



Sermon Overview

Mark presents a series of seven conflict stories between Jesus and the religious leaders. These conflicts extend to the end of chapter 12 and resemble the conflict stories of 2:1–3:6. As in the earlier Galilean controversies, in the Jerusalem controversies, Jesus acts with incomparable authority, providing both hearers and readers with glimpses of his messianic consciousness; but unlike the Galilean controversies, the Jerusalem controversies are all set in the temple and in opposition to the powerful religious authorities housed there. In the present section, Mark moves from Jesus' opposition to the temple complex to the religious leaders themselves. The religious authority that Jesus opposes is centered in the Sanhedrin, the influential judicatory of seventy-one leaders that dominated Jewish religious and even political life to some degree. The Sanhedrin is presupposed in the controversy in 11:17-33 and in the parable in 12:1-12. Three subsequent stories are targeted to Pharisees (12:13-17), Sadducees (12:18-27), and scribes (12:28-40), the three groups that comprised the Sanhedrin. Traps are laid and snares are set to catch the Galilean teacher. Even more remarkable than their cleverness are Jesus' responses.

He does not mount a counterstrategy of evasion and escape. Rather, he joins the field in a final attempt to reveal himself rather than defend himself to those who would judge him rather than understand him. The section concludes with a story of a powerless and penniless widow in 12:41-44 whose faith moved her to give her whole life, an ironic but crowning contrast to the powerful but faithless religious authorities.¹

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Getting Started

1. How do you usually deal with conflict, someone thinking you're wrong or disagreements with others? What does the reality of Jesus' power and authority in all situations tell us about how we deal with conflict?

¹ Edwards Jr., James R.. The Gospel according to Mark (The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC)).
Eerdmans Publishing Co

Starting with God

2. Read verses 11:27-33. What are they asking Jesus? Why would this group be so concerned about it? Why is Jesus' answer so effective?

3. Read Mark 12:1-12. Why is this parable spoken to religious leaders, and how does it follow from the previous discussion?

4. Also from verses 1-12, what remarkable claims is Jesus making for himself in the parable of the vineyard?

5. What does the account in Mark 12:13-17 have in common with the previous accounts?

6. What can we learn about life after death according to Jesus in Mark 12:18-17?

7. In verses 28-30, why is Jesus' response to the scribe so amazing to them? What does this teach us about ourselves?

8. Read verses 32-34. In what way is the scribe's statement so wise, and why does Jesus say he is near the kingdom?

9. Read verses 41-44. Why does Mark put the story of the widow here?

Prayer

*Father God,
Thank you for your sovereign authority in this life and the life to come. Please give me your perspective of the important things in this world that I may be pleasing to you and bring glory to you and your purposes. Change my heart to trust in you with wisdom and sincerity.
Amen.*