

Series: **Gospel of Mark**  
Today's Title: **"Jesus on the Hot Seat"**

February 7, 2021 – Mark 12:13-27 (Also: Matthew 22:15-33; Luke 20:19-40)

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**Objective:** To help people give their life to Christ and to look forward to the glories of heaven.

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### **Prayer**

Miriam Webster defines *'The hot seat'* as: *the position of someone who is in trouble or is being asked many difficult or embarrassing questions.* (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/the%20hot%20seat>)

As Jesus is in the Temple, the religious establishment is trying to put Him on the 'hot seat'.

We're in a section of Mark's gospel where Mark records 4 questions presented to Jesus - 4 attempts to trap Him - trick Him - discredit Him - to put Him on the *'hot seat'*.

Last week was question #1: *By what authority do You do these things* (11:27-33)? Today are questions 2 & 3.

2 questions that are not intended to gain information, but to entrap - to demean - to embarrass.

**Turn to Mark 12:13-27** (Matthew 22:15-33; Luke 20:19-40)

I believe the Jewish religious establishment realizes they won't beat Jesus at Bible trivia or theological debates.

So, they partner up with a group called *'the Herodians'*.

*Who were the Herodians?*

There were massive differences between the Herodians and the Pharisees - and there was a great deal of disdain the Pharisees felt toward the Herodians.

- Pharisees were devoted to Israel
- Herodians were devoted to Rome/Caesar.
- Pharisees were intensely religious
- Herodians were intensely political

Herod the Great had died shortly after the birth of Jesus and his sons succeeded him. His kingdom was divided between his sons and they each ruled a portion of their father's kingdom.

His sons were also referred to as Herod - which is why we read about King Herod in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' death.

The *Herodians* were those who identified with the political family of Herod the Great.

Israel was a long way from Rome - and Rome was happy to delegate the day-to-day rule over Israel to these puppet kings - as long as they kept the peace and the tax money kept rolling into Rome's coffers.

So, the Pharisees - who despised the Romans and their occupation of Israel - hated the Herodians because the Herodians sided with Rome - but in this case, they saw each other as useful because they wanted the same thing: the destruction of Jesus (3:6).

### ***Why did the Pharisees and Herodians see each other as useful?***

If they could get Jesus to say something - do something - that would be anti-Rome...which could be seen by the Romans as a threat to Roman rule or peace in Jerusalem - then the Romans would arrest Jesus and take care of Him.

#### **Luke 20:20**

“So they (religious establishment) watched Him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch Him in something He said, so as to deliver Him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. (Pilate)”

If they could get Jesus to say something that Rome would see as a threat, then the Romans would arrest Jesus.

The Pharisees would be *‘innocent’* in the eyes of the people. The people would see Jesus in Romans custody - and since in their minds the Messiah would defeat Rome - when they see Jesus in Roman custody, they would abandon Jesus - no longer believing He was the Messiah.

After all, the Messiah would never be in Roman custody - He would put Romans in custody!!!

This is the motive behind the first part of our passage today.

#### **Jesus calls out insincere religious hypocrites. vs. 13-17**

vs. 13 sets the stage - the tone: “And they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap Him in His talk.”

The verb “to trap” is only used here in the N.T. - and it’s a hunting term. The Pharisees and the Herodians are on a hunt - to capture Jesus.

In using this term, Mark is painting a picture for us that Jesus is their prey - they are on a hunt.

**Read vs. 14-17**

Flattery often has a motive behind it.

It is often used as a way to get something - to sway someone - to soften their defenses - to build them up so they will step into the glorious picture and description the flattery has painted.

So, they're speaking wonderful, glowing compliments to Jesus - to appear a certain way to the people (*they just want to get along - they want to work with Jesus - they admire Him - they respect Him*) when all along they're wanting to "destroy" Him (Mark 3:6).

They're also hoping their flattery will cause Jesus to answer in bold honesty - without regard to the repercussions of His answer.

After all, if Jesus says *"No - don't pay taxes to Caesar."*

Then the Herodians will let the Romans know that Jesus is telling people not to pay the taxes - and the Romans will come and arrest Jesus.

The issue of taxes paid to the Romans was a huge deal in Israel. (Taxes are a huge deal today in the U.S.!!)

- When Jesus was a child there was a revolt against Roman taxation - led by Judas the Galilean. **Acts 5:37**

refers to his rebellion - and how the Romans had killed him.

- Later, in 66 A.D. there will be another revolt against Roman taxation - which was crushed by the Roman general Titus - who destroyed and burned Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Taxation was a hot-button issue.

A very *Pro-Israel* or *Pro-Roman* issue.

The question was really this:

*“Should we pay taxes to a Gentile, idolatrous, occupier, invader of God’s holy land? Should we pay taxes to an oppressor of God’s people, or should we not pay?”*

vs. 14 - “Is it lawful” - This is a question to a Rabbi - so this is a question about God’s law - not Roman law.

The Pharisees are hoping / expecting Jesus to say, *“No, don’t pay taxes to a pagan empire oppressing God’s people and occupying Israel’s land!”*

But... **Luke 20:23** - “He perceived their craftiness” **Matthew 22:18** - “...aware of their malice” **Mark 12:15** “Knowing their hypocrisy”

vs. 15b - “Bring Me a denarius to look at.”

The denarius was a day’s wage - it was a silver Roman coin used between 300 B.C. and 300 A.D., minted by Rome’s emperors.

Only emperors had the power and authority to mint coins in silver and gold. All such coins minted by the

emperor bore the sacred image of the emperor engraved on one side and some other identifying description – inscription on the other side.

vs. 16 - They brought a denarius to Jesus and He asked a question which everyone knew the answer to...

“Whose likeness and inscription is this?”

Everybody knew it was Caesar’s.

If it was minted by Tiberius Caesar, it would be like the coin on the screen - the front of the coin it would have said, “*Tiberius Caesar, Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus.*” Augustus believed he was a god, which made his son, Tiberius, the son of god.

If you flipped the coin over, it would have a picture of Livia, the mother of Tiberius, and it would be inscribed “*Pontifex Maximus,*” which was the title for the high priest in ancient Rome - and it’s one of the current titles the Pope now wears.

For the Jews, these coins were little idols. They were graven images which violated **Exodus 20**, second command, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image.”

They saw them as little idols. They wouldn’t carry them. They wouldn’t use them. They would pay the Roman tax in the equivalency in their own Hebrew coinage.

The Pharisees and Herodians - and maybe the people - probably assumed Jesus would denounce the graven images on the coins - and say the Law of God forbids these taxes.

But that's not what Jesus said.

vs. 17 - "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

This was not the Jewish mindset when thinking about the Roman occupation - but it is the clear teaching of Jesus and the N.T. writers: Government is God's instrument and grace for human civilization.

**Romans 13:1, 6**

1 "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing."

**1 Timothy 2:1-3**

"...I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior..."

**1 Peter 2:13-15a** - Nero was emperor

"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

For this is the will of God..."

With this answer - Jesus did not fall into their trap.

But the most important part of His answer is, “and to God the things that are God’s.”

**Key question:** What do you give to God? What is His?

**Answer:** (Not \$) - Belief / Faith in God’s Son.

**John 5:23**

“Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”

**Mark 12:30**

“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

You have the image of God imprinted on you!!!

**Genesis 1:26**

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.”

Pay your taxes - not more than you need to!!

Give your life to God by believing in His Son, Jesus!

When hypocrites don’t get what they want - they lie.

**Luke 23:1-2**

Then the whole company of them arose and brought Him before Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this Man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar...”

Now we move on to the next question - question #3 of the 4 questions.

Next group up: The Sadducees.

**Read vs. 18-27**



**Jesus corrects ignorant religious liberal fundamentalists.** vs.  
18-27

That's a crazy mix of terms / labels!

Our modern terms for liberal, conservative, fundamental - don't fit well with the different groups / sects in 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism.

The Sadducees were liberal in they didn't believe in the spirit world - angels - or the resurrection (no life after death). Essentially, they were annihilationist's - believing that when you die you cease to exist.

They were fundamentalists in they only considered the writings of Moses - the Pentateuch - to be inspired Scripture.

They were ultra-literal in their interpretation of Moses. On the other hand, the Pharisees believed all of the O.T. was inspired and they believed in angels and the resurrection.

The Pharisees were the more dominant group - they were all over the country - along with the scribes and elders.

The Sadducees were in control of the Temple in Jerusalem - and that was the extent of their reach and influence.

This is why we don't read about the Sadducees in Galilee, but only when Jesus is in / around the Temple in Jerusalem.

*In fact, the Sadducees are wiped out when General Titus destroys Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70.*

First of all, this is a crazy, ludicrous hypothetical situation.

But the actual question here is: *Is there a resurrection after this life? Is there life after physical death?*

This whole scenario they present to Jesus is very foreign to us - probably criminal in some parts of our country.

But this was a law in ancient times which protected the estate of a man/family. It made provision for the estate / fields / other possessions to stay in a family and not be taken over by another family.

**Deuteronomy 25:5-6** is where we find the details.

This is called **‘Levirate Marriage’** (Latin *levir* = ‘husband’s brother’)

“If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

**6** And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.”

We see this in **Genesis 38** and in the book of **Ruth**.

Back to **Mark 12**...

In **vs. 24**, Jesus answers their ridiculous hypothetical scenario.

*Don't waste your time on pointless, ridiculous theological pursuits!*

Jesus tells them 3 things:

- 1) You're wrong
- 2) You don't know the Scriptures
- 3) You don't know the power of God

They're wrong because they don't know what God has said - and they limit God's power.

The O.T. is full of verses that speak to life after death.

**Psalm 16:9-11**

"Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let Your holy one see corruption.

You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

**Psalm 49:15**

"God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me."

**Job 19:26**

"...after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God..."

**Psalm 79:24**

"You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will receive me to glory."

**Psalm 139:8**

"If I ascend to heaven, You are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, You are there!"

Among the Jewish people, the Sadducees were the minority in their view of the resurrection.

Jesus affirms His own belief in the resurrection...

**vs. 25** - "For when they rise from the dead..."

This is stated as fact - no debate here.

You guys are wrong... “when they (people) rise from the dead.”

Jesus tells us there is no marriage in heaven...

And we will be *like* angels (not angels...like angels).

This used to bother me.

I couldn't imagine heaven without marriage being part of it.

I love marriage.

Peter refers to it as “the grace of life”. (1 Peter 3:7)

Young people - get married!

It's one of the best things this life has to offer.

Choose wisely...but choose!

The N.T. teaches that marriage is an illustration of God.

This is one of the reasons we won't have marriage in heaven - because we won't need an illustration of God any longer.

Also, in heaven we will experience perfect love with everyone - and we will have amazing experiences all the time.

So, the love and intimacy of marriage will not be needed...won't even be missed.

We often project the best of this world and amplify it / super-size it - and assume it must be part of heaven.

*Too earthly minded to be any heavenly good!*

Heaven will be better than sex!

Procreation won't be needed - no need to replace anybody since death will be no more.

Angels don't marry - don't have little angels - and our existence will be like the angel's existence in this sense.

vs. 26 - "as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses..."

The Sadducees were the 'experts' in the writings of Moses. This is a major insult!!

The other verses I read from the O.T. which speak about future resurrection are mostly from Psalms - but Jesus doesn't go there.

He uses their preferred text - and proves the resurrection from the writings of Moses (Pentateuch).

**Exodus 3:6** - God tells Moses

"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Present tense verbs. "I am" - not "I was".

The details in God's Word are important.

Something as miniscule as verb tense proves and teaches a major truth!

"You are quite wrong."

### ***Apply it...***

Give your life to God through faith in Christ.

You are created in His image - in His likeness.

This means you belong to Him.

Will you accept this...believe this...by putting your faith in Jesus Christ for the payment and forgiveness of your sins?

**Admit** your sins...

**Believe** in Jesus as your Savior...

**Commit** your life to Him!

If you've given your life to God through faith in Christ...

Then...

Look forward to your resurrection to the glories and pleasures of heaven.

The Bible is clear...there is a future resurrection.

All people will exist in the next life.

The difference is...will you experience eternal judgement in hell - or eternal glories and pleasures in heaven?

The best things in this life aren't good enough for heaven!

Difficult truth to wrap my brain around...but that's because we don't have a full or complete understanding of the glories and pleasures of God!

Close in prayer