

Pentwater Bible Church

Gospel of Mark
Message 46
March 8, 2015



Herod's Banquet by Domenico Ghirlandaio Cir 1486-90

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

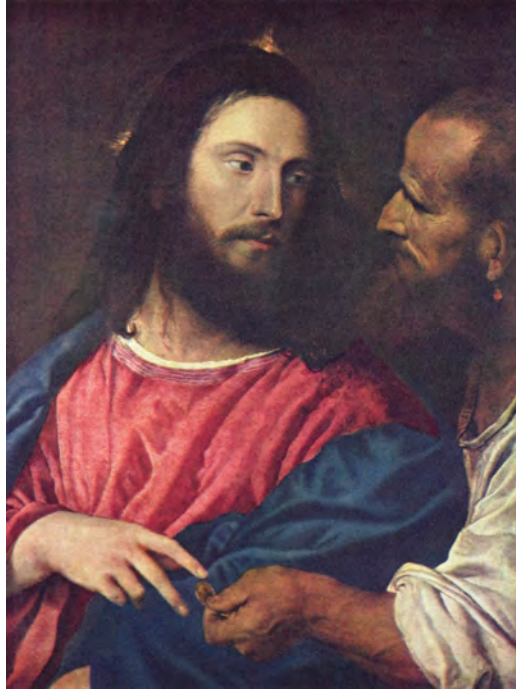
Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Mark
Message Forty-Five

RENDER UNTO CAESAR THE THINGS THAT BELONG TO CAESAR

Mark 8, 2015

Daniel E. Woodhead



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JESUS DEALS WITH THE PHARISEES, HERODIANS AND SADDUCEES

Mark 12:13-27

¹³ And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words. ¹⁴ 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 Cesar, or not? ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cesar's. ¹⁷ And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

¹⁸ Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. ²¹ And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. ²² And the

seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. ²³ In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. ²⁴ And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ 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? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err (KJV).

THE HERODIANS AND PHARISEES MAKE LEAGUE AGAINST JESUS

Mark 12:13

¹³ *And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words (KJV).*

Even though the religious authorities (Sanhedrin) left Him because they feared the crowd that came to the Temple for Passover they sent the Pharisees with their enemies the Herodians for further harassment. The Pharisees were super religious and opposed the Roman occupation of Israel. They longed for self rule as a theocracy. The Herodians were their political opponents and they did not get on well with each other. This particular Herodian group was a political party that supported the Herods and the policies of the occupiers, the Romans. However, because of the common goal they all shared of ridding themselves of Jesus they made a league together to try and trap Him again. The Israeli citizens had to live under both the Roman occupiers and the Jewish religious leaders. The Romans allowed the Sanhedrin to continue to run the day-to-day governmental affairs. In their logistical trap they wanted to get Him to select an authority either God or the human government. Because the Sanhedrin consisted of Pharisees Sadducees and Scribes each of these groups sent members to try and trap Jesus. This story brings the Pharisees along with their political enemies to confront Jesus. They would not be deterred from continuing to confront and attack Him because they were so intent on killing Him. The Greek word for “catch” Him is *agreuin* and it occurs only here in the New Testament and means to violently pursue such as a hunting party. They strove to portray Him as a false teacher so the population would not be so endeared to Him when they finally executed Him. Their immediate goal was to get Him to say something in conflict to both religious and or civil authorities so that He would be arrested.

FLATTERY TOWARD JESUS BEFORE THE TRAPPING QUESTION

Mark 12:14

¹⁴ *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 Cesar, or not (KJV)?*

So they approach Jesus with great hypocrisy and flattery. In fact the way they say, “*thou art true*” is to say you are no flatterer and “*carest for no man*” as if to say you don’t curry

favor with any man. Interestingly, they were doing exactly the things as they falsely praised and flattered Jesus for not doing! So they follow this with additional false praise for His teaching of *God in truth*. In an interesting reversal of the stated Pharisaical hypocrisy Jesus is immune from being affected by flattery and He does teach the truth of God. Now when they think they have schmoozed Him they ask Him: “*Is it lawful to give tribute to Cesar, or not?*” This question is actually one of whether it is correct to pay taxes or not? This was approximately 33 AD and Judea had been under Roman occupation since 63 BC. For most of that time the Jews were not required to pay taxes to Rome. The tax referred to is an imperial poll tax. The amount required to satisfy the poll tax was a denarius, which was the average daily wage in Israel (Matthew 20:2, 9). Since 6 AD this had changed when Judea became an official Roman Province.¹ It was a very prickly political topic that engendered strong feelings that centered on the Jews hatred for the Roman occupiers and their sense of obligation to pay tithes to the religious authorities under the Mosaic Law as well. The Pharisees favored the tithes and the Herodians the Roman taxes. The money that Rome recently required of the people caused resentment among the Jews because it heightened their aversion to the Roman occupation and the Herods who supported and benefitted from it. Now comes the catching question they asked Jesus, “*Is it lawful to give tribute to Cesar, or not?*” With such a hot political topic it had a sense of contemporary relevance to it. If Jesus said that the taxes should be paid to Caesar then the Pharisees could say that He was opposed to God and hope that this would turn the population against Him. If He said that He was opposed to paying taxes to Caesar then He could be arrested on grounds of rebellion and possibly insurrection since he had so many followers. Jesus understood what they were trying to do to Him and in response He followed their so-called trap with His perfect wisdom. Jesus’ response is still appropriate today for all believers to use as a guide to deal with the secular powers.

JESUS TURNS THE QUESTION BACK TO THE PHARISEES AND HERODIANS

Mark 12:15-16

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cesar’s (KJV).

This seemingly unsolvable situation is commonly referred to as being on the horns of a dilemma. They restate the issue by saying more directly to Jesus, “*Shall we give, or shall we not give?*” He reverses the situation, let’s them know He realizes what they are doing and asks someone to give Him a denarius, the Romans coin. This Roman silver coin had the bust of Tiberius Caesar (14–37 AD) with an abbreviated Latin inscription, *Tiberius Caesar Divi Augusti Filius Augustus* (“Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus”). The other side bore an image of Tiberius’s mother Livia and the inscription, *Pontifex Maximus* (“High Priest”). Once He receives the coin He simply asks who is depicted on it and what is the inscription? They answer Him Caesar’s.

¹ Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 5. 1. 21

JESUS ASTONISHES THEM

Mark 12:17

¹⁷ And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him (KJV).

In saying this Jesus makes a distinction between giving and paying a debt, which can be seen in the two Greek words used. The question of the Pharisees and Herodians used the Greek word *didomi*, which means to give. Jesus responds with a different Greek word *apodidomi*, which means to pay a debt. What He is saying that they are part of the country that issued the currency so they should acknowledge its authority to tax and pay what is required of them. The Jews did not like this answer but it centers on the sovereignty of God to choose or allow the various ruling authorities to conduct business for the government. They could protest but they would gain very little if anything by refusing to pay what was required of them (Romans 13:1-7; I Timothy 2:1-6; I Peter 2:13-17). Jesus was saying to the Pharisees that what they owed Rome was a debt for the maintenance of a stable government and peace, which the Romans brought to the region. Jesus was making it quite clear that His followers had a responsibility to be loyal to the standing government. On the reverse side of this issue Jesus was in no way saying that the secular government should be worshipped as divine. By the end of the first century the Roman emperor Domitian mandated emperor worship, which put the apostle John in prison on the Isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. Jesus was telling them that the secular authorities had no claim on their souls only their fidelity to obey the laws in so far that they did not require the population to disobey God. The Pharisees were not rendering to God what belonged to Him. They failed to understand that one reason for their occupation was because they had turned away from God as the supreme authority in their life. They were amazed at His response because they thought they could trap Him.

THE RESURRECTION QUESTIONS

Mark 12:18

¹⁸ Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying (KJV).

This group who now comes at Him are the Sadducees, which were the liberal miracle-denying rationalists. They denied the resurrection of the body. They came from the wealthy upper class whose members were largely in the priesthood. Although they were less in numbers than the Pharisees they populated the most influential positions in Israel. They occupied most of the positions in the seventy member Sanhedrin and generally cooperated with the Roman authorities. By denying the afterlife they seemed to strive exceptionally for position and wealth in this one. In addition to their denial of the resurrection they also denied any future judgment and the existence of angels and spirits. (Acts 23:6-8). They were at odds with the Pharisees since they only accepted the first five books of the Bible as authoritative. They were about to try and trap Jesus in another

question about the afterlife, the Mosaic Law and the law of Levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

THE LAW OF LEVIRATE MARRIAGE

Mark 12:19

¹⁹ 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 (KJV).

These resurrection deniers are mocking Jesus with a loose rendering the Mosaic Law regarding levirate marriage. Moses wrote that if a husband dies without leaving a male heir his unmarried brother or if there isn't any then his nearest male relative was obligated to marry the widow and raise up children. The first of whom would be considered the heir of the deceased brother. This was put in place to prevent the family name from terminating and also to preserve the family inheritance and land. This was also designed to care for the widow so that she would not become destitute. The book of Ruth provides an example of this with Boaz (Ruth 3:1-4:12). Genesis does too in the incident with Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38:1-26).

THE SADDUCEES IMPRECISE RENDERING OF LEVIRATE

Mark 12:20-23

²⁰ Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. ²¹ And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. ²² And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. ²³ In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife (KJV).

The Sadducees now take a hypothetical situation to an absurd length. It might have been based upon the non-canonical apocryphal book of Tobit, which relates a story of a woman who was married to seven men in succession without ever having any children. In Tobit the men are not brothers. The woman in the situation they described had been married seven times to seven different men, all according to the Jewish Law. There were no children produced in any of the seven unions. They thought that their question would reveal the truth of their position that there is no resurrection of the dead. Their question is centered on the Pharisaic and rabbinic belief that Heaven is just an extension of the conditions experienced here on earth including marriage, although more glorious. The impossibility of a woman being married to seven men in heaven was put forth to Jesus in order to render the whole concept of resurrection ridiculous. Their lack of understanding or unwillingness to accept it demonstrates their view of God, which is no more divine than an earthly human being. If Jesus were to accept the assumption that Heaven is similar to the present earthly existence, He would either have to argue on technical grounds, such as which husband had rights to the woman in heaven, or concede to the Sadducees' notion that there is no resurrection. Jesus is not going to fall into their logistical trap. He wrote the Mosaic Law, He came from Heaven and will return in His resurrected body. His answer stuns them as they do not know most of the Scripture nor do they believe it.

JESUS RESPONDS TO THE SADDUCEES TRAP

Mark 12:24-27

²⁴ And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ 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? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err (KJV).

Jesus immediately directs their attention to the essence of their questions. They do not know the Scriptures nor do they know God and His power. If they did know the Scriptures they would believe in the resurrection because it is taught in the Scriptures. God's power makes it possible as the omnipotent creator of all that there is, seen and unseen. For so called religious leaders they were sorely lacking in actual knowledge of the Bible and God.

Jesus went on to describe resurrection as more than simply rising from the dead to an earthly like life. Life in Heaven will be different like the angels especially regarding marriage. Believers to not become angels nor do angels marry or propagate in Heaven. They have been known to enter human bodies on the earth for specific divine purposes, but do not marry in Heaven. When we will be raised up to glory in Heaven we will not have the same physical constraints as here on earth. There will be no more death. Believers will be "like" the angels of Heaven in that we will share their immortal nature. We will not become angels though. The Sadducees did not grasp that God will establish a whole new order of life after death and resolve all apparent difficulties connected with life here.

Since the Sadducees accepted the first five books of the Bible Jesus answers them from Exodus. He affirms the incident of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6) where God declares that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. By using the present tense God was stating that they were alive and He had a relationship with them even though they left this earth many years before. In other words, death does not end existence it begins it and transforms us into glory, which is eternal. Therefore the Sadducees were engaging in serious error.

NEXT MESSAGE PHARISEES AND THE MESSIAH

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

E-mail info@pentwaterbiblechurch.com Toll Free 877-706-2479