

Jesus would have just said, well, this is already been answered. Don't why you ask me this. It's clear this was considered to be an unanswerable objection to the resurrection, and they thought they're going to come to Jesus and make his belief in the resurrection look foolish with it.

And so I'm sure the Pharisees were looking on, too, because in one of the Gospels after this, it says the Pharisees saw that he had put the Sadducees to silence. And that probably gratified the Pharisees a little bit, even though they weren't on Jesus side in this particular matter, the resurrection. They were on Jesus side.

And just think after Jesus answered it authoritatively, the Sadducees couldn't use their favorite argument. And now they've been answered and they lost one of their favorite weapons in their arsenal. But they didn't think they're going to lose this one because it's like an unanswerable problem.

Now, see, the Pharisees, excuse me, the Sadducees, according to Josephus, they also didn't believe in any of the scripture except the Pentateuch. The Sadducees only accepted the law. And you'll notice they use the law.

Teacher Moses wrote to us. They use the law as the basis of the authority for saying,

since Moses, who we accept, taught such and such a thing. And that would certainly be inconsistent with a doctrine of resurrection.

Therefore, you know, on the authority of the law itself, we reject the resurrection. Now, it's going to be interesting is that Jesus in answering them actually goes so far as to quote from the Pentateuch and Moses to show that the resurrection is a true doctrine. But it says Jesus answered and said to them, are you not therefore mistaken because you do not know the scriptures nor the power of God? Two problems here.

One is you don't know the power of God to resurrect the dead. Probably part of their objection to the doctrine of the resurrection had to do with just the logistic difficulties of the doctrine presents, you know, like when someone has died and they've gone back to the dust, they've been eaten by worms. And then those worms are eaten by birds and then the birds die and they're eaten by other worms.

And then those worms are used for bait by a fisherman and a fish eats those worms. And then the fish is eaten by man. And you've got these same atoms that were the dead man have now been the atoms of a worm and of a bird and of a fish and of a man, another man, the same molecules passing through.

Now, when God comes to reassemble all the bodies again, how is he going to get all this put back together? Right now, in my opinion, that's not a problem for God. Because nothing is too complex for God to do, but it does raise interesting questions. People often talk about the case of and there are real cases like this where an apple tree growing in a graveyard actually sends its roots through a corpse that's buried there and draws nutrients from that dead body into its apples.

And then another man eats the apples. And so he's got some of the same atoms that were in that corpse now part of his body. Now, those kinds of things make it seem difficult to imagine how God could raise all the dead with those kind of complexities.

But that's only a problem if you don't know the power of God. But they also didn't know the scriptures, he said. Now, see, they didn't recognize all the scriptures.

They only recognized the Torah. They didn't recognize the Psalms and the prophets as scripture. So he said, your problem is you're you're limiting yourself in your knowledge of what of what the scripture teaches.

And of course, you've got a limited appreciation for the power of God, and therefore you're making a big mistake for when they rise from the dead. They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of heaven. So that solves that problem right there.

Now, no Pharisee could have given that answer. You know why? No Pharisee would have known that. There's nothing in the scriptures of the Old Testament that say that when

you rise from the dead, you're like the angels and there's no marriage in the resurrection.

That's a new revelation Jesus is giving. He's not restating something that God had said before, he's now giving an answer from directly from heaven. Pharisees couldn't give that answer, but once it's been given, this conundrum has been solved.

The woman has had seven husbands in her lifetime, but she's not going to have any husbands in the resurrection. And that means, of course, that marriages that are contracted on earth are not going to continue in eternity in the resurrection. There is it will be like the angels of heaven who don't marry, he said.

But he didn't finish there. After he answered their actual question, he comes back at them using the law of Moses. The one part of scripture they do acknowledge to show that even that law proves the Sadducee and Doctrine's wrong.

He says, but concerning the dead that they rise. Have you not read in the book of Moses, your book in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to Moses saying, I am the God of Abram, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now, of course, Abram and Isaac and Jacob had been long dead before Moses was born and before he met God of the burning bush.

And yet here he meets God long after the death of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And God's still saying, I'm the God of these men. And Jesus comments, he's not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.

You are therefore greatly mistaken. Now, what's he saying? He's saying it is a given that God isn't the God of dead men, because to say that somebody is your God means you worship him. Dead men don't worship if they're really dead.

He remained he was the God that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob worshipped when they were alive. He is also the God they worshipped after they were gone in the days of Moses. I am now the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

And he's not the God of the dead. The implication is they are alive. In fact, in one of the parallel Gospels, it says for all men live to him.

Meaning even after they're dead, everyone who's ever lived is still living before God. In some sense, now, how this answers the question of the resurrection is somewhat disputable because one could argue, OK, suppose we allow that Jesus is saying that in the days of Moses, long after the death of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that God is saying that they were still alive. Somewhere in some state, let's say their spirits were alive in Hades or something like that.

How does that prove the resurrection? I mean, that would perhaps prove what we might

call soul survival after death. But to say that the soul survives somewhere after death isn't the same as the doctrine of the resurrection. The doctrine of resurrection is that bodies rise from the dead, a different doctrine.

So we have to figure that somehow Jesus thought this argument he made addressed the Sadducees errors. One way to take it is this, that the Jews were not like the Greeks. The Greeks believed that the body was a prison to the spirit or to the soul and that death was a welcome release from the body and that the soul lived on eternally after death without being in captivity to a body.

But the but the Jews didn't have that concept. The idea of a disembodied soul was not their idea of having a good time. They wanted to be in bodies living in a very tangible, palpable earth, a perfect paradise, a kingdom of the Messiah.

And their hope was to live, at least those who believe in the resurrection, was to live forever. But if it could be shown that Abram, Isaac and Jacob were still alive somewhere in spirit, it would be clear that that wouldn't be the thing that God has in mind for them forever. He must intend, since he has kept them in existence, that there is a future disposition of their of their lives in a resurrection someday.

That's kind of a convoluted and complex way of applying his argument. And I mean, it could be that that's what you think of it. That's that's how I've often heard it explained.

But I think it may be this, that the Sadducees' problem was not just that they didn't believe in the resurrection, but in the other gospels, when it tells us the Sadducean beliefs, we're told they didn't believe in the resurrection. They didn't believe in angels or spirits. Now, notice in his answers, when people are resurrected, they're like the angels.

No, they didn't believe in angels. He's just he's just, you know, he's just in their faith about everything they're wrong about. Well, there is a resurrection, but they don't get married because they're like the angels.

And you don't believe in angels either, do you? Well, and you also don't believe in spirits, but you're wrong about that, too, because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were still alive somewhere in the days of Moses. It must have been their spirits. In other words, what the Sadducees are wrong about is everything.

They're not just wrong about the resurrection, doctor, they're wrong about angels and they're wrong about the existence of spirits. The commentaries about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob make the most sense if what he is saying is their spirits are still alive. They had died, but they that they were still alive in some place in some form when God spoke to Moses and said he's their God still.

And I believe that what Jesus is implying is they still are alive. Their spirits are. Oh, but you don't believe in spirits either.

But you then are not reading Moses very carefully. You're not paying attention to what God said at the burning bush, if you think there aren't spirits. And if you're wrong about that, then it appears that your whole doctrinal system is in error.

And so I don't think that the comment he makes about the burning bush incident is there specifically to support the resurrection doctrine, but simply to show all the ways in which the Sadducees were missing the truth. Because they did not know the scriptures and they did not know the power of God. They were wrong about the resurrection.

They were wrong about angels and they were wrong about spirits. And so that this is the only time we read of that the Sadducees ever confronted Jesus. It's the first and last time it was the Pharisees usually who confronted him.

But on this occasion, the reason the Sadducees did, because Jesus happened to agree with the Pharisees on this particular point of the resurrection. And so they brought their favorite question on the subject, I'm sure, their favorite argument, and Jesus dismantled it rather handily. But, of course, his answer could only be considered as as useful if you recognize him as what he is, someone who could speak directly from God and say, oh, well, what no one knows but me is that in the resurrection, people don't get married.

You won't find that in the Bible, but you don't need to. I'm telling you, it's true, you know, on my own authority. You know, as the Messiah, as the son of God.

But Jesus gives them an answer that works and it's silent to them. They never come back to him. But there are others who do.

There's still further confrontation in the rest of this chapter. We'll have to take that another time because of the way time has gotten away from us here.