

# FOLLOW ME

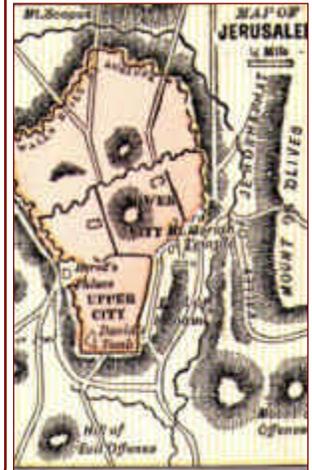
## LESSON FIFTEEN: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK 12



### FAST FACTS

- Jesus told a parable in which a man established a vineyard and leased it to vinedressers. The vinedressers abused everyone sent by the man to receive fruit, and even killed his son. The man therefore condemned the vinedressers.
- Jesus is the chief cornerstone Whom the builders rejected.
- Jesus taught that Caesar's things should be given to Caesar, but God's things should be given to God.
- The Sadducees, asked a hypothetical question about a woman who had consecutively married seven brothers. Jesus responded that God has the power to resurrect humans, and that resurrected humans are like angels.
- Jesus is both the son of David and David's Lord.
- Jesus condemned false piety, and praised sacrificial faithfulness.

### MAP



## MARK 12:1-12

The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers (also known as the Wicked Husbandmen, and told in Matthew 21:33-46 and Luke 20:9-19) is a prophecy regarding all who purposefully reject Christ. Its immediate historical context is the history of the people of Israel, as the chief priests and Pharisees recognized in Matthew 21:45. Isaiah 5:1-7 describes Israel as a vineyard; Blessed Theophylact compares the treatment of the King's servants in Mark 12 to the treatment of God's prophets to His vineyard of Israel:

*The Lord sent forth one servant, that is, the prophets at the time of Elijah, whom Sedekiah, the false prophet, struck. He sent forth a second servant, the prophets at the time of Hosea and Isaiah, and they cast stones at them and wounded them in the head, thereby committing the height of outrage and insult. And He sent forth a third servant, those prophets such as Daniel and Ezekiel at the time of the captivity in Babylon. Finally God sent forth His own Son.*

The Church Fathers consistently teach that v. 9 is a reference to the Church: the vineyard is the Church, and the other vinedressers to whom it is given are the bishops and priests — and, in fact, all Christians — who are called by God to care for His vineyard.

Jesus added to this Parable by using a quotation from Psalm 118:22-23. St. John Chrysostom explains that Jesus is the cornerstone who joins together both Jews and Gentiles to form the building of His Church (see also

## OUR FAITH TEACHES

We do not know exactly what our lives will be like after we receive our resurrected bodies. God has revealed to us, however, some important information about eternal life.

Jesus prophesies that all people will be resurrected to either salvation or condemnation (John 5:28-29), and in his long discussion of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 St. Paul teaches that the corruptible mortal body will be resurrected as an incorruptible spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). St. Irenaeus of Lyon further explains:

*The souls of Christians go to an invisible place designated by God for them, and remain there until the final resurrection...Afterwards, receiving bodies and rising again perfectly (i.e., with their perfected bodies), just as Our Lord rose, they too will come to the sight of God.*

St. Gregory the Theologian elaborates:

*Every good and God-beloved soul...when it has been released by death from the body with which it was united...immediately experiences the joy and pleasures which it shall enjoy in full measure in the future...and though immediately after death the enjoyment is small, after, when it shall again receive its body at the resurrection of the dead, it shall enjoy blessings in perfect measure.*

Ephesians 2:19-20; 1 Peter 2:6-7).

## MARK 12:13-17

St. Luke tells us exactly what is happening in this scene: the religious leaders sent spies who tried to trap Jesus into saying something they could use to convict Him of treason (Luke 20:20). These spies asked Jesus whether it was lawful (meaning both governmental and Jewish laws) to pay taxes: the Herodians would accuse Him of treason if He answered that Jews *shouldn't* pay taxes, while the Pharisees would accuse Him of disloyalty to the Jews if He answered that they *should*. Jesus responds that, since coins bear the image of Caesar, the government has the right to require taxes; however, the believer must never compromise his or her relationship with God merely to satisfy any irreligious demand the government might make. David Hewitt clearly states, "That which bears Caesar's image (the coin) belongs to him but that which bears God's image (men and women) belong to God."

## MARK 12:18-27

The Sadducees made their first appearance in St. Mark's account to challenge Jesus about the resurrection of the dead. St. Luke, describing the Holy Apostle Paul's trial in the Temple, notes the "Sadducees say that there is no resurrection — and no angel or spirit" (Acts 23:8). To disprove the resurrection, they presented a bizarre tale of a woman marrying a succession of brothers (this may be based on Sarah in Tobit 3:7-8), and wondered whose wife she would be after the resurrection.

Jesus responded that the Sadducees misunderstood the resurrection: first, they were wrong in believing that there will be no resurrection, and second, they were wrong for assuming that post-resurrection life would be identical to this life. God has the power to resurrect His people, and life after the resurrection will be angelic, with — as St. John of Damascus notes — no need for the sexual component of marriage that is necessary for human procreation.

## MARK 12:28-34

Jesus' discussion with the Pharisee regarding the greatest Commandment tells us a great deal about how we are to live. Blessed Theophylact explains: "The two

## LOOK AT YOURSELF

Jesus' words in vv. 43-44 teach us that it is not necessarily the size of our offering to God — it is our attitude in making the offering. The widow joyfully gave what she had to God, whereas Jesus criticized those who grudgingly gave as little as possible.

What is your attitude toward giving of yourself to God, whether it be your money in offerings, or your time and energy in serving during the services or engaging in outreach? Do you give everything you can to serve God and help others, or do you resent having to give up something? Do you find joy in knowing that you are helping someone who is truly needy, or does it make you angry that your youth group is "wasting your time" on a Saturday? Remember, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34).

commandments are held together by each other. He who loves God, also loves God's creation; and that part of His creation which is most akin to God is man. Therefore he who loves God will also love all mankind, and shall not he who loves his neighbor love God all the more?" The defining characteristic of the Christian is love (John 13:35).

## MARK 12:35-44

This chapter concludes with Jesus criticizing the religious leaders for two things: failing to recognize their Messiah, and failing to live a self-sacrificing life of humility and love. First, Jesus did not deny that He was descended from King David: He asserted that He was *more* than simply David's descendent, and uses Psalm 110:1 to demonstrate that the Messiah is *both* the son of David *and* the Lord.

Second, Jesus criticized the Pharisees for engaging in their ministry not to serve God and His people, but instead to be celebrities in their communities and to, as Blessed Theophylact puts it, "receive all other tokens of glory." Ironically, while these Pharisees were guilty of putting on only a pretense of devotion to God, they demanded intense self-discipline and self-sacrifice from their followers (see Matthew 22:4). Jesus told His followers to avoid such hypocrisy, and instead to follow the example of the faithful widow who completely dedicated herself to God.

### WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT FOLLOWING JESUS?



- What is my attitude toward those whom God sends to care for His Church? Do I help them and follow them, or do I criticize and attack them?
- A lot of people cheat on their taxes. Is it okay if I do this,

especially if I'm going to give the money I save to the Church?

- What does St. Paul tell me about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15?

Why can I have faith that I can spend eternity with God?

- Do I gladly sacrifice for God and His Kingdom?

