

I. Introduction

A. Authority, a short history

1. Max Weber: Three types
  - a. Traditional: long-standing custom
  - b. Legal-Rational: from the office, not the person
  - c. Charismatic: leader's personal qualities
2. Today, we tend to decide for ourselves who or what "authority" we want to recognize.
  - a. The government, as long as it conforms to my ideals
  - b. The church, as long as they teach what I feel strongly about
  - c. Experts, only if their expertise follows my experience
  - d. Parents, as long as they respect my right to explore and investigate
  - e. Law enforcement, only if I feel they are protecting me and my interests

\*We tend to think this is new or newish, but really, since the beginning, humanity has questioned and rejected the authority that doesn't fit them. See Genesis 3.

II. Mark 11:27-12:17

A. Jesus' authority challenged

1. Setting
  - a. Temple (court of Gentiles) the day after Jesus clears everybody out
  - b. Widening alienation between Jesus and those who control the temple and the religious life of Israel
2. Vs 27-28: Chief priests, scribes, and elders
  - a. Hostile approach vs open-minded (not different from today)
  - b. "These things...": context of the temple clearing and the manner by which Jesus entered Jerusalem
  - c. In other words, "Who do you think you are and where do you get off doing what you've done?"
3. Vs 29-30: Jesus responds
  - a. Scenario: This isn't a passerby situation. Jesus had established the Court of Gentiles as His Jerusalem classroom, so there is a crowd sitting and listening.
  - b. "I will ask ... answer me ... I will tell ..." This was not Jesus just dodging their questions, it was actually a recognized "move" in Hellenistic and rabbinic debate.
  - c. In Jesus' question, He was connecting the dots between the answer to His authority and John's - and that by John's own teaching, Jesus was greater.
4. Vs 31-33: no safe ground
  - a. Whatever the religious leaders respond with must be linked to the question and answer posed to Jesus.
    - 1) Accept John's authority from Heaven, then accept Jesus' authority from Heaven
    - 2) Reject John's authority from Heaven, then reject Jesus' authority from Heaven
  - b. Religious leaders = prideful, arrogant, and power defensive, but not stupid

- 1) They connected the dots.
- 2) They feared the loss of their own authority because they knew it came from people rather than from God.

\*Our convictions, the way we live our lives, must be anchored in God alone and independent from any culture, nation, tribe, family, or person. Otherwise, we are just like the religious leaders, always on the verge of losing everything because people and their inventions can't be trusted.

- c. No answers today, but the question of authority is settled, at least for today.
  - 1) While there were no answers given, the crowd had an answer.
  - 2) Religious leaders don't know where the prophets' authority comes from? God of course!

\*Immediately following the "conversation," Jesus goes into parable mode.

#### B. Jesus removing authority

##### 1. The parable players

- a. The vineyard: Israel and the long saga of God's dealing with His chosen people
  - 1) Isaiah 5:1-2 allegory, explicitly drawn out, of God's disappointment with His people
  - 2) Here, the vineyard is the setting and the tenants (leaders) are the targets in order to save the vineyard.

\*Jesus' parable has hope for a new beginning but that comes after judgment of the existing regime.

- b. Vineyard owner: God
- c. Tenants: religious leaders
- d. Servants: the prophets
- e. Son: Jesus Christ (played by Himself)

##### 2. The story notes

- a. Vs 1-2: planted vineyard, leased to tenants, and went to collect the fruit (see Leviticus 19:23-25)
  - 1) to retain legal rights, an owner needed to obtain produce from the tenants—an agreed-upon portion from the crop to be surrendered to the owner
  - 2) 1-2, 4, 5 years: enjoy the harvest
- b. Vs 3-8: Owner sends envoys to collect agreed upon produce and is met with opposition.
  - 1) After four years, tenants securely entrenched and refuse the claim of the owner and agreement
  - 2) Owner kept sending envoys as a statement of ownership and authority
  - 3) Foolish of the owner to send son with a different expectation
  - 4) Tenants: if we keep the harvest, we end up with the land as well; if we kill the heir there is no one to inherit the land

##### 3. Jesus lays it down

- a. Rhetorical question (v 9)
- b. Psalm 118:22-23 (vs 10-11)

\*(v11) This is the gospel of paradox, of human amazement at the unexpected work of God. That Jesus demands from us a reversal of human values and expectations, the whole first/last, last/first thing. The stone rejected is the most critical.

- c. And they were seeking to arrest Him (but could not yet because) they feared the people for they perceived (and were aware that the crowd also knew) that He had told the parable against them (so that the crowd was more likely to take His side against them). So for the time being they could take no action, and they leave Him in possession of the field.

### III. Application and challenge

#### A. Significance of the parable

1. Those called to represent God had failed to recognize His long line of servants who showed up to remind them that this whole thing belongs to Him.
2. He finally sent His Son to reveal Himself to His people and they rejected and killed Him.
3. Therefore, God removed them and brought in new “tenants” - the Church!
  - a. Israel is not over.
  - b. Jesus did what Israel refused to do ... salvation to the nations!

#### B. Significance to us

1. Process of becoming comfortable, complacent, rebellious, and finally, to rejection. And at that point, God will act according to His plan and character.

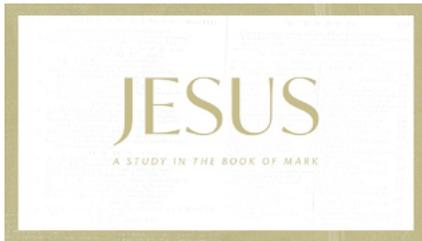
\*Jesus as a servant, then Jesus as the King.

2. God has sent message after message to His Church but we have fallen into the same cycle. Rebellion and rejection are much more subtle than saying “I’m done with Jesus.” Sometimes it looks more like, “Jesus didn’t really mean that for me. It’s different now.”
3. We complain about immorality and our shrinking footprint of freedom—but we have become comfortable in our privilege and become dangerously like those religious leaders questioning Jesus.

\*We’ve forgotten Who owns the vineyard and what His primary activity is.

#### C. Questions:

1. What are you doing in the vineyard?
2. Are you producing fruit for the owner?
3. Have you forgotten or reimagined who owns the vineyard?
4. Have you rejected the messengers God has sent you?
5. How would God evaluate me as a tenant?



## MARK 11:27-12:17

### UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

FEBRUARY 21, 2021 | PASTOR MATT WHITEFORD



#### GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER (USE JUST ONE OR ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS TO CONNECT AS YOU START YOUR CONVERSATION)

**1** How would you describe the attitude toward authority that was taught in your home as you were growing up (i.e., “Because I said so” was the final word; I was given a say in decisions; I had my parent(s) wrapped around my finger; etc.)?

**2** How would you describe your attitude toward authority today?

Sometimes we appreciate the role that authority plays in our lives, and other times it cramps our style. In today’s passage, the religious leaders were offended by the authority Jesus demonstrated and claimed to possess. They had already made the conscious choice to find a way to destroy Jesus. They began by trying to trap Him with a question, and Jesus responded by asking them a no-win question. Either way they answered it would put them at odds with the crowd. This exchange stirred their anger toward Jesus’ authority even further.

#### QUICK REVIEW (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY’S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week’s message, was there anything you heard that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

#### DIG DEEPER (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURE OR COMPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES FROM SUNDAY’S MESSAGE)

**1** Someone read **Mark 11:27-33** in their Bible.

**How would Jesus be in trouble either way He answered the question in v. 28?**

The leaders went right to the heart of the issue and asked the key question: What right did Jesus have to do what He did in the temple? Where did He get His authority for such an act? While not a subtle question, it was still a trap. If Jesus said He acted on His own authority, they could detain Him as a madman suffering from delusions of grandeur. If He said His authority came from God, then they could accuse Him of blasphemy, for which the penalty was death.

**How did Jesus turn the tables on the religious leaders? Why didn’t they give Him a straight answer to His question?**

**2** Someone read **Mark 12:1-12** in their Bible.

**Why would the tenants believe they could inherit the vineyard if they killed the son (v. 7)? How is this parable similar to Jesus’ own situation? Who are the “others” (v. 9) that the owner would give the vineyard to?**

## How did the parable of the tenants answer the religious leaders' question about Jesus' authority?

The leaders knew exactly what part they played in Jesus' parable. They were being cast in the role of the evil tenants who killed the servants (prophets) and the heir. From their point of view, such teaching had to be stopped. Not only was Jesus attacking them, but He was implying claims about Himself (i.e., that He was the Messiah and God's Son) that they could not tolerate.

**3** Someone read **Mark 12:13-17** in their Bible.

## What is the question the Pharisees and Herodians ask Jesus to answer? How is their hypocrisy revealed in the question they ask of Him?

In these conversations Jesus is confronted by three groups of people, the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the Sadducees. The Herodians were loyal to Herod and were interested in political alliances. They weren't fond of religion. On the other hand, the Pharisees were intensely religious. Both the Herodians and Pharisees confronted Jesus with strategic questions, hoping to catch Him making statements that were blasphemous. In doing so, they revealed their own hypocrisy.

The Pharisees were Israelites who believed allegiance should only be to God. The Pharisees believed paying the one denarius tax with a coin that had the face of the emperor on it was blasphemous. In contrast, the Herodians, loyal to their country, knew that if Jesus said people shouldn't pay their taxes, He would be accused of treason.

## What was the response of the Pharisees and Herodians after Jesus answers their question? Why do you think their response was what it was?

### LIVE IT OUT (DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN LIVE OUT THE TRUTHS YOU JUST OBSERVED IN SCRIPTURE)

**1** On a scale of 1 ("I do things my way") to 10 ("I always try to follow Jesus' teachings in every aspect of my life"), how have you been relating to Jesus' authority over your life lately?

**2** What have you been treating as your own that God might call you into account for as He did with the workers in the vineyard?

Pastor Matt asked these questions at the end of the message:

- 3**
- What are you doing in the vineyard?
  - Are you producing fruit for the owner?
  - Have you forgotten or reimagined who owns the vineyard?
  - Have you rejected the messengers God has sent you?
  - How would God evaluate me as a tenant?

Share your responses to those questions, and then share one step you can take to be in better alignment with God in light of your responses. How can this group help you remain focused on taking that step?

### CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time in prayer with your group.

## NEXT WEEK:

Read **MARK 12:28-13:2** before Sunday and your next home group gathering. Remember to take good notes so you are ready to add to the discussion your home group will have!

## PRAISE/PRAYER REQUESTS (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to write the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

## TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of being in a Home Group. Here are some tips to help make group prayer be a life-giving aspect of your group.

**PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME:** Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request or praise during the prayer time. Once a topic is introduced, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it's covered, the group moves on to the next request or praise.

**PRAY MORE THAN ONCE:** If your group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one should be required to pray.

**KEEP PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE:** Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. No one should be required to pray out loud.

### How to Use this Discussion Guide

*This guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and becoming like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.*

*With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel the need to ask every question during your group discussion. This guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your group grow in Gospel community. In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!*

**Visit [cpmodesto.org/groupleaders](http://cpmodesto.org/groupleaders) to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit [cpmodesto.org/homegroups](http://cpmodesto.org/homegroups) and use the Home Group Finder!**

## COMMENTARY

### MARK 11:27-12:17

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**11:27.** The chief priests, the teachers of the law (or scribes), and the elders made up the Sanhedrin, although this would have been a delegation and not the entire body. The chief priests had charge of the temple by the regulation of Old Testament law. It may seem imprudent for Jesus to go into the temple after clearing the merchants from it. But the Sanhedrin was probably afraid of what the crowds would do if they made an attempt on His life at this point. However, they did have the courage to approach Him.

**11:28.** Jesus was not a priest, a Pharisee, or an elder. By what authority, they demanded, had He done these things? The phrase these things probably refers to the things they had just seen - the clearing of the temple and the triumphal entry. They wanted Him to say that He had no authority, that He had acted on His own.

**11:29.** The question Jesus asked them in return was not meant as an evasion. His counter question was a typical practice of rabbis. He told them He would not answer their question until His question had been answered. Even with His counter question, Jesus showed He had a higher authority than those who were questioning Him.

**11:30.** Jesus' question brought up the issue of John the Baptist. The Sanhedrin certainly remembered John's fiery sermons and his insistence that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah. The link answered the leaders' question about Jesus' identity and authority. But He wanted a

Sermon Discussion Guide

response from them. The phrase “Tell me!” is an imperative not found in the other Gospels. It demanded a response, some kind of commitment—one way or the other—from the leaders.

**11:31-32.** The leaders were in a verbal trap, and they knew it immediately. If they answered “from Heaven”, meaning John’s authority came from God, then they would be condemned by the people for not listening to John regarding repentance as well as Jesus’ identification as the Messiah. On the other hand, to say that His authority was not from God was to risk the wrath of the people. The verb for “discussed” means they discussed Jesus’ question among themselves for some time.

According to verse 18, the Sanhedrin feared Jesus. Here, Mark states that they feared the people. They had no faith—only fear—and their fear must have given rise to all their decisions.

**11:33.** In the end, they said the only thing they could say without commitment: We don’t know. They were like the Laodiceans in Revelations 3:16 - lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, playing it safe. Jesus knew their hearts, so He refused to answer their question.

**12:1** The phrase “a man planted a vineyard” points to the song of Isa 5:1-7 in which Israel is symbolized by a vineyard. Tenant farmers and absentee landlords stand for Israel’s leaders.

**12:2-5** Harvest time for a vineyard might be as late as the fifth year after the vines were planted (Lv 19:23-25). The mistreated slaves stand for the prophets.

**12:6** The beloved son in this parable is Jesus.

**12:7** “Come, let’s kill Him” were the words spoken by Joseph’s brothers (Gen 37:20).

**12:8** Matthew (Mt 21:39) and Luke (Lk 20:15) reported that the son was cast out before being killed. Mark’s order (seized him, killed him, and threw him out) indicates they did not give the son a proper burial.

**12:9** The man who planted the vineyard (v. 1) and sent his servants and son is identified as the owner. The word is literally “lord” (Gk kyrios), which is also a title for God. Give the vineyard to others alludes to the upcoming Gospel mission to the Gentiles.

**12:10-11** Jesus concluded by quoting Ps 118:22-23, the first verse of which is also quoted elsewhere (Lk 20:17; Ac 4:11; Rm 9:33; 1Pe 2:6-8). Only Mark and Matthew (Mt 21:42) included Ps 118:23, which adds a strong providential element. “Cornerstone” (lit “head of the corner”) may refer to a foundation cornerstone, the capstone on a column, or the keystone in an arch.

**12:12.** The Sanhedrin did not miss the message of the parable. They recognized that Jesus had claimed divinity for Himself, that He had prophesied destruction against them and their elaborate system, and that God’s blessings would come upon the hated Gentiles. But again, their fear of the people, with whom Jesus was popular, kept them from taking action at this point.

**12:13.** The fact that the Pharisees and the Herodians were sent indicates an approved delegation. The same groups are united in 3:6 in the plot against Jesus in Galilee. They hoped to trap Jesus with a trick question.

**12:14.** The specific tax the Pharisees and Herodians had in mind was the Roman poll tax imposed when Judea became a Roman province in a.d. 6. This tax represented Jewish subjugation to Rome.

**12:15.** If Jesus answered “yes,” He would be seen as pro-Roman and would alienate the crowds. If He said “no,” the Pharisees and Herodians would denounce Him as a revolutionary (Lk 20:20). Jesus was not fooled. He saw their hypocrisy and realized they were testing Him. A denarius was the equivalent of a day’s wages (Mt 20:9-10).

**12:16-17.** The denarius bore an image of Tiberius Caesar (reigned a.d. 14-37) with an inscription professing his divinity. Since Jesus was asked about giving (vs. 14-15), He replied with a lesson about ownership. “Give back” has the nuance of obligation. The coin had Caesar’s image, so it belonged to Caesar. Jesus supported the legitimacy of human government, but He raised the issue to a higher level. He did not identify the things that are God’s, but since humans bear God’s image (Gen 1:27), we have an obligation to give to God that which bears His image - ourselves.