

Mark 12:1-17 BEING TENANTS + PAYING TAXES

PRELIMS. Christ is at the Temple, just days before His crucifixion. He is walking with His disciples around the temple courts. He has been ‘**accosted**’ by the priests, scribes, elders about **authority**, but they cannot reply to His question about John the Baptist.

BEING TENANTS

After this unpleasant and intimidating ‘encounter’, Jesus tells a parable. A parable is a **story** that has a spiritual meaning/application! I take it we all know that this parable reflected the Israelites who had already killed many prophets, were now trying to *arrest* Jesus and kill Him. The Israelites themselves understood this parable and ***perceived that He had told the parable against them*** [12]

Certainly those who had gathered round Jesus when He was accosted, grasped clearly what He was saying in the parable. So, **why** did Jesus not just simply say, ‘Look, this nation is like: A man who planted a vineyard, and put a fence round it...’? Why did Jesus not **bluntly** say **You** killed all the prophets, and now **you** are about to kill Me? The parable was **so pointed** there was hardly any need for it!

Ans: We only really see the **negative** side of our own characters under **guise**! Jesus knew that telling unbelievers their sin, straight to their face, only makes them resist the truth more than ever! We, by nature, **dislike** being **told** we are **sinner**s! But we can see very clearly that same sin on other people! As Spurgeon says ‘Hunchback sees not his own hunch, but he sees his neighbours’!

Since the Fall, a **covering**, a **prejudice**, has come over our eyes regarding judgment on ourselves! We just don’t see the **negative truth** about ourselves. We can see the **positive** and **good** points in ourselves, in fact we can **exaggerate** the good things, but there is a ‘blindness’, a **defensiveness** against a **negative perception** of ourselves! *Paul to the Cors: *the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ* [2Cor 4:4] To keep them from seeing the perfection (glory) of Christ! You see, it is **when** we see **Christ** in His

purity that we see our own sinfulness! Remember Peter fishing? Jesus said 'Let down your nets for a catch' and Peter objected because they caught nothing all night'. Jesus never said a thing to Peter about his sin - yet Peter *fell down* and said **Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord** [L 5:8] Peter saw something in Christ!

*Paul to Ephs: the Gentiles: *are darkened in their understanding... due to their hardness of heart* [Eph 4:18] Paul was saying that their blindness was *due to their hardness of heart!* This is the **plight** of man - our hearts are hard, it is difficult to **penetrate** our hearts! As in that passage, we **need God...(to shine) in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ** [2C4:6] Unless we get **that** light, we remain in darkness!

It is because of this hardness, that Jesus told the parable - because a parable **can penetrate** where the stark truth **rebounds!** It is truly **amazing** that when we **see our sin in another context**, we **recognise** it for what it is - sin! It took a 'parable' of a sheep stealer, to convince King David the **sinfulness** of his adultery! David really saw and hated the evil of the sheep stealer, by which means he **condemned himself!** And so, here, the priests, scribes and elders *left Him and went away* because they were convicted and had no answer to give!

Notice what Jesus highlighted in the parable making Israel **specialy accountable**. (a) The **several warnings** Israel received through the various servants who came looking for fruit. Finally John the Baptist came. But as a **nation** they **refused** these warnings. **APP** That has applicatiion to the UK! How often have we as a nation **silenced** the voices of those who pointed out our sins! We decry preachers who tell us what God says in His Word whether on the streets or in the churches. We **avoid** the churches that tell us unpleasant truths like the doctrine of hell! **That's killing the prophets!**

(b) In the parable Jesus highlighted God's **patience** in not coming with **vengeance!** The whole purpose of God sending those who point out our sin, is that we would **repent!** It is God's **desire** that we would not die but that we would **repent**. Ezek was commanded *As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the*

*wicked, but that the wicked **turn from** his way and live; **turn back, turn back** from your evil ways, for **why** will you **die**?* [Ezek 33:11]

Finally, **how do you perceive** your life? How do you see your **existence** on this **planet earth**? Do you believe there are **other planets** with life on them? With all our new technology, we **can** now see **how small** our planet is **compared** to all the millions of planets in our galaxy, among all the millions of galaxies!! When you see these **programmes** of the **universe** and photos of the **sun**, how does that **affect you**? Do you see yourself as an **unimportant midget** amidst a huge, vast world of **inexplainable/complex** organisms?

Actually despite the vastness of the universe you are **very important** - and **precious!** God made **you** for Himself - amidst all the millions of stars and galaxies. You are no accident. ***But this passage teaches** us that we **are only tenants** - thats what we are, tenets! Tenants in an ordered world, created for a **purpose!** We are here for a **reason** - and that reason is to **bring glory** to God - we must **bear fruit!** The final prophet John Baptist *bring forth **fruit** in keeping with repentance!!*

And if we **fail** to fulfill that purpose, to bear fruit to God, we will **no longer be tenants!** We will be **put out** of **this** world. **APP** We need to **realise** what it is to be a **tenant!** This world is **not our home!** There **are things** tenants have to **do**. They must **respect** the **wishes** of the **Owner!** The Owner has power. He can put us out! Tenants have to **look after the property** - we have to take care of the earth, it does not belong to us! We must **not damage** it!

But there is something more important! We must keep the **terms** and **conditions** of the 'contract'! Tenants must **pay the rent!** So we, as tenants on God's earth, must give to God the fruit of the harvest. As in the parable, God, the Owner comes **looking for the fruit** of the vineyard. *By this my Father is **glorified**, that you **bear much fruit** + I chose you and **appointed** you that you should go and **bear fruit** and that your **fruit** should **abide*** [John 15:8,16] Are you/I bearing fruit?

PAYING TAXES

Strategy! The Phars tried to **kill** Jesus. But nothing was working.

They needed a good **public reason** for *they feared the people* [12] The crowds liked Jesus (although they didn't put their trust in Him). So the Phars **changed** their strategy! They must now **discredit** Jesus before the **people!** Notice, they *sent to Him* **chosen** men who **hated** Jesus. The **Herodians** joined with the Phars. The Herodians loved pagan art, architecture, athletics. They were not very religious. The Phars were meticulous re their religion. Jesus' preaching condemned them both - the Herods' worldliness, and Phars' self-righteousness.

Notice, unlike the earlier approach, they give Him the title of **Teacher!** [14] Different strategy! They are really trying to 'soften Him up'! They turn to **flattery!** *we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For You are not swayed by appearances but truly teach the way of God* [14b] What slush!!

Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? It was a '**catch 22**' question of course. If He said 'Yes', then He would be offending many **devout** and **patriotic** Jews who believed that giving money to a **foreign** power like Caesar, was **distasteful** and even sinful! If Jesus said 'No', then He would be guilty of **rebellion** against Caesar.

Bring Me a denarius and let Me look at it. And they brought one [15] Now some think that Jesus asked for a denarius, because He did **not** have **one!** And **neither** did His **disciples** have **one!** *Now on one side of the coin there was the head of Tiberius Caesar. Reverse side: Tiberius was seated on a throne with a jewelled crown!

Jesus was saying: 'Yes, pay the tax. Caesar is **due** it!' You have to pay for your Roman roads, Roman peace, courts, police, etc! *So, **why** did Jesus **introduce God?** Because on the side of the coin where Tiberius was seated on the throne, he was **dressed in Priest's clothing** and the words 'Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the **Divine** Augustus', **Highest Priest**'! In other words Jesus was saying 'Do **not** pay Caesar **more** than his **due!** APP Caesar is not due many of the things he claims. He is **no God.** Just as today Government **exceeds** its **legitimate boundaries** by encroaching on **moral/spiritual** issues! Issues which **God** has revealed in **His Word!** APP Big Lesson: We have to give to God **what is due to God!** Praise, honour, glory!