

## Mark 12

Written by K B Napier  
Wednesday, 05 August 2015 09:56

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We now see the conspiracy against Jesus building up fast. Time and again, pretenders to faith attack Jesus, not because He was wrong but because He was right. It still goes on today as men and women without sense or spiritual life attempt to destroy Christian witness. The same happens against genuine Christian teachers and preachers, who dare to stand outside the conforming, politically-correct, traditional churches, whose lives depend on everyone agreeing to a particular formula.

I walked past a typical church billboard today; the church is supposed to be reformed. It advertised a variety of courses and lunch-time offerings. It is my belief that all this is wrong. We should not be hawking Jesus or God's word on the high-street. God will send His people to reap the harvest. He does not need us to advertise what He has to 'offer'... because God offers nothing at all. Do you understand that?

### Verses 1-12

1.

And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

2.

And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

3.

And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.

4.

And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.

5.

And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing

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some.

6.

Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

7.

But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

8.

And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

9.

What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

10.

And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

11.

This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

12.

And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

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Jesus was in the midst of a den of vipers – the Temple officials. They wanted Him dead and were conspiring in the demise of their arch-enemy... an enemy not because He came to attack them, but because He preached truth. (There is a widespread assumption, even amongst Christians, that His primary ministry was 'love'. But, Jesus' ministry was far more hard-hitting than that. His main message was to obey God and repent). Disregarding the keepers of Judaism, Jesus continued to speak to the people.

“And he began to speak to them by parables...” Perhaps you will remember that Jesus did not use parables to make what He had to say easier to understand – He used them as a stumblingblock to those who did not believe.

A man developed a new vineyard, fenced it about along its boundaries, made a place for the winefat, and built a tower. The 'winefat' was a container placed underneath the winepress to catch juice from the pressed grapes. We know that this container was put into a sunken pit, because that is what the text tells us: he “dugged (a place for) the winefat”. A very tall tower was built in the field, so that the foreman could keep an eye on the vineyard and the workers.

The owner of the vineyard handed over management of his property to husbandmen, whilst he travelled abroad. In this case the husbandman was a vinedresser, one skilled in keeping vineyards. The husbandmen were supposed to tend the vineyard and pay the owner so much rent for the privilege, plus a portion of the profits.

When the time came for winemaking after the grape harvest, the owner sent one of his servants to the property to gather his rent and share of the profits. In other words, he was only doing what was normal and expected. But, the husbandmen, thinking they could get away with it because the owner was in a foreign land, beat-up the servant and sent him away with nothing.

In response, the owner sent another servant, but they treated him abysmally, too, after pelting him with stones, injuring his head. Then they “sent (him) away shamefully handled.” That is, they dishonoured him as well as themselves, by acting so foolishly and violently; they were defrauding the owner as well as criminally attacking people.

The owner sent yet another servant – but the husbandmen killed him. They repeated the same violence against anyone the owner sent, because they were emboldened when their previous

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attacks did not meet with a legal reaction. Each person sent by the owner was either killed or beaten.

Finally, the owner sent his only, much-loved son, thinking the men would at last listen, because of who the son was. But, the wicked husbandmen decided to get the inheritance for themselves by killing the son, which they did, throwing his body outside the vineyard.

When Jesus finished telling the parable, He asked “What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do?” Jesus answered Himself: the owner would come with many men and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others.

It was usual for Jesus’ listeners not to understand the parables, so Jesus gave the meaning (verse 10)... the listeners, being Jews, knew that scripture said the “stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.” Jesus had already told His Apostles that He was the Son, God. He told them that He would be rejected by those in Jerusalem and killed.

Now He was ‘opening-up’ the same theme, by saying that the Jews had not listened to, or killed, the messengers of God, the prophets. They killed John the Baptist. Now they would kill Him, also. And when they did, God would hand over the mantle to others, meaning the Gentiles. Even today, many who claim to be Christians do not want to hear the truth, and treat preachers and teachers abysmally, if they do not like their message.

“This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?” The question was rhetorical, because Jesus did not expect an answer. But, an answer was already forming in the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees: “they sought to lay hold on him”. More than ever they wanted Jesus to be killed, but they were afraid that if they arrested Jesus in the Temple, the people would object because of His words and miracles.

We are told that these wicked rulers “knew that he had spoken the parable against them”. They were the evil husbandmen, who, given God’s vineyard to tend, deviated from truth and destroyed it. Fuming with rage the rulers walked away, to stir up hatred for Jesus and to plot His downfall, fulfilling the parable’s story. They knew exactly what they were doing, so were fully accountable and culpable.

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Nasty people and groups today are plotting the downfall of God's people. Many are within the fold, pretending to love the brethren, but hating them because they want truth and oppose heresy. Truth-lovers prevent wicked men from taking full-flight; they stop financial gains and the building of false status. Others, prompted by Satan's current control over the people through wicked rulers, are joyfully attacking anything and everything belonging to God, including His words and His people.

And remember this: there are those in our churches who say they are brethren, who accept all kinds of Biblical error, and yet show a kindly face. These are just as much our enemies as openly wicked plotters, though they woo with friendship and smiles, rather than with outright attacks. Even so, when faced with a decision to accept their own errors or your genuine Christianity, they will choose the first and cast you adrift.

Any 'friend' who is not saved is a potential enemy of your soul, who will not hesitate to denounce you if their personal 'space' is perceived to be challenged! Also, anyway, an unsaved person cannot ever be your real 'friend' no matter how close you think they are, because you are both diametrically opposed to each other – you belong to Christ, they belong to Satan. Pretend otherwise if you wish, but that is the reality, according to God's word and the teaching of Christ.

### Verses 13-17

1.

And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

2.

And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?

3.

Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it.

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4.

And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.

5.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

The wicked Temple rulers were now determined to catch Jesus out in any way they could. So, they encouraged Pharisees and Herodians with known abilities to challenge arguments, to visit Jesus. Remember, their aim was not to discover truth, or to debate scripture, but just to catch Jesus out. They were being used as storm-troopers.

Today, little is known about the Herodians. They were certainly political Jews and, as their name implies, they supported the Herod dynasty. So, anyone who might upset that rule would be treated harshly. Other than that there are few clues about their existence. Some scholars think the Herodians were a political branch of the Sadducees, loyal to Herod the Great. For us the importance is simply that they opposed Jesus and sought His downfall.

The question used by the Herodians was designed to prove Jesus' treason against the Romans, the ultimate rulers of the Herods. Firstly, they tried to disarm Him by telling Him how wonderful He was! Even as an human in a management capacity I was well-used to employees trying to gain my favour by being nice! It never worked. As a Christian teacher, too, I am always wary of Christians telling me how 'good' I am, because, as Jesus said, no-one is good except God. Also, I am suspicious anyway, because those who begin with praise almost always end with vicious opposition.

However, Jesus would not let them get away with using praise. They told Jesus that He was 'true' (spoke the truth – did not lie) and cared for no man. This did not mean Jesus had no feeling for mankind. It meant He did not allow any man, whether lowly or powerful, to sway His judgment... He did not regard "the person of men". Rather, Jesus taught the ways of God regardless of race, rule or status, without favour and always in truth. How many pastors or Bible

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teachers are like that? Very few.

Most try not to offend their listeners, because they fear losing their income or office. Because of this they will not preach or teach certain subjects, in an unholy effort to maintain the status quo. Others rigidly adhere to the attitude of their peers in the same denomination, so that they remain accepted.

The assembled 'experts' asked Jesus: "It is lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" The question was unequivocal, so there could only be one of two answers... yes, or no. If Jesus said 'no', then He could have been charged with treason. But, I think, personally, that if He answered 'yes', the people could have conjectured that He favoured the occupying forces and not Judaism.

A tribute, or *kēnsos*, paid to an occupying ruler, was not just an ordinary tax. It was a poll tax paid to Rome annually, based on property owned. We read of Joseph and Mary travelling to register their taxable income, via the census. If anyone failed to register their property and did not pay the relevant level of tax, it would be considered treasonous. Should the Jews pay money to their oppressors, or not? The same question can be asked today, for in many ways, local councils and national government oppress the people with similar taxes.

If paying these taxes was commanded by Rome and by sub-rulers such as the Herods, why did the Herodians ask if it was "lawful?" The more correct wording should be "Is it permitted?" This term takes us back to the wording used by the priests, who judged what was permitted or not by what they perceived Moses would have done. Thus, the law they referred to was dual – what Rome demanded and what Moses said was acceptable... so the question had two-edges to it. We know they had Moses and God in mind because of the words "(you) teachest the way of God in truth".

It is possible Jesus did not answer immediately, so the question "Shall we give, or shall we not give?" was borne of impatience. No-one rushed Jesus! He knew they were out to get Him and knew they were not interested in His answer theologically. He asked 'Why are you trying to tempt me? Bring me a denarius'. He caught them out, and they knew it – hypocrisy is a reference to play-acting, pretending to be or say something but being or thinking something else. We might use the term 'two-faced' nowadays.

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Being so, they tried to tempt Jesus, or test His character. Jesus asked them to show Him a 'penny' or denarius. This was a small silver Roman coin common throughout the Roman empire, equal to just less than a Greek drachme – roughly about the worth of an old UK shilling. In Jesus' time this seemed to equate to a day's pay for a labourer (Matthew 20).

Someone handed Him a denarius. Holding it up, He asked "Whose (is) this image and inscription?" Or, 'Whose face is on the front? And what words are imprinted on it?' They all replied that the coin had the image of Caesar. Jesus cleverly responded, 'Then give to Caesar what belongs to him, and give to God what belongs to God!' This was an amazing reply and it baffled and awed His listeners.

Very often those who wish only harm to God's people refuse to hear the truth or to bend to logic. The same happens to those who claim to be believers but whose lives or beliefs do not match scriptural demands. You can argue as much as you like, but if their hearts are not with God, they will not understand, or, even if they do, they will reject the truth. Nothing can be done with these people – they must be shunned, as God requires.

### Verses 18-27

1.

Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

2.

Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

3.

Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

4.

And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.

5.



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And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.

6.

In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.

7.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?

8.

For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

9.

And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

10.

He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

Some of the Herodians may also have been Sadducees. So the ones who came afterwards may have been non-political Sadducees. They were opposed to the Pharisees in several doctrines. But, now they combined forces to destroy Christ.

One of their distinctives was a refusal to believe in a resurrection (which would later include the resurrection of Christ). So, that makes their question irrelevant, because it was to do with a post-resurrection life! But, it was sufficient to try and trip Jesus up with.

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The Sadducees put a question to Jesus: Moses told them that if a man died childless, the widow must marry the man's brother, who would then make sure the woman had children as heirs to the dead man. The Sadducees took this to the extreme, by saying there were seven brothers... so if each brother died after remarrying the woman, also leaving no children, and then the woman dies – whose wife is she after the resurrection?

Jesus swiftly rounded on them, saying they were completely ignorant of scripture and of God's power! He told them that in Heaven no-one marries, but exist as angels do – without formal ties to others, or in marriage. In more practical terms it probably means each would know the other, but in a sense of friendship and overall love.

Jesus then reminded the critics that when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, He told Moses He was the God of each of his earlier kinsmen when they were alive; God is the God of the living, not the dead. Those who had died on this earth are now alive in Paradise, waiting to enter Heaven. For this reason, the Sadducees were ignorant and spiritually untaught.

Many today claim to be believers, but are woefully ignorant of truth and doctrine. They come out with all kinds of silly arguments, showing they have not read scripture systematically, and did not really care what truth is. Jesus would not have been tied-up for long periods with these people, trying to answer their every criticism or query, because it would have wasted His time.

Many, affected by charismaticism, think they must answer every question and dot every 'i', in the hope that somehow their critics will come to learn truth. This is an Arminian idea, for it suggests we can, by careful answers, persuade others to change. It will not happen – their very continuing criticisms and queries show a dead mind and a rejection of truth. I cannot alter a critic's mind or heart!

Only the Holy Spirit can do that, by firstly regenerating the person's dead spirit. Without it, no critic will ever come to know truth, and we have no warrant to keep trying to answer every query... which, like queries put by the Pharisees and Sadducees, are meaningless, asked out of a proud heart that does not want answers. The real response should be to tell the person he or she is an unbeliever, who must be cast aside until and if they are regenerated.

### Verses 28-31

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1.

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

2.

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

3.

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

4.

And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

A scribe who heard Jesus' responses to the Pharisees came up to Him to talk. Obviously, from Jesus' reaction to him, we can see the man was more reasonable and a genuine Jew. The scribe asked Jesus what was the first commandment. Now any Jew could have answered that question, so the scribe was not looking for a mere parrot-fashion reply. He was wondering how Jesus would interpret it.

Jesus gave the reply any Jew would give: "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."

The commandment is still current and applies to all Believers. It is a powerful statement – how many of us can match it with our lives and beliefs? I mean, in actuality, not just in intellectual acceptance of the statement. It means that we hand over everything we are, and our everyday lives, to God, to do with us whatever He wishes. Can you truly comply with that magnificent

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demand? If you say 'yes', then why is your life no different from the lives of every unsaved person around you? Why do you not have holy power?

Jesus did not leave his reply at that, but added something else. He said "the second is like..." That is, the second commandment is similar to the first. "namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."Of course, all commandments are great, but Jesus Himself placed emphasis on these two, above the others.

As with commandments, many Christians think all sins are the same, but scripture places greater emphasis on two major sins – homosexuality and its underlying godlessness, and the sin that can never be forgiven. But, in an attempt to soften the curse upon both types of sin, Christians refuse to accept the special note made in scripture against these two sins. All sins have the same end – but not all sins have the same earthly weight.

Why did Jesus say that the second commandment is very similar to the first (note: not exactly the same but close to the same, for God always comes first)? When a man is a Believer he should love himself. This is what Jesus is saying. It does not mean 'love' in the narcissistic sense, but respect. It means that as God made us and we are in His image, we cannot hate ourselves or treat ourselves badly.

We must take care of ourselves and love (respect) the body we have been given. We have it in trust! And if we love ourselves we should also love others in the same way... yet, how many Christians love their fellows? I have spoken before of the way fellow Christians could not care less about me (or about others they deem not to be equal), because of their superior view about themselves and their wayward theologies. When we see others as better than ourselves, we level our attitudes to one that is Christ like. This is what Jesus is referring to.

There is an hierarchy of care though: God first, family second, fellow Believers next; all others last. But, each should be treated as equal and worthy of help. Of course, many, especially unbelievers, do not want such care, and hate us. Sadly, we must then cut off from them, for a number of reasons – but this does not mean we must thereby think of them as less than ourselves, no matter how evil they become. Also, there are Christians who care nothing for their fellows, no matter how badly off they are.

### Verses 32-34

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1.

And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

2.

And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

3.

And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

The scribe was pleased with Jesus' reply: "thou hast said the truth". "There is only one God; and there is none other but he." Remember this when all other religions try to vaunt their claims! They are all fake, no matter how big they are numerically or how influential. The scribe agreed with Jesus about the second commandment, too, and said that together, both commandments are "more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Indeed, this is God's own assessment of Jewish sacrifices. It also applies to all other religions, for they are false, and thus opposed to God. Many have castigated me for not showing 'respect' for other religions – I do not show respect because they deserve none. To give respect to something that is false is to treat it as equal and of the same worth. I cannot do that! Nor does God.

Many Christians try to appease God with their constant works and services. They attend every service and do all kinds of 'Christian' things, not once seeking God's word on the matter. Thus, most do and say what is not needed; many so-called Christian works are nothing of the kind – they are just things done because the individual thinks it is somehow 'holy' or acceptable. In reality, works done without the prompting of the Holy Spirit (or as defined in scripture) do nothing: they are Arminian-style works designed to induce God's pleasure in us. He ignores them and no reward is given.

I would dare to say that most 'churchy' acts of this kind are Arminian and psychological rather than truly of God. Our works and statements, no matter how pious, are not wanted by God; He

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wants ourselves, our whole lives, whether or not we 'do' things' for Him. Without this total obedience all our works are useless and unworthy.

After hearing what the scribe had to say, Jesus told him: 'You are not far from salvation!' Like the rich young ruler, and certain fellows met by Paul, the scribe was 'almost but not quite' a Christian. Of course, the gap between being a Christian and being unsaved may seem small – but, in reality, it is vast, separated by an eternity. The smallest gap is enough to send a man to hell. So, never be convinced by good works, good speech or any other seemingly pious life. The person is either saved, or not. There are no gradations! Not saved is not saved.

### Verses 35-37

1.

And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?

2.

For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

3.

David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

After his talk with the scribe, Jesus began to teach in the Temple, to an audience including scribes, the 'legal' experts on Mosaic law and scripture. Jesus asked them 'Why do you say the Messiah is the Son of David?' He was not questioning His own status, but wanted the scribes to define their belief.

Jesus then reminded the scribes what David had said after being prompted by the Holy Spirit: "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." That is, God the father said to God the Son that the Son would be in a position of power, and all his enemies would be subdued and put in a position of servitude. The wicked of this world

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always think they are in control. They slaughter innocents or bring them misery. They speak out against God and attack His people. Yet, they die. And after that they enter Sheol until the judgment. Then hell will be their abode. Their most vicious rejection of God alters nothing!

Jesus then pointed out that David called the Messiah 'Lord' (God). The Jews knew that the Messiah would come from the earthly lineage of David. But, why call Him God? That was the question to the scribes. The word 'Lord' in this text is kyrios and here means 'God' and 'Messiah'. We know that in both instances of 'Lord' Mark refers to one as God the Father and one as God the Son, though in both cases the same word, kyrios, is used, because the context defines it for us.

So, Jesus asked: how can David call the Messiah his son, and yet refer to Him as God (who pre-exists David)? The people listening to Him were absolutely delighted with His talk! Of course, Jesus was subtle but to the point, for He was actually saying that the Messiah is God, though He must come as a man... and that He was the Messiah, and therefore God! Yet another example of Jesus referring to Himself as God, for those ignorant people who claim He never called Himself God! Note that it was the 'common people' who "heard him gladly", not the Temple hierarchy. They were the polys (from which we get our 'politics', the Greek polis, etc), the majority who were not officials and did not have an high opinion of themselves.

Many Christians believe, against scripture, they can think, do and speak as they wish; they believe that they are always right, and so reject the words and warnings of called pastors, preachers and teachers. In their arrogance they think their 'interpretation' of scripture is correct and thereby denigrate called men whose ministry is of, and from, God! Such are deluded, arrogant and stiff-necked (untaught and refusing tuition).

### Verses 38-40

1.

And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,

2.

And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

3.

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Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

“And he said to them in his doctrine...” How many Christians understand the word ‘doctrine’? I can answer that with confidence – they have no real idea. In the broadest sense, ‘doctrine’ is everything found in scripture. Doctrine, *didachē*, is whatever teaching is given by anyone. Of course, in this text, it refers to what Jesus taught.

For Christians, ‘doctrine’ is everything contained in scripture. It is a fallacy and an error to think doctrine is only a limited number of statements about ‘core’ teachings. It is *everything* God says. And everything He says in His word is *didaskō* (the root of *didachē*): for instruction. The word also includes the teacher. The Church has been given called-men to teach doctrine, yet so few Christians bother to listen, thinking they know it all. They collect bits and pieces of home-spun teachings they happen to like, and do not see if they actually mix together or are true!

It is also a fallacy that we should not judge others. Apart from other texts that *command* us to judge our fellow believers, here Jesus makes it plain: “Beware of the scribes”! What else is this but a judgment of, and upon, the religious rulers of the day? In Jesus’ day the scribes and Pharisees would dress in such a way as to bring attention to themselves, because they loved having adulation as rulers. They made their cloaks and clothing longer than those of others, so that they would be instantly recognised as rulers. They also loved the way people in the streets called out to them in greeting, using their official titles. Rather like many pastors who love to use the title ‘reverend’, though it should never be applied to human beings!

The scribes and Pharisees expected and demanded a show of their status, by taking the best and most official seats in synagogues, and the most honoured seats in the upper rooms of houses during feasts, so that their status was recognised.

The same religious hierarchy were well-known for taking property from widows who could not fight back, leaving them destitute. They pretended to pray genuinely with long prayers! How many pastors and ‘higher-level’ Christians take up people’s time with long prayers (mostly repeated and vague)? We all know who they are, because they love to pray; that is, they *think* they are praying! They love to be called ‘prayer warriors’ and to be known as ‘intercessors’.



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Genuine intercessors say nothing.

The genuine ones pray unknown and do not vaunt their prayers or their perceived status. They pray in the privacy of their rooms, knowing that Jesus meant what He said – to pray in our closets. It surprises me how so many Christians and pastors cling to their traditional regular public prayer meetings, when Jesus was so plain in His command to pray privately! The two ideas clash violently: either tradition or Jesus is to be followed. Which is it to be? As Jesus said, such who ignore His word will be given the greater judgment before God.

### Verses 41-44

1.

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

2.

And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

3.

And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

4.

For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

Later, Jesus “sat over against the treasury”: the ‘Treasury’ was the vault used by priests to contain their clothes and items of gold and silver, especially to do with worship. Lower-status priests also lived in the Treasury, and it is where the money stolen from widows was kept. Outside the women’s treasury were thirteen chests (half for specific uses; the other half for general purposes) in the shape of trumpets. People would throw in their money as donations to the Temple.

## Mark 12

Written by K B Napier

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The Treasury had special significance, for it denoted not just silver and gold but also strength. Just as today, much money means strength and power to the rich man, so it meant the same for the Jewish Temple priests. In modern times it is certainly the feeling in Roman Catholicism for its unrevealed wealth.

There are three words for 'treasury' in Hebrew literature; one, bet nekhhot (from Akkadian), refers to treasures amassed and stored. Another is ozrot bet (Temple treasury). The Treasury contained immense wealth, as we read in the account of Nebuchadnezer, when he took the entire contents. At the time of Jesus, riches had accrued as before.

Jesus sat opposite the thirteen boxes, watching people come and go, and how they threw in their donations. He probably had his back to the massive stone blocks that made up the huge corridor around the Treasury. He noted how the rich cast in much money. But, then came along a poor widow, who threw in "two mites, which make a farthing". Two mites, or lepton, were tiny coins made of brass, about one fifth of a modern US cent. Or, in the money of those days, a farthing, or kodrantēs.

The mite, like other coins, possibly bore the image of a royal canopy and three ears of barley, and would have had a date between 37 AD to 44 AD. Of course, the image on the widow's mite depends very much on when Christ was actually born. If He was born earlier, the coin would have had an image of the Roman emperor and a pagan temple (up to 34 AD). The clue is probably in the fact that when Jesus asked to see a Denarius a little earlier, he was shown one with the emperor's face on it. Therefore, the mite would also have had the same image.

Jesus was impressed by the poor woman's offering and called His disciples, telling them that though the woman threw in the least, He counted it to be the most, even more than the cash thrown in by rich men. As I have taught many times, she cast in everything she had, giving to God before she considered what she had to eat, but the rich men gave of their "abundance". That is, the woman gave everything, including her living money, whilst the rich men only gave what they wished to spare from an already large income. Most people, including Christians, give from what they have spare. Before giving, they save for their own use and live well.

Thus, what they give is not a sacrifice, but can be given without altering their basic financial state or comfort. God looks upon such giving with approval – but what magnificent approval He

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gives to those who give everything! The same goes for everyday life: do you give everything to God? Is your career, or college course, or income, or house, etc., given to God Who owns them anyway? Do you consider everything you have to be God's – because they are, whether or not you like it!

Sadly, most Christians work hard only to keep themselves and their family. No-one else matters. Sacrificial giving is not part of their thinking; they give nothing to ministry/God, as if what they have is their own and is all there is in life. But, what is the point of having riches, whether millions or one penny), if God is not pleased? Give everything to God... only then will He give you everything back, one hundred-fold.

Unfortunately, groups of charismatics take this to an undesirable and wicked level. They give 'X' amount to 'God' and fully expect that amount to be increased by God one hundred times. To put it bluntly, they see it as an investment opportunity! Give one pound or one dollar, and they get back £100 or \$100! It would be understatement to refer to this as disgusting, a cynical abuse of what God says.

When we give it must be out of the depth of our heart, with no ulterior motive or hope of gain. The widow gave because she loved God. We should give because we love God and wish to further His ministries. Only when we give without desire for getting anything back, will God return what we give an hundredfold.

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