

# Gospel Gems from Mark



## Chapter 12: A busy Tuesday

All of the events in this chapter seem to have taken place on a single day--Tuesday of Holy Week. We see how energetically Jesus continued to teach and preach until the very end of his ministry!



### **Gospel Gem #1: Pay taxes to the pagans? (12:13-17)**

What is unusual about the Pharisees and the Herodians working together to test Jesus? How should we understand their comments about how Jesus was a good teacher with integrity?

Why would the question of taxes be controversial? How were Jesus' enemies planning to use his response against him, no matter what he answered?

What point was Jesus making by having them show him a coin?

Why was it important for Jesus to add, "Give to God what is God's?"

What are some important applications of this conversation for us as citizens of a secular state today?



### **Gospel Gem #2: The resurrection and marriage (12:18-27)**

Mark points out that the Sadducees "say there is no resurrection." How does that demonstrate their purpose in asking Jesus their question?

Look at Jesus' words in verse 24. What double error were the Sadducees making in their thinking?

In what way will the resurrected saints be LIKE the angels? (notice that Jesus does not say that they will BE angels...)

How does Jesus' quote from the story of Moses and the burning bush testify to the truth of the resurrection? What does it show about the whole Bible?

Jesus' words can be difficult for some believers--perhaps especially those who have been blessed with happy earthly marriages. What are some things to remember as we think about his words?



**Gospel Gem #3: The greatest commandment (12:28-34)**

When the teacher asked Jesus which was the most important "of all the commandments", he was not just thinking of 10 but of the whole Jewish Old Testament Law (the rabbis counted 613 separate commandments in the Torah). What did Jesus say was the most important?

Why did Jesus add a second great commandment as well?

What did the teacher correctly realize about these two commandments?

Why did Jesus say that the man was "not far" from the kingdom of God? i.e., Why wasn't the man IN or PART OF the kingdom, if he had given such a good answer?

Why is it helpful to us today to realize that these two commandments are the sum of God's whole law?

This might be a good place to review the three purposes or effects of God's law as we learn it in the catechism. Although these commandments don't save us, why are they still a great blessing of God?

**Bonus questions (if time)**

In the parable of the tenants (12:1-12), whom did the tenants represent? How can this story still apply as a warning to us?

What temptations do pastors and church leaders need to watch out for, based on Jesus' words about the teachers of the law? (12:38-40)

What helpful truths for our Christian financial giving are found in the story about the widow's small offering (12:41-44)?

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## Chapter 12: A busy Tuesday - *answer page*

All of the events in this chapter seem to have taken place on a single day--Tuesday of Holy Week. We see how energetically Jesus continued to teach and preach until the very end of his ministry!



### **Gospel Gem #1: Pay taxes to the pagans? (12:13-17)**

What is unusual about the Pharisees and the Herodians working together to test Jesus? How should we understand their comments about how Jesus was a good teacher with integrity? *These two groups were very different politically--the Herodians supported*

*the rule of King Herod's family as Roman representatives, while the Pharisees were generally very hostile toward Roman rule. Both of them, however, saw Jesus as a threat! Their words to him here seem to be nothing more than empty flattery attempting to catch Jesus off guard.*

Why would the question of taxes be controversial? How were Jesus' enemies planning to use his response against him, no matter what he answered? *If Jesus said "no" to paying taxes, the Herodians could report him to the government as a traitor. If he said "yes", the Pharisees could accuse him of idolatry because he would be robbing God's holy people to support the Romans and their pagan temples and practices.*

What point was Jesus making by having them show him a coin? *The money they were using had come to them from Rome. So in using it to pay taxes, they were merely returning to Rome a part of what was already marked as Roman property! "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's."*

Why was it important for Jesus to add, "Give to God what is God's?" *Some of the Caesars themselves were venerated as gods. Although taxes were to be paid to Rome, God's people were not to follow any part of the false Roman religion. This was an important truth that the early Christians would have to follow--and in some cases paid for it with their lives!*

What are some important applications of this conversation for us as citizens of a secular state today? *Even if a government supports or practices something God says is sinful or forbidden, this in itself is not a reason for a Christian to withhold taxes or financial support. We can be faithful citizens even of an un-Christian government--but we must continue to follow God's Word faithfully in our own lives and worship, regardless of what the government might try to do or forbid.*



### **Gospel Gem #2: The resurrection and marriage (12:18-27)**

Mark points out that the Sadducees "say there is no resurrection." How does that demonstrate their purpose in asking Jesus their question? ***It was not a sincere question; they were trying to set up a fictional scenario that would show how ridiculous belief in a resurrection was.***

Look at Jesus' words in verse 24. What double error were the Sadducees making in their thinking? ***"You do not know the Scriptures or the power of God." Like many people today, these skeptics were not accepting the message of Scripture and did not really believe in the ability of God to do all things. Their religious veneer was really a cover for outright unbelief.***

In what way will the resurrected saints be LIKE the angels? (notice that Jesus does not say that they will BE angels...) ***Just as angels do not marry or have children, in a same way the resurrected people of God will not be called to participate in these things.***

How does Jesus' quote from the story of Moses and the burning bush testify to the truth of the resurrection? What does it show about the whole Bible? ***God doesn't merely say that he WAS the God of Abraham and Isaac, but that he IS. This choice of name indicates that those saints were alive and not dead--and that one day their faithful God would undo the curse of death.***

Jesus' words can be difficult for some believers--perhaps especially those who have been blessed with happy earthly marriages. What are some things to remember as we think about his words? ***Here on earth the thought of being without a loved spouse brings us the fear of being alone. But in heaven we will be far from alone! We will be in perfect fellowship with the Lord and all the saints. While there is much we don't know about our heavenly home, we can be absolutely sure that we will be happy and blessed.***



### **Gospel Gem #3: The greatest commandment (12:28-34)**

When the teacher asked Jesus which was the most important "of all the commandments", he was not just thinking of 10 but of the whole Jewish Old Testament Law (the rabbis counted 613 separate commandments in the Torah). What did Jesus say was the most important? ***"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul..." (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) This is really another way of stating the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods."***

Why did Jesus add a second great commandment as well? ***By adding the command to love your neighbor, Jesus was really summing up the entire law of God (Matthew 22:40).***

What did the teacher correctly realize about these two commandments? ***These two commands, aimed at the heart, were really the point of the whole law; it was not just about outward, external obedience to religious ceremonies (although these were certainly part of the law as well!)***

Why did Jesus say that the man was "not far" from the kingdom of God? i.e., Why wasn't the man IN or PART OF the kingdom, if he had given such a good answer? *Jesus, of course, could see the man's heart; but judging from his answer, we don't hear the man admit his sin and his need for a Savior. He understood the law well, but what about the Gospel?*

Why is it helpful to us today to realize that these two commandments are the sum of God's whole law? *We too need to realize that the law is not ultimately about external things but about our hearts. The all-encompassing demand for love should lead us to repent!*

This might be a good place to review the three purposes or effects of God's law as we learn it in the catechism. Although these commandments don't save us, why are they still a great blessing of God? *The law is a mirror that shows us that we have sinned; it is a curb to keep the impulses of our sinful nature in check; and a guide for Christians to understand how we can thank God for salvation. All three of these are vital for our Christian lives!*

#### **Bonus questions (if time)**

In the parable of the tenants (12:1-12), whom did the tenants represent? How can this story still apply as a warning to us? *The tenants represented the nation of Israel, especially its leaders that were opposing Jesus just as their ancestors had opposed and killed the prophets. However, the parable also reminds us that if we reject Jesus, God will judge us equally harshly!*

What temptations do pastors and church leaders need to watch out for, based on Jesus' words about the teachers of the law? (12:38-40) *Vanity, pride and greed can waylay ministers today as well.*

What helpful truths for our Christian financial giving are found in the story about the widow's small offering (12:41-44)? *On the one hand, we can say that God is honored by the attitude of the heart rather than the size of the gift. On the other hand, most of us are not in that woman's situation; her example should move us to give with the same kind of generosity that she showed.*