

## Who is Your Final Authority?

**Text:** Mark 11:11-27-12:12

### **Introduction:**

1. In this section of Mark's Gospel, the religious hierarch again attack Christ and His claims. There are four questioners that present four different challenges to Christ. In the first instance, Christ's authority is challenged.
2. Hiebert: "The public teaching in Jerusalem consisted of Jesus' answers to a series of questions asked by His enemies (11:27-12:34), His counterattack on the Jewish leaders (12:41-44), and His commendation of the widow's giving (12:41-44)."
3. Christ refutes His challengers and then exposes the wickedness of their hearts in the parable of the vineyard.
4. We will study this challenge to Christ's authority by the religious leaders in 3 units.

### **I. THE DEFIANCE FROM THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS (VS. 12-14)**

#### **A. The Motivation of the Religious Leaders (Vs. 27)**

1. Verse 18 gives us a window into the hearts of these religious fakes. They were looking for ways in which they could destroy him.
2. The three groups that made up the Sanhedrin are represented in the delegation.
3. This event takes place in the temple.

#### **B. The Question of the Religious Leaders (Vs. 28)**

They ask two questions concerning Christ's authority:

1. What? They inquire as to the character and nature of Christ's authority; of what sort it was. There mention "these things" which was a reference to Christ's cleansing of the temple (Vs. 15-16).
2. Who? They inquire as to the source of His authority, where it came from.

### **II. THE DEFENSE TO THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS (VS. 29-33)**

#### **A. The Counterquestion from Christ (Vs. 29-30)**

1. Asking a counterquestion was a common practice in debates between rabbis.
2. This was not an attempt to evade the question on the part of Christ by changing the subject. In actual fact, Christ was striking at the heart of the issue. If they did not acknowledge and accept the Divinely given authority of the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner, then they would not accept His authority either. After all, John the Baptist pointed to Christ as the Lamb of God and

## Christ the Servant – Mark Series

promised Messiah. If they had accepted John's authenticity then they would have accepted Christ's also.

3. "from heaven" = a ministry of Divine origin
4. "from men" = a ministry of human origin

### **B. The Confounding of the Questioners (Vs. 31-33)**

1. Their reasonings (Vs. 31-32)
  - a. "reasoned with themselves" = they deliberated over how to answer the question. They consider the implications of both possible answers to the question.
  - b. "If we shall say" = their primary concern was themselves and their own position rather than being motivated by which answer would represent the truth.
  - c. Note: This is the mark of the politician as opposed to a true man of God. The politician tailors his answers to ensure popular support. His primary concern is for himself and his own position rather than for the truth.
2. Their reply (Vs. 33)
  - a. "we cannot tell" = their terse expression of their unwillingness to answer the question.
  - b. "neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things" = Christ's reply to their decision. They had failed the simple test. To try and tell these men that His authority was from His Father in heaven would be pointless and futile as their hearts were already calculated not to accept that answer.

## **III. THE DISCOURSE EXPOSING THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS (12:1-12)**

"After putting His questioners to silence, Jesus proceeded to expose their true character." (Hiebert)

### **A. The Story of the Parable (explanation) (Vs. 1-8)**

Let's take a brief walk through the details of the story.

1. The Context of the story. There was a vineyard established.
  - a. A hedge around the vineyard for its protection from thieves, predators and foxes.
  - b. A winepress for processing the grapes.
  - c. A tower for storage, shelter and most importantly for the watchman to be on the look out for threats the vineyard.
2. The Characters in the story. There are four main characters in the story.
  - a. The Owner (lord) of the vineyard – He establishes and owns the vineyard and appoints caretakers for it.

## Christ the Servant – Mark Series

- b. The Owner's overseers – the husbandmen responsible to protect and tend the vineyard to ensure its productivity for the owner.
  - c. The Owner's servants – those sent to retrieve the fruit of the vineyard on behalf of the owner.
  - d. The Owner's son – his wellbeloved and only son who is sent in a final attempt on the part of the owner to appeal to the husbandmen.
3. The Crux of the story
- a. The owner sends his servants repeatedly to receive the fruit that was rightfully his but the husbandmen respond with vicious hostility, beating, injuring and even murdering some of the owner's servants.
  - b. The owner finally sends His only, beloved Son in the hopes they will show Him reverence but the wicked husbandmen rather see it as an opportunity to kill him and then secure the vineyard for themselves.
  - c. The consequences of their blatant disregard for the owner's authority and repeated acts of mercy and longsuffering despite their wickedness is spelled out in verse 9. They would be destroyed and the vineyard would be given to others.

### B. The Substance of the Parable (interpretation) (Vs. 10-11)

Christ's quotation from Psalm 118:22-23 Provides the key to unlock the meaning of the parable. The rejected son in the parable represents Him. Therefore, the key elements of the parable are to be interpreted as follows:

1. **The Vineyard** – represents Israel. The imagery of this parable is clearly drawn from Isaiah 5:1-7. The figure of the vine is used repeatedly in the O.T. as a picture of Israel (**references?**). The hedge, tower etc... picture the abundant provisions God made for Israel's protection and well-being.
2. **The Owner** (lord of the vineyard) – represents God the Father. His longsuffering, patience and mercy with rebellious Israel is highlighted in this parable. A human owner would have immediately evicted the husbandmen from his vineyard based on their treatment of the first servant but God appeals again and again through his servants, giving multiple opportunities for them to repent.
3. **The Husbandmen** – represent the religious leaders of Israel. They were supposed to act in the interests of the Owner and work under His authority and direction. In reality, they were self-seeking, selfish and rebellious against their master's authority. Their rejection of the Owner's Son amounted to a rejection of the Owner Himself. They would be severely judged for their wickedness and the vineyard would be given to others. This literally was fulfilled in A.D. 70 with

## Christ the Servant – Mark Series

the destruction of Israel. Israel is now temporarily set aside as God builds the church mainly comprised of Gentiles (See Rom. 11:25). Israel temporarily forfeited her privileged position when she rejected her Messiah. Matthew 21:43 “Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

4. **The Servants** – Jehovah’s messengers, the prophets, sent to Israel to call her to repentance, and yet they rejected and mistreated them. The history of Israel demonstrates that this is exactly what happened. Note Jesus’ words in Matthew 23:37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, **thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee**, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not.” Stephen traces a similar theme in Acts 7. For example, tradition says Isaiah the prophet was sawed in half at the command of evil king Manasseh.
5. **The Son** – represents Christ. There is a touching revelation of the self-knowledge of the Son of God in this parable. He knew He was the Father’s only Son and the object of His eternal love and delight. The sending of the Son by the Father was the crowning act of God’s grace and mercy. It reveals the unfathomable love of God for Israel and for the whole world.
6. **The Stone** – the quotation from Psalms introduces another figure but the meaning is the same. The builders tasked with building God’s house had rejected the stone of God’s choosing. But that rejected stone would become the Cornerstone. Architecturally, the cornerstone was the most important stone in the structure. It is the stone binding together two adjoining walls.” (Hiebert) Jesus Christ would be crucified but He would rise triumphantly over death and all his enemies.
  - a. Acts 4:11 “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.”
  - b. Eph. 2:20 “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,**”
  - c. 1 Peter 2:6-7 “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,”

### C. The Schooling from the Parable (applications)

1. Lessons about the Character of God:

## Christ the Servant – Mark Series

- a. God loves sinful men. God sent His only Son to redeem all those who will turn in repentance and receive His free gift of salvation.
  - b. God is longsuffering. He gives men generous opportunity to repent. Are you heeding His loving calls to you or are you like the religious leaders and stubbornly rejecting God's offer of salvation?
  - c. God is just. He will severely judge all those who reject His offer of salvation.
2. Lessons about the Christian life
- a. Do we accept God's authority in **all** things? If you are struggling with surrender on a particular issue in your life, the ultimate issue has to do with who is your final authority. Being a Christian means total surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
  - b. What is your attitude to God's servants? Those who are tasked with the responsibility of delivering God's message to you.

**Conclusion:** Are you saved? Will you accept God's invitation to salvation? If you are saved, is there an area in your life that needs to come under Christ's authority?