

Mark 12:35-13:13: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0 : 00] Mark chapter 12 verse 35 to chapter 13 verse 13. And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?

David himself in the Holy Spirit declared, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet. David himself calls him Lord, so how is he his son?

And the great throng heard him gladly. And in his teaching he said, Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at feasts who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers.

They will receive the greater condemnation. And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins which make a penny.

And he called his disciples to him and said to them, Truly I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance.

[1 : 12] But she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on. And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, Look, teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings.

And Jesus said to him, Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, When will these things be?

And what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? And Jesus began to say to them, See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name saying, I am he.

And they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place. But the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

There will be earthquakes in various places. There will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains. But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils.

[2 : 20] And you will be beaten in synagogues. And you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.

And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say. But say whatever is given you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child. And children will rise against parents, and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake.

But the one who endures to the end will be saved. At the conclusion of his various conflicts with the leaders of the people, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the Sadducees, in Mark chapter 12, Jesus asks a question to them.

Psalms 110 is a Davidic psalm, in which David refers to the Christ as his Lord. Which makes no sense if the Christ is merely his son. The Christ seems to be more than merely the son of David, according to the flesh.

[3 : 24] This is a conundrum for those who lack the fuller understanding of Christ that would emerge through his resurrection. The full character of the messianic secret, when it was revealed, would answer this question.

Jesus warns about the scribes. They are concerned with the praise of men, and with social status. They love the markers and the honorific titles that come with religious authority.

And there's clearly some exaggeration and satire in Jesus' description of them. But Jesus is very concerned that his disciples learn from their example, and do not follow it.

The ministers of Christ must be meek. They must not be those who exalt themselves over others. They must not be those who see leadership as a matter of personal honor, rather than about the service of their master, the Lord.

True ministry in the kingdom is such that the one who is most humble will be most exalted. The scribes, by contrast, are predatory leaders. They consume the sheep, especially the most vulnerable.

[4 : 25] They are hypocrites. They're fixated on getting honor from men, but cover up their inside, the fact that they are not pious people at all. They are whitewashed tombs, as we see in Matthew 23.

The story of the widow's two small coins that is read here, needs to be read alongside what immediately precedes it. All too often it's taken out of context, and the point is missed.

The widow is investing all of her livelihood in the temple, which is about to be destroyed on account of the sin of the people and their rulers. This isn't a parable about healthy sacrificial giving, but about the way that corrupt religious leadership preys upon the weakest of all and heaps up judgment for itself.

The prophecy of the destruction of the temple that follows should be directly related to the oppression of such people as the widow. The leaders of the people devour the houses of widows, so their great house will be devoured.

Read carefully in context, the story of the widow's two small coins is a horrifying story of the way that wicked religious leaders abuse the flock.

[5 : 33] As Jesus leaves the temple at the beginning of chapter 13, one of his disciples admires the temple buildings. Jesus makes clear, however, that the buildings are condemned to destruction.

Not one stone will remain upon another. All will be torn down. Jesus teaches concerning the judgment upon Jerusalem and its temple on the Mount of Olives later to Peter, James, John and Andrew, his three core disciples and Andrew, Peter's brother.

Remember that these four disciples were the four disciples that were called at the very beginning of the gospel in chapter 1, just after Jesus had declared that the time had come for the kingdom of God and just after his baptism and his temptation in the wilderness.

The gospel is returning to its beginning point. We're hearing about the fulfillment of the kingdom of God, there will be a new set of temptations and then there will be the baptism of Jesus' death and then the announcement of his coming.

