

v.11:1-3 *And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring [him]. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.*

Continuing to travel west from Jericho, Jesus, the large group accompanying him, as well as the large crowd that is now following him descend upon the town of Bethany. Bethany was about two miles east of Jerusalem and on the eastern side of Mt. Olivet.

- a) *Jesus dines in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper. It is the meal at which Jesus is anointed by Mary. (Mark chooses to tell this story as a flashback in chapter 14) Early the next morning, Jesus sends two of his disciples to the town of Bethphage which was on the western side of Mt. Olivet. ("the village over against you")*
- b) *The instructions given to the two disciples is to bring to Him a colt that they would see tied-up as soon as they entered the town. John tells us that the colt was the offspring of a donkey which was also brought along. This was all in fulfillment of prophecy. (Matt. 21:1-5)*
- c) *So, the donkey was both symbolic and prophesied. The horse was an animal of war, but Jesus came on the colt of a donkey. He was a Messiah of meekness and peace. (Zech. 9:9-10)*
- d) *Further instructions given, was that if or when they were asked about their actions they were to simply say that it was the Lord that needs to borrow the animals and would return them when He was done with them.*

v.11:4-6 *And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.*

The disciples went their way and upon entering the town found the animals secured by the door of a residence and began to untie them. Luke tells us it was the owners who questioned the disciples as to what they were doing. The disciples answered as Jesus had directed them, and they were allowed to proceed.

- a) *Everything had happened exactly as Jesus had predicted. In all probability the owner of the animals was familiar with Jesus, and so, upon hearing it was Jesus who needed the animals let them be taken. If this was not the case then supernatural forces are again at work for someone would not let strangers walk off with two of their animals.*

v.11:7-8 *And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed [them] in the way.*

The two disciples bring the colt to Jesus as he had requested. Garments are laid or draped over the animal's back and Jesus takes a seat upon it. Others who were with Him laid their garments before Him in the road. Some cut down branches and likewise laid them in His path.

- a) *This was it! The time had finally arrived! They were going to Jerusalem! This realization stirred-up the hearts of the multitude that was traveling with Jesus. All of the mighty works that they had seen were brought to their minds. They rejoiced and sang loud praises to God as they descended from the Mount of Olives. (Luke 19:37)*

v.11:9-10 *And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed [is] he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed [be] the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.*

Many pilgrims had already arrived in Jerusalem. The talk within the city centered upon Jesus having raised Lazarus from the dead. As soon as word got out that Jesus was now approaching the city, a great multitude of people poured out of Jerusalem to go out and meet Him.

- a) *Upon meeting up with Jesus the multitude turned and went before him, waving palm branches and joining in the songs of praise sung by those who followed. So basically, two huge crowds converge and usher Jesus into the city. (John 12:12-13, 17-18)*
- b) *The songs of the multitude along with their shouts are messianic in nature. The people believe that the kingdom of God is upon them. There are no words to describe the euphoria and excitement of the moment. The feast of the Passover that they were going to Jerusalem to celebrate was itself a feast of deliverance. Was the One who had the power to raise the dead coming to liberate them and to restore the kingdom?*
- c) *"Hosanna" can be interpreted "save, now." Their cries amounted to a prayer directed to God for full and immediate deliverance. They called Jesus the King of Israel who would re-establish the kingdom of David. They quote Psalm 118 which reflected their thoughts and expectations. (Ps. 118:22-26)*

Jesus was their Messiah coming to liberate them not from the Romans but from their sin. He was coming to establish His kingdom, not an earthly kingdom, but the spiritual kingdom of God. In reality, He was coming to achieve something far greater than anything they could have imagined. He was coming to liberate them and the world from sin and death.

v.11:11 *And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.*

As Jesus enters the city a curious thing occurs. Just as quickly as the euphoria had started, it now comes to an end. What is called the "triumphant entry" was obviously energized and orchestrated by God in fulfillment of prophecy. It was a tribute by God to His Son.

- a) *It is as if the crowd didn't even realize the words that were coming from their mouths for when they are questioned by those in the city He is no longer the Son of David, but simply the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee. (Matt. 21:10-11) There is no plausible human explanation as to how such euphoria could so quickly be reduced to basically a non-event. (Luke 19:39-40)*
- b) *Jesus enters the temple and literally "looked around at everything." He surveyed everything and all that was going on. Implied is that He was making judgments and assessments. Being late, He decided to forgo any action or teaching until tomorrow. He and the disciples retreated back to Bethany for the night.*
- c) *It was not yet His time. The day, because of the crowds, afforded Him protection from those who sought to take Him. The one night that He would remain in the city was the night that He would be taken.*

Jesus arrived into the city with such fanfare that the Jewish leaders concluded that they had waited too long to take Him and that all would be lost. (John 12:19) The Pharisees believed that their worst nightmare had come true. They were convinced that He was not the Messiah, and so, if the people followed Him the Romans would quickly subdue the insurrection as Jesus would be powerless against them. They believed they would then lose their power and the nation would be dissolved. (John 11:47-53)

v.11:12-14 *And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not [yet]. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard [it].*

The next day Jesus and his apostles leave Bethany and set out for Jerusalem. In contrast to the previous day the approach they city with no fanfare, but proceed virtually unnoticed. Subjected to the frailties of the humanness He had taken on, Jesus is hungry.

- a) *He spots a fig tree in the distance because it is full of leaves. This was not the time for figs, however, the early figs appear at the same time as the foliage and sometimes even precede the leaves. So a fig tree at this time of the year with leaves was unusual.*

- b) *Was the Father providing Him a meal? The leaves were a virtual guarantee that figs would be found. They go out of the way, but upon reaching the tree they find that although it is in full foliage there are no figs.*
- c) *Jesus delivers a curse upon the tree. He who gave the command to be fruitful and multiply now commands that this particular tree never grow fruit again. The apostles hear His words, but do not question Him.*
- d) *Although the actions of Jesus in this instance are not explained, most commentators agree that the fig tree is probably symbolic of the city of Jerusalem. Viewing the city from afar off it offered great promise that it was bearing spiritual fruit. Especially at this time of Passover the city was in full bloom, so to speak. The city was alive with prayer, sacrifices were being offered, the temple was full of worshippers, but there was no fruit. All was being done in vain. (Is. 1:21-23)*
- e) *This would agree with the parable of the fig tree that appears in the gospel of Luke. A fig tree, although given the greatest of care for several years never would provide fruit. It would be given a final chance, but then cut down. In the parable, the fig tree was representative of the nation of Israel. (Luke 13:6-9)*
- f) *So, in effect, this cursing of the tree represented a cursing or final judgment of Jerusalem, which in turn was representative of the nation of Israel. Jesus had come for the final time and the nation didn't respond, therefore, the city would never bear fruit, but would be destroyed. (Jer. 8:13)*

v.11:15-17 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry [any] vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus proceeds to enter into the temple. He immediately begins to throw out the sellers and the buyers. He turns over the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves. This was the second time He had cleansed the temple in this manner. John provides the account, which also took place during the Passover at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. (John 2:13-17)

- a) *Not only was this activity taking place in the temple, but the whole process was driven by dishonesty and corruption. One could bring his own animal to the temple to sacrifice, but the priests needed to inspect the animal and approve it. The priest would not approve animals*

brought by individuals forcing them to buy from vendors, who, in turn, would give a percentage of their sales to the priests. People no longer brought their own animals which created this huge market especially during feast days.

- b) Since pilgrims came from all over to attend the feast and only Jewish currency could be used in the temple a market for moneychangers was also created. So the people were cheated by the moneychangers and gouged by the vendors all with the approval of the priests who lined their pockets with all the kickbacks.
- c) Furthermore, because of the vastness of the temple individuals were using the outer courts as a shortcut or a cut-through. They were carrying all manner of vessels and other things through the temple out of mere convenience. Jesus stopped them turning them back and forbidding such practices.
- d) At this busy time the scene must have been one of total chaos as men attempted to pick-up their money as the animals were being herded out of the temple. Money rolling around, animals running wild, doves flying about, and all as Jesus is quoting scripture, justifying his actions.
- e) Proclaimed by Isaiah to be a house of prayer for all people, the present generation had made the temple a den of thieves with their illicit practices. (Is. 56:7)

v.11:18-19 *And the scribes and chief priests heard [it], and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. And when even was come, he went out of the city.*

The vendors and moneychangers no doubt ran directly to the leadership, especially the chief priests who encouraged their activities. Jesus had directly and publicly attacked their corruption accusing them of defiling the temple of God.

- a) There was an open warrant out for Jesus' arrest, but they feared Him. He was popular with the people, for His teaching was unlike anything they had ever heard. The day before He had proven that He had the ability to mobilize the people. Why Jesus hadn't taken advantage of the situation the previous day was probably one of the questions that plagued them. What was Jesus up to? They must move cautiously.
- b) It not yet being His time, Jesus also proceeds cautiously. With the coming of evening He and His apostles again left the city.

v.11:20-21 *And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.*

They probably spent the night in Bethany, for the next morning they took the same route past the fig tree. They notice that the tree that yesterday was green and full of leaves is now completely withered. In fact, it was dead, being dried-up from the roots.

- a) *The apostles are surprised by what they observe. No doubt they were used to making idle threats and curses, but nothing like this ever became of them. Peter reminds Jesus that this was the tree He had cursed only yesterday and in doing so questions Him as to how this was possible.*

v.11:22-24 *And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive [them], and ye shall have [them].*

Jesus takes this opportunity to encourage the apostles in their faith. The withered fig tree together with the simple command to have faith in God is meant to demonstrate to them the importance of faith in their lives, the power of faith and the role it could and would play in their future as His followers.

- a) *Matthew tells us that when the apostles saw the fig tree withered, they marveled. (Matt. 21:20) The question is, "Why?" They saw Him command the wind and the waves. They witnessed Him multiply loaves and fishes to feed thousands. They observed as He healed every disease and handicap known. He raised the dead. Peter, the spokesman here, walked on water until his faith failed him. (Matt. 14:29-31) After all this, they marvel at a withered fig tree?*
- b) *Earlier, when they had failed to cast out a demon, Jesus, in frustration, indicted the entire generation of being faithless. Later, He explained to His apostles that prayer and fasting, that is, a relationship with God based on faith was necessary. (v. 9:19, 28-29)*
- c) *Just like the crowds, the significance of all they had experienced was still beyond them. They didn't understand that Jesus' power lie in His prayer and communion with God. Jesus possessed perfect faith, completely entrusting Himself to the will of the Father.*
- d) *Jesus makes a sensational statement to get their attention and to try to get them to*

understand the power of faith in God. One with perfect faith could command Mt. Olivet to be cast into the Dead Sea and it would be done. Likewise, any prayer believed in, and not accompanied with doubt would be answered. However, even the Christian's faith is weak and in our humanness doubt reigns. The father of the demon possessed boy understood the fragile nature of belief and knew the belief required had to come from outside himself. (v. 9:23-24)

- e) *Jesus is not talking about faith in oneself, that is, in one's ability to keep all doubt from creeping into their minds, but faith in God. Only God can erase doubt and guide prayer. Only He can make our prayers truly effectual.*

"Jesus was not speaking about faith or faith in oneself, both of which foolish and unscriptural ideas are popular today. He was speaking about faith in the true God and in God alone, not faith in one's dreams, aspirations, or ideas of what he thinks ought to be."

"True faith is trusting in the revelation of God. When a believer seeks something that is consistent with God's Word and trusts in God's power to provide it, Jesus assures him that his request will be honored, because it honors Him and His Father." John MacArthur

v.11:25-26 *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*

Continuing to instruct His apostles on effectual prayer, He reminds them that not only faith, but a forgiving spirit is also a prerequisite. In an "eye for an eye" culture this was once again novel teaching, and so, a concept they had to be reminded of often.

- a) *A good portion of what is called the "sermon on the mount" deals with forgiveness shown towards others. The culture was one of grudges, revenge, and restitution, but they, as believers, and so, receivers of God's mercy and forgiveness, were to be likeminded toward their fellow man. (Matt. 5:23-24, 38-45, 6:14-15)*
- b) *An unforgiving spirit characterized by malice and hate can be a destructive and all consuming force in one's life. It affects not only one's prayer life but also one's health, and as stated here, affects how God will in turn deal with you. The parable of Jesus about the king and his dealings with the servant who owed him an insurmountable debt points out this truth clearly. (Matt. 18:23-35)*
- c) *Every believer has been forgiven an insurmountable debt and Jesus insists that this fact be ever before our eyes in our dealings with others. Once again, His example is meant to shut every mouth and negate every possible excuse. Believers are to be a forgiving people. It is a mark and a proof of our faith.*

- d) *As John MacArthur states, "The sin of an unforgiving heart and a bitter spirit forfeits blessing and invites judgment." An unforgiving spirit invites God's chastisement. The believer has been judicially forgiven for his sins. This mercy is irrevocable by God's own word, however, the believer depends on the daily mercies of God as to the consequences associated with his many sins. This is the arena where God may choose to withhold His mercy and forgiveness in judgment of an unforgiving heart.*

v.11:27-28 *And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?*

For the third straight day, Jesus and the apostles enter Jerusalem and proceed to the temple. Matthew and Luke tell us that He was interrupted as He was teaching while Mark says He was walking. In all probability Jesus taught as He walked in the courts of the temple.

- a) *The leaders would not dare arrest Him while He publicly taught, but sent a delegation to question Him. We saw how with the triumphal entry the leadership had actually despaired thinking they had lost every chance to take Him, but were now again encouraged as over the past several days His momentum had miraculously waned.*
- b) *This was definitely a planned attack against Him as the three component parts of the Sanhedrin were present. The chief priests consisted of former high priests or those appointed to various positions of importance by the reigning high priest. The scribes were those who studied, interpreted and taught the law, while the elders were people of prominence, they were the lay members of this governing body or Sanhedrin.*
- c) *The plan was to discredit Jesus in front of the people. They were the Sanhedrin, that is, the authority as to teaching and religious matters. Implied in their question, "By what authority doest thou these things," is that Jesus did not have their authorization. They did not sanction Him or in any way give their approval to His doctrine. What were His credentials?*
- d) *"These things" probably include the praise He had accepted during the triumphal entry as well as His cleansing of the temple the day before. It probably also included His claims and His general teaching which they had obviously interrupted with this confrontation.*
- e) *If Jesus claimed no credentials or authority the people would lose respect for Him thinking Him to be some rogue teacher, on the other hand, if He claimed authority directly from God He could be proclaimed guilty by the Sanhedrin of blasphemy.*

v.11:29-30 *And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was [it] from heaven, or of men? answer me.*

The leadership never asked Jesus an honest question for their goal was to trap Him. They asked Him questions that no matter what His answer He would alienate some portion of His followers or play into the hands of His enemies. As seen above, this latest question is no exception.

- a) *In his wisdom, Jesus' strategy was to ask a counter-question that would expose them for what they were. This is the sixth instance in this gospel in which Jesus answers them with a question, the most recent being in chapter 10 verses 2-3.*
- b) *This particular instance is somewhat different, for Jesus precedes His question with a challenge. He tells them that He will directly answer their questions as to His authority if they answer the one question He will pose to them.*
- c) *With His question concerning the baptism initiated by John, which in effect was a question as to where John's authority came from, Jesus puts His inquisitors in the same "no win" situation in which they had placed Him. Was the baptism initiated by John, God ordained or was it of John, that is, something he initiated on his own. Jesus demands an answer.*

v.11:31-33 *And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all [men] counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.*

John the Baptist was a controversial individual within Judaism, like Jesus, he was at odds with the leadership, but very popular with the people. Both Jesus and His predecessor exposed the hypocrisy of the leadership, while finding worth in the people, acknowledging that they could think for themselves and come to proper conclusions.

- a) *"They reasoned with themselves," that is, with the question of Jesus they called a side bar. They couldn't answer hastily, but had to think this through. Mark shared with his readers both their logic and conclusion.*
- b) *If they answered that John the Baptist was of God, that is, sent by God as a prophet to call for the repentance of the nation, as did the prophets of old, then Jesus would counter by asking them why they didn't believe in John. By acknowledging John they would have to acknowledge Jesus whom John baptized and proclaimed to be greater than he, so acknowledging the ministry of John in any way was out of the question.*

- c) *On the other hand, if they took a stand against John as having been a prophet of God, the people would turn on them. John was beloved of the people and had a profound impact upon them as the forerunner of Jesus. The leadership, at least publicly, stayed neutral on John for this reason. They really didn't have to take a stand on John for he stayed in the wilderness and with his death at the hand of Herrod no longer had to deal with him.*
- d) *They conclude that they cannot answer the question, and so, reply that they do not know or cannot say where John's authority came from. In that case, Jesus informs them that He does not have to tell them the basis of His authority. In His wisdom, He once again beats them at their own game.*

v.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.*

Having shut the mouths of the leaders, at least for the time being, Jesus continues to teach in the temple. As was His custom, He spoke to them in parables. This particular parable pertains to the very leaders of the nation whom He had just confronted. As we will see at the conclusion of this parable, the leaders were still in the crowd and knew that it was directed at them.

- a) *A certain man, who is representative of God, planted a vineyard, which is the nation of Israel. He did everything right, sparing no expense, while providing everything needed to experience success. The hedge offered protection, keeping the vineyard safe from outside dangers. Likewise, God kept Israel separate from the nations offering them protection through His laws and statutes.*
- b) *He provided all of the necessary equipment, digging and building the winepress, just as God had provided the nation of Israel with the proper structure and framework. God was the nation of Israel's high tower providing them advance warning and a course of action.*
- c) *Finally, the man leased it out to tenant farmers and went away. The tenant farmers represent the leaders of Israel, that is, scribes, Pharisees, chief priests and elders. They were to care for God's possession and to make sure a return on His investment was realized.*

v.12:2-5 *And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught [him], and beat him, and sent [him] away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded [him] in the head, and sent [him] away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.*

The owner, who lives abroad, then sent a servant to those who were in charge of his vineyard to take an accounting, but instead of being accommodated and respected, he was caught, beaten and sent away.

- a) *This happens many times to many of the owner's servants and ambassadors who are representative of the prophets, that is, those sent by God to check on their progress and are to take an account.*
- b) *The treatment afforded to the owner's representatives became progressively worse. They were not only beaten, but stoned and even killed. They were shamefully treated simply because they were the voice of authority representing the Master. The leaders wanted to keep all of the glory and benefits of this great vineyard to themselves forgetting that they were merely caretakers.*

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

The owner, exercising the greatest of patience and longsuffering, decides to send his only beloved son. Surely these evil men would recognize his son, repent for their past actions, treat him with respect and finally give an account, that is, give the master his due.

- a) *Being beloved, he was the image of his father. He wielded and exercised the father's authority and backed with all of the father's resources. It was as if the owner had come himself. If they disrespected the son, it would be as if they disrespected the father. How could they not reverence him? (Col. 1:15, 2:9; John 15:23-24)*

v.12:7-8 *But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed [him], and cast [him] out of the vineyard.*

Jesus was the beloved Son sent by the Father, the image of the invisible God coming with all power and authority. They heard His wisdom and observed the miracles performed by His hands. He proclaimed to them openly His oneness with the Father.

- a) *The Son was sent to this particular generation of caretakers, but instead of reverencing Him they plotted to kill Him. In their blindness they believed the nation was theirs to do with as they pleased. They believed the benefits of the nation belonged to them.*
- b) *In this parable Jesus offers a veiled prediction of His death as He says, "They took [the son] and killed him." They would take Jesus outside the walls of the city and crucify Him with the premise that by killing Him they would save the nation for themselves. (John 11:48-50)*

v.12:9 *What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.*

The question posed by Jesus, "what shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do?", was meant to touch the sense of justice of everyone in the crowd. The answer was obvious. It is the same response Nathan the prophet extracted from David with his parable.

- a) *In Matthew and Luke it is the crowd that answers. The parable had produced the proper response that Jesus is merely confirming in Mark's gospel account. (Matt. 21:41)*
- b) *The owner would triumph for the evil husbandmen were no match for the owner's power and wrath. They would be killed and the vineyard would be lent out to others who would prove to be faithful.*

- c) *Those leaders and the nation would meet their destruction. The killing of Jesus being their final act of defiance. The vineyard or the people of God would be given over to the gentiles and those Spirit filled leaders that would promote growth and fruit bearing.*

v.12:10-11 *And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?*

Jesus quotes from the Psalms, in particular Psalm 118 which speaks about how all of the nations despised Israel and yet it became chief among nations, emphasized is that it was the Lord's doing. By quoting this scripture Jesus claims Himself to be this scriptures final fulfillment.

- a) *Jesus predicts His triumph and resurrection. They would reject Him and kill Him, but by the power and will of God He would rise to the place of prominence.*

v.12:12 *And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.*

The leaders knew that this particular parable was spoken against them. They knew that He claimed to be of the Father and that He believed them to be as the husbandmen in the parable.

- a) *They knew the scriptures and the similarity between the parable and the indictment brought against the nation by Isaiah. (Is. 5:1-7) He boldly told them that their rejection of Him did not matter, predicting that He would triumph and be exalted.*
- b) *Their anger kindled they sought to take hold of Him right there. In view of His prediction that the Son would be killed they were going to do it anyway! However, the people's anger was also kindled by this parable as they also had at least a partial understanding. They may have feared that Jesus would fully enlighten the crowd to the meaning of the parable, and so, they angrily walk away.*

v.12:13. *And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in [his] words.*

After the previous confrontation the enemies of Jesus quickly re-group. Exactly how much time had elapsed we do not know, but they are now all the more determined to bring Him down.

- a) *A group consisting of Pharisees and Herodians go and try to catch Him in His words, that is, to try to trick Jesus into saying something that would discredit Himself in front of the people or something that might give the authorities grounds to arrest Him.*

- b) *This was an unholy alliance between what amounted to state and religion. (v. 3:6) The Herodians were those of the court of King Herrod. These individuals were Jews only in the most external sense. Herrod was given his power by Rome and few Jews recognized him as a king, however, Jesus posed the same threat to both groups, and so, represented a common enemy.*
- c) *Luke adds that these men were sent as spies. They were undercover, so to speak, pretending to be ordinary people in the crowd. (Luke 20:20) Matthew tells us that they were sent after a meeting had taken place. (Matt. 22:15) So, once again, a calculated attempt to trick Jesus into incriminating Himself, an attempt to gather evidence that could be used against Him.*

v.12:14-15 *And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see [it].*

The deception is apparent as these individuals address Jesus as Master, which could also be interpreted, teacher. Again, pretending to be the common man in the crowd, they begin with a litany of flattery to maybe “soften Him up” or to catch Him off guard.

- a) *Their plan is clever. After having approached Him as members of the Sanhedrin in all of their power and glory, they now take the exact opposite approach coming to Him as common men trying to make Him believe their question to be a sincere concern.*
- b) *Their flattery is quite remarkable for they basically or even ironically tell Jesus that He is truth and one who teaches the way of God in truth. What they are saying is that He teaches the true way that people are to live and to think. Furthermore, they tell Him that He is truthful with everyone, not swayed by status or position. In other words, He speaks His mind which is truth and without partiality. He is the one to go to if seeking a truthful honest answer.*
- c) *Confident that Jesus had let down His guard, they asked the question which amounted to, “Is it against our religious law to pay the tribute tax imposed upon us by Caesar?” They were seeking to mix politics and religion to trap Him.*
- d) *The tribute in question was collected from every adult male Jew in Judea. The coins required bore the image of Caesar who claimed to be divine and the ruler over all men in both a physical and spiritual capacity. One of his titles, “Pontif Maxim” translated “The Highest Priest.” This was the inscription on the coin.*
- e) *The fact that this was not a tax, but a tribute that went directly into the imperial treasury*

was the problem. It reminded the Jews that they were under Roman rule and many felt that by paying the tribute one agreed with the claims of Caesar. In fact, when it was first imposed, a revolt had taken place. (Acts 5:37)

- f) So once again, a well thought out question in which either answer would get Jesus into trouble. Answering that the tax should be paid would alienate Him with the people, while saying the tax shouldn't be paid would expose Him to a charge of rebellion against Rome.
- g) Jesus, in his wisdom, sees right through them and their scheme. Their wickedness, craftiness and their hypocrisy are the words used by the three gospel writers who recorded this event. They had sunk to a new low, pretending innocence in order to trap Him, employing deceit and dishonesty.
- h) Even under the circumstances it was a question that was asked and needed to be answered. Showing them that He saw through their deceit, He indignantly asks them why they continue to try to trap Him or to put Him to the test. He asks for the required coin.

v.12:16-17 *And they brought [it]. And he saith unto them, Whose [is] this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.*
They brought Jesus one of the coins. Didn't Jesus or the disciples have any of the coins? Or maybe, Jesus wanted one of their coins to show them that they possessed them, used them, and readily carried them in their pockets.

- a) Once again, Jesus answers their question with one of His own. Looking at the coin He asks them whose likeness and inscription are in the coin. The stage is set as they answer that it is Caesar's image on the coin. At this point an unnatural quiet probably comes over the crowd as they all anxiously await His answer. Remember, the people are still looking to Him for liberation from Roman rule. Would He now speak words of rebellion?
- b) Jesus tells them to pay Caesar the things that are Caesar's, in other words, the coin has his image on it so it must belong to him. They were not to be a rebellious people, but to submit to worldly authority. (Rom. 13:6-8; 1 Peter 2:13-17)
- c) He qualifies His initial answer, however, with another, that being, "and to God the things that are God's." The emperor should be given his due, but there were things that belonged to God alone. Jesus separated the image on the coin from the inscription of "Highest Priest." They could worship God alone. He only was the Master of their spirit.

- d) They marveled at the wisdom of His answer. A supposedly inescapable trap, an unanswerable question, and yet, He answered it to the satisfaction of all. They had responsibility to the state as well as to God. They were required to fulfill both. It is not a stretch to conclude that even those who asked the question marveled.

v.12:18. Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

Still on the same day (as Matthew informs us) another group approaches Jesus with what can be called a trick question. They were the Sadducees who along with the Pharisees ruled over Israel, however, a rivalry existed between them. The Sadducees were mostly the priests that ministered in the temple.

- a) The main point of contention between the Pharisees and Sadducees was that the latter did not believe in a bodily resurrection. They approach Jesus with a question that their Pharisee counterparts had probably failed to answer, and so, present this time tested question to Jesus in order to make Him look foolish as well as to show up their rivals.

v.12:19-23 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave [his] wife [behind him], and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.

Their question is based on the law given by Moses that if a woman's husband dies before a male child is born to them the brother of the husband must marry the widow. The first child born of this marriage would be considered the child of the deceased. (Deut. 25:5-6)

- a) To what extent this law was still being followed at the time of Jesus is not known. Whether the situation had really come up or whether it was totally fabricated is not known either. At any rate, they present this lengthy story to Jesus in the hope that He would not be able to answer, as well as to point out the problems that a bodily afterlife could create.
- b) The situation refers to woman who's husband died before she could conceive. Seven brothers in succession married the woman in obedience to the law, but she bore no children. The question posed is that in the afterlife, when they are all bodily resurrected, who's wife would she be?

v.12:24-25 *And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.*

Jesus answers immediately and decisively. They are in error, He tells them, for two reasons. The word translated “error” means to wander from the truth and in so doing to deceive oneself. In other words, the truth was there, but they didn’t desire to see it. They wanted to hang onto their prejudices despite proof to the contrary.

- a) They didn’t know the scriptures, that is, they didn’t see beyond the words to grasp the truths contained therein. Second, they didn’t know the power of God. They failed to realize who they were dealing with.
- b) Jesus separates the physical realm from the spiritual and the present world from that which is to come. He tells them that in the next life the resurrected body will be like that of the angels. They will not marry. There will be no such institution, for they will be intimately joined with all believers in the presence of God. (1 Cor. 15:36-44)

v.12:26-27 *And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I [am] the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.*

Jesus is not done with them as He takes them to the scriptures to prove the reality of an afterlife and resurrection. In doing so, He accomplishes something the Pharisees had failed to do in centuries of arguments and reasoning with the Sadducees.

- a) Quoting Exodus 3:6, Jesus refers to God speaking to Moses from the burning bush. He identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob long after all of these patriarchs were dead. In saying God is the God of the living, He proclaims that these men were indeed alive and awaiting the resurrection. He again tells them they are in great error. (Ps. 16:9-11; Dan. 12:2; Job 14:14)

v.12:28. *And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?*

The Pharisees were bitter enemies of Jesus. They were plotting to destroy Him, and yet, they had to give Him credit for His answer to the Sadducees. Matthew tells us that “they heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence.” This was no small feat for it was something they had been unable to do.

- a) Nevertheless, with the defeat of the Sadducees, a Pharisee now presents a question to Jesus. Matthew tells us that this lawyer or scribe was putting Jesus to the test with his question, while Mark says that the individual asked Jesus the question having perceived that He had answered the Sadducees well. (Matt. 22:34-35)
- b) So it would appear from the two gospel accounts that this Pharisee had mixed intentions. He was probably in attendance waiting to try and trap Jesus with a question, but with the defeat of the Sadducees, he began to take notice of the wisdom that Jesus possessed. Was he now taking a genuine interest? Did he now have an earnest desire to hear how Jesus would answer his question?
- c) The question, "Which is the first commandment of all?", was a question they had argued over themselves. According to commentators, many Rabbi's had tried to come up with some sort of summary statement for the approximately 613 commandments that they had defined.

v.12:29-30 *And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments [is], Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment.*

Without hesitation Jesus begins His answer by quoting Deut. 6:4-5. The statement, "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord," is called Shema. It was a very important part of the Jew's life as every synagogue service was begun with these words. Furthermore, the same statement was attached to the doorpost of every Jew's dwelling place. As Hendriksen states, "It is readily understood that the Shema was and is the very foundation of monotheism."

- a) The Lord is one. He has no rivals and His desire is to be loved by man. This then, becomes the whole duty of man whom God created to love Him. God created man with certain faculties. Heart, mind, soul and strength represent the total of these faculties. The repetition of the word "all" demonstrates that loving God is to be the central all consuming focus of man. The love of God should control a man's attitudes, desires, thoughts, words and deeds.

v.12:31 *And the second [is] like, [namely] this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

Although only asked what is the greatest commandment, Jesus quickly adds a second, that being, to love ones neighbor as himself. This commandment "is like" or flows from the first, in that, if one truly loves God he will also love His creatures. (1 John 4:20-21)

- a) God has instilled within man a love for himself. Every man seeks his own comfort and well-being. Every man has a self-preservation instinct. Every man knows what he would want or

desire in a situation and is to apply that love and knowledge of himself to his dealings with others. He is to treat others as he himself would want to be treated.

- b) *As to the question, “Who is my neighbor?”, Jesus answered with the parable of the good Samaritan earlier in His ministry. In the parable it was a man who was a social enemy of the victim that showed compassion and “went the extra mile” to meet the man’s needs.*
- c) *These are the greatest commandments because love is the greatest of virtues. (1 Cor. 13:13) God defines Himself in the scriptures as love. (1 John 4:7-8) God’s love was the motivation behind our salvation. (John 3:16)*

v.12:32-34 *And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love [his] neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him [any question].*

Whatever the original mindset or the original intention of this man it quickly becomes apparent that Jesus had won him over with the wisdom of His answer. We know this scribe is sincere, for Jesus, the reader of hearts, treats him kindly and offers him encouragement.

- a) *The word translated “well” is in the original an exclamation. The answer of Jesus opens the man’s eyes and arouses emotion. It is as if the scribe himself had been contemplating this question for some time and Jesus had just provided him the answer. He exclaims what amounts to , “WOW!”*
- b) *The scribe treats Jesus with genuine respect in calling Him Master or teacher. In front of all he states that Jesus had spoken the truth, had answered the question magnificently, and repeats Jesus’ answer demonstrating that he understood, while verifying that he totally agreed.*
- c) *The scribe’s mind enlightened, he adds that this law is more important than the main offerings which were totally burnt, and, as a matter of fact, more important than all sacrifices in general.*
- d) *It seems that the man realized that as a scribe he was guilty of majoring on minors. One could know and obey law and ritual without loving God or neighbor. Not motivated in love, such sacrifice was worthless and without meaning. Possibly he now saw familiar passages in a new light. (1 Sam. 15:22; Is. 1:10-18)*

- e) *Jesus both commends him and encourages him by stating to him that he is not far from the kingdom of God, that is, he was heading in the right direction. He was coming to an understanding that would allow him to take the next step. He was approaching the kingdom, but had not yet entered in.*
- f) *In rapid succession, Jesus had answered an age old question on paying Roman tribute, had hushed the mouths of the Sadducees, and had won over one of the scribes. He had proved that despite all of their plotting they were no match for His wisdom. Is it any wonder that no man dared to ask Him any more questions?*

v.12:35. *And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?*

Jesus literally has been putting on a display of the wisdom of God. He has answered all of the questions the various sects of the Jewish leadership have put before Him. Trick questions, supposedly unanswerable questions, as well as questions they themselves had pondered and argued over, He has answered to everyone's satisfaction. One gets the impression they may have run out of questions, so now, Jesus will quiz them.

- a) *Mark's gospel provides an abbreviated account and actually begins with Jesus' comment on His answer to His question which are both recorded on Matthew's gospel. (Matt. 22:41-42)*
- b) *So His question to them is, "Concerning the Christ or the Messiah, whose son or of whose line will he come." They rightly answered that the Christ would be of the line of David. (2 Sam. 7:12-17; Ps. 89:34-37)*
- c) *The follow-up question of Jesus to their answer that he would be of the son of David or of his line is where Mark picks up the story. Jesus answers them, "How can this be? How can the Messiah be David's son or ancestor?"*

v.12:36-37 *For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he [then] his son? And the common people heard him gladly.*

Jesus reasons with them by taking them to Psalm 110:1. He quotes the scriptures first reminding them that it was David who wrote it by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

- a) *In the Psalm, God is speaking to the Christ or the Messiah. We know this because the promise is made to this individual, by God, that He would rule supreme, that is, all enemies would be vanquished and under His subjection.*

- b) *Add this to the established fact that the Messiah would be of the line of David and a problem is created that is pointed out by Jesus. (Is. 11:1-10) David calls this individual "his Lord," so how can He be David's son? He might be David's equal, but David calls Him Lord. How can this be?*
- c) *Jesus does not answer the question. His goal seems to be to get them to start expanding upon their ideas of the Messiah. He was much more than a worldly descendant of David. He was not only the son of David in a worldly sense, but also the Son of God, of David's God. David's son is God's Son! (Acts 2:34-35; Heb. 1:13, 10:12-13) The Messiah's kingdom was beyond the physical. It was spiritual. (Eph. 1:20-23)*
- d) *The ordinary people, that is, those not part of the various sects greatly enjoyed listening to Jesus. They loved it when He answered the religious leaders in all of their pride and arrogance. The question however is, "Were they merely entertained or did they seek to understand the wisdom He put before them?"*

v.12:38-40 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and [love] salutations in the marketplaces, And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

The words, "And he said unto them in his doctrine," indicates that these verses were not a part of the previous discourse. Some amount of time had elapsed, however, it was probably on the same day, possibly in the afternoon or evening as He continued to teach in the temple. The introduction also indicates that what Mark records is but a summary of what was said in His discourse.

- a) *The topic is the Jewish leadership. Jesus tells them to be on their guard, that is, to scrutinize both their teaching and their example. Things may not be as they appear.*
- b) *The message seems to be that just because they are leaders they are not to be trusted. He obviously does not condemn all of their leaders for He presents identifying traits that would expose the hypocrisy of some or probably most of them.*
- c) *The first four identifying factors point out their pride. They love or relish to stand out among the people. They wore priestly attire so that even in the marketplace where such attire is unwarranted they will be readily recognized and receive special greetings. They were not satisfied with a friendly "hello," but craved respect and public recognition.*
- d) *They sought and even expected the chief seats at the synagogues and banquets for the same reasons. They got to parade up to the front through the synagogue or banquet hall as everyone*

watched them. They craved this attention

- e) Greed is another identifying trait. They “eat-up” the money or the estates of widows. Exactly how they did this is not explained. It could be that they were in charge of settling estates and carried out this duty in a dishonest manner. At any rate, targeting the widow was especially heinous.*
- f) Finally, they are hypocrites. Their piety is false. They pray long prayers to appear religious, but they are frauds. It is all just a show to impress. There is no connection between their words and their hearts.*
- g) They boasted that they knew the scriptures and as students of the law had a greater accountability. They should have known that they are to put on love, humility and sincerity. As a result, a heavier sentence would be imposed upon them. (This discourse in its entirety can be found in Matthew 23)*

v.12:41-44 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called [unto him] his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all [they] did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, [even] all her living.

After such a lengthy and emotional discourse it was not unusual for Jesus and the apostles to take a break. It was probably the end of the day for Chapter 13 begins with Jesus leaving the temple.

- a) Jesus rests near the treasury of the temple and simply observes what is going on. There were receptacles there which were marked with exactly what the money put in that particular receptacle would be used for. He observed the wealthy and they put in large sums. A poor widow then makes her way up to the receptacle and puts in what was considered a very small amount.*
- b) The lesson begins as Jesus calls His apostles to Him. “Verily I say unto you,” always signals a truth or a lesson of great importance. It is something He desires the apostles to take note of, contemplate and to understand.*
- c) It is basically another lesson on the spiritual being more important than the physical. True religion and true worship is a matter of the heart. Outward appearances can often be deceiving as in the case of their religious leaders.*

- d) *In this particular case men are concerned with amount. No one is going to get excited over two mites. According to mans point of view what can be done with such a small amount. They might watch the widow and think kindly of her, but never give a second thought to her sacrifice.*

- e) *God, however, greatly acknowledges her sacrifice, for it is in reality a sacrifice. She had given her all, while others gave out of their surplus. This is in no way a rap on the rich, but instead, a praising of the widow. This widow was last in the eyes of men, but first in the eyes of God.*