

Mark 12:13-27 – The King's authority challenged

Introduction:

Two weeks ago we considered the incident of Jesus entering Jerusalem. He did so with a clear of his mission. He was God's anointed king – the Messiah - the one of whom the prophets wrote about. Jesus activity in the temple and his cursing of the fig tree signified that the entire religious system with its temple ritual had failed.

Last week we saw that the religious authorities questioned Jesus' authority to act in this way. Jesus was presenting them with challenge; he was threatening the status quo and they demanded to know by what authority he did so.

So, having considered the fact that the King's authority was questioned, this week we are considering two ways in which the King's authority was challenged. Our first verse shows that the Pharisees and Herodians were sent by others – representatives of the Sanhedrin.

1. A question about allegiance (vs 13-17)

The Pharisees and Herodians who were sent to test Jesus – to trap him. We know a lot about the Pharisees but need to understand that they were zealous for God's law. Their name means 'separated ones' and they were extremely puritanical and demanded observance of the law. The Pharisees placed great burdens on the people that God's law did not require. Jesus regarded the Pharisees as hypocrites.

The Herodians were a Jewish party that supported King Herod and that dynasty. They were united with the Pharisees in their need for good relations with Rome; they were also united in their opposition to Jesus (see Mark 3:6).

Notice their approach to Jesus. It is described as a trap (v.13); they used flattery (v.14) and Jesus understood their motive as hypocritical (v.15) – 'evil intent' (Mt 22:18). They asked the question trying to trap him with evil intent. Jesus was aware of this and asked why they were trying to trap him (v.15).

The response of Jesus was masterly. He asked whose portrait was on the face of the coin and whose inscription was on the obverse. They correctly observed it to be that of Caesar. The inscription read "*Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus*" [son of God]. They said it was Caesar's. Jesus said that they were to give [render: ESV] to Caesar what belonged to Caesar. But they should also give (or render) to God that which belonged to God. Jesus answer amazed them. It was not only clever. It was also a challenge to them – as indeed it is to us.

2. A question about the resurrection (vv 18-27)

The Sadducees' question was not a political question – it was religious. It concerned life after the resurrection and was brought by the party that did not believe in the resurrection. The Sadducees rejected belief in the resurrection, the soul, the afterlife; as well as angels and demons. They also rejected the whole of the OT scriptures save only the Torah (first five books of Moses). So their question was clearly disingenuous on the face of it.

Their question was based on the Pentateuch which they observed – Deut 25:5-6. They trotted out the rather extreme example of a woman whose first husband died and who left behind seven brothers but no male heir. Sadly all seven brothers took it in turn to marry the widow and, remarkably, each one died before he was able to provide an heir. The woman also died. The question is, at the resurrection, which of her seven husbands will be married to her.

Instead of answering the question Jesus showed the Sadducees its futility. The question was a flawed question and had no basis. It was predicated on a false assumption and was therefore not worthy of

consideration. The Sadducees knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. Their system of theology contains two errors:

- There is no marriage in the after-life.
- There must be life after death because God said I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex 3:6). At the time of Moses they must have been living even though they had died. Jesus' conclusion was that the Sadducees were badly mistaken.

3. Application

This is all very informative and shows how Jesus dealt with the challenges to his authority. Next week we will see how he responded to further question – this time by a teacher of the law who also represented the Sanhedrin. But what is the relevance of these ancient discussions to us – it was a long time ago and in a culture very different to our own.

Yes it was but the principles are the same.

Let's draw a few lessons:-

1) The matter of our allegiance is a very important matter. We have obligations to human institutions that have authority over us – including that of paying the taxes which are due from us. (Rom 13; I Pet 2:13-17).

2) We are to render to God the things that are God's. In rejecting Jesus, the Pharisees and Herodians were rejecting God. However this applies to us as well. Our lives bear the image of God (Gen 1:26-27). We are to render to God that which belongs to him. We are not our own, we belong to God.

1. Out of the night that covers me, Black as the Pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be For my unconquerable soul.	3. Beyond this place of wrath and tears Looms but the Horror of the shade, And yet the menace of the years Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.
2. In the fell clutch of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeonings of chance My head is bloody, but unbowed.	4. It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll. I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.

This is rubbish! We are not the master of our souls. God is the master of us all and all of us. We are accountable to him for how we respond to Jesus Christ. He is God's only means by which you can be saved from the consequences of your sin and rebellion against God. The death of Jesus on the cross is the price he paid to save you from your fate. You are neither the master of your fate nor the captain of your soul – God is.

3) Jesus rebuked the Sadducees because they did not know the Scriptures. They did not accept the whole of the Scriptures but even that which they believed in they did not know. One day, at the resurrection, our bodies and souls will be re-united. This much is demonstrated to be true from the lips of Jesus who could not lie. The Sadducees were wrong to think otherwise and so are you if you believe that this life is all there is.

4) Lastly Jesus rebuked the Sadducees because they did not know the power of God. How could they? What power could they believe in if they denied the resurrection? The resurrection is an attested fact because Jesus was raised from the dead. This is not a matter of conjecture but a stated fact. This is the culmination of Easter. We are not left with a body on a cross. Neither are we left with a corpse in a tomb. Jesus was raised by the power of God just as he said would happen. This makes all the difference.