

Mark: The Mysterious Messiah

Week 22: Mark 12:1-27

Introductory Exercise: Do you remember a time when somebody asked you a question not to get an answer but to see if you had the mettle to handle a future situation?

As chapter 12 starts, Jesus is in the Temple, just having staved off the Temple authorities with an elusive answer. What does he immediately start to do for the crowds? What is the setup for this extended parable, and how does it link up with Isaiah 5:1-5?

When the tenants in the parable variously beat and kill the landlord's messengers, motive is implied but not stated directly. What does the text imply? When the "beloved son" shows up, what motive does Jesus's parable attribute to the tenants for doing him in? Where has the phrase "beloved son" shown up IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK?

When the parable describes the fate of the tenants in the vineyard, what sort of warning is Jesus giving to the people in the Temple, and specifically which people? Assuming that this written gospel first gets read publicly after AD 70 (as most scholars seem to think), what recent event would that first audience have on their minds as they hear this?

What does Jesus's citation of Psalm 118:22-23 say about his own mission, and how do "they" (who are "they"?) respond to the parable and the moment when Jesus tells it?

When the Sadducees (or the faction of Zadok, analogous to modern Shi'ites) regroup and try to catch Jesus speaking blasphemy or nonsense, what two Pharasaic teachings (to which Jesus and Christians also hold) do the Sadducees put in opposition? What additional non-Sadducaic teaching does Jesus deploy in his reply?

When Jesus makes his statement about the nature of family life in the Resurrection, he's both staving off the Pharisees and, this time, actually making a positive statement about theology. What are some of the implications of human souls' living like angels in the Resurrection? When Jesus cites Exodus 3:6 at them, what tricky bit of grammar does he deploy, and again, what are the implications theologically?