

Mark: The Mysterious Messiah

Week 23: Mark 12:28-13:2

Introductory Exercise: What clues do you use to tell the emotional and psychological states of characters in Biblical stories?

Jesus is still in Jerusalem, and he has just confounded two traps brought against him. How does Mark narrate the approach of the next questioner (12:28) differently, and at this point, what role is Jesus taking in Jerusalem?

When the man of letters echoes Jesus' citation of the Hillel-school interpretation of the Torah, what does he add, and what makes his response especially tense at this point in the life of Jerusalem? How does Jesus respond to him, and what effect does Jesus's response have on those seeking to trap him?

Mark 12:35-37 make up one of the most confusing passages of Mark, but in their context they do make a certain deal of sense. Given what Jerusalem was expecting of a Messiah, what does it mean for Jesus to be lord (*adonai*) of David? How does this strange little teaching comment upon expectations and divine fulfillment, and how do the people react to the teaching?

When Jesus turns from debating with scribes to critiquing them in Mark 12:38, what strong elements of public show does Jesus focus on? What relationship between the powerful and the powerless are also part of this critique?

When the widow shows up at the *gazophylakion* (treasury) of the temple, what saying about widows is already in the ears of those nearby listening? Do you find this passage more compelling as a commentary on voluntary giving or as a critique of temple-taxation, and why?

In Mark 13:1-2, to what historical event is Jesus pointing? Do you find this prophecy more compelling as connected to 12:41-44 or as largely unrelated? Why?