

Dr. Mark Jennings, Mark, Session 19, Conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees (Mark 12:13-37) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Jennings, Mark, Session 19, Conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees (Mark 12:13-37), Biblicalearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mark Jennings' lecture, the nineteenth session on the Gospel of Mark, specifically examines Jesus' final week and his confrontations with Jerusalem's religious leaders: **the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes**. The lecture analyzes how each group attempts to test Jesus' authority through distinct questions, such as the legality of paying taxes to Caesar posed by the Pharisees and Herodians, and the Sadducees' challenge regarding the resurrection based on their interpretation of Mosaic law. **Jennings meticulously unpacks Jesus' responses, highlighting his wisdom in navigating these contentious issues and his skillful use of scripture, even tailoring his arguments to the specific beliefs of his questioners.** The lecture further explores an amicable interaction with a scribe who inquires about the most important commandment, followed by Jesus raising a question about the scribes' understanding of the Messiah's relationship to David. **Ultimately, the session illuminates the growing conflict between Jesus and the religious establishment in Jerusalem during the last days of his life.**

**2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Jennings, Mark, Session 19 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament →
Gospels → Mark).**



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3. Briefing Document: Jennings, Session 19, Conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees (Mark 12:13-37)

Briefing Document: Analysis of Mark 12:13-37 - Conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees

Overview: This lecture by Dr. Mark Jennings focuses on Mark 12:13-37, a pivotal passage detailing Jesus' final week in Jerusalem and his confrontations with various factions of the Jewish leadership: the Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, and a scribe. Jennings highlights Jesus' awareness of his impending death and his deliberate engagement with these groups in the temple, characterizing these interactions as attempts to "test and trap Jesus." The lecture analyzes the specific questions posed by each group and Jesus' masterful responses, emphasizing themes of authority, hypocrisy, the nature of God and the resurrection, the interpretation of scripture, and the relationship between love of God and love of neighbor.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

1. The Setting and Context of Conflict:

- Jesus is in his last week of life, fully aware of his impending fate.
- He continues to teach in the temple, which Jennings argues he has already "cursed and declared that its purposes are now being moved elsewhere."
- The Jerusalem leadership, primarily composed of Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes (with the Sanhedrin as the backdrop), actively seeks to challenge Jesus' authority.
- Jennings reminds the audience of the earlier parable of the wicked tenants, where Jesus associated the religious leadership with those who rejected God and even killed his son (representing himself), setting the stage for these conflicts.

2. The Pharisees and Herodians' Question on Taxation (Mark 12:13-17):

- **The Unlikely Alliance:** Jennings emphasizes the unusual pairing of Pharisees and Herodians, two groups typically opposed due to the Herodians' pro-Roman stance and Hellenistic leanings, which the Pharisees resisted. Their alliance here underscores their shared desire to trap Jesus, mirroring their earlier collaboration in Galilee.

- "Of course, this is an unlikely alliance between the Pharisees and the Herodians. This would have been two groups that, in most circumstances, would have been opposed to each other."
- **Flattery as a Trap:** The question begins with flattery, praising Jesus for his truthfulness and impartiality. Jennings points out the irony, noting that such flattery often precedes insincere or manipulative intentions throughout Mark's account of Jesus' final days.
- "And there's a lot of irony in chapter 12 all the way through Jesus' trial. A lot of irony where you have people saying things in insult or in falseness or in flattery that are actually true, even though they don't realize it."
- **The Hypocrisy:** Jesus, "knowing their hypocrisy," recognizes their true motive is to test him. Jennings explains the Greek origin of "hypocrite" as an actor, highlighting the idea of pretending to be something one is not.
- "But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, why put me to the test?"
- **The Denarius and its Significance:** The coin requested by Jesus, a Roman denarius, bore the image and inscription of Tiberius Caesar, including claims of divinity ("son of the divine Augustus") and his mother's status as a high priest, highlighting the religious implications of Roman rule.
- "The Denarius was a Roman silver coin, at this time, would have on one side the bust of Tiberius Caesar with an abbreviation that stood for an inscription that would read Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus."
- **Jesus' Wise Answer:** Jesus' response, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's," is analyzed for its multifaceted wisdom.
- It acknowledges the legitimacy of civil government and its monetary systems.
- It asserts God's ultimate sovereignty over all things, including human governments.
- Jennings notes the subtle irony that while the coin bears Caesar's image, humans themselves bear God's image, implying everything should ultimately be in service to God.

- The answer successfully avoids both advocating for rebellion against Rome and condoning what could be seen as blasphemous imperial claims, leaving his opponents "marveled."

3. The Sadducees' Question on the Resurrection (Mark 12:18-27):

- **The Sadducees' Denial of Resurrection:** Jennings explains that the Sadducees, unlike the Pharisees, denied the resurrection of the dead. Their question about a woman married to seven brothers through the practice of levirate marriage was intended to highlight what they perceived as the absurdity of the resurrection.
- "Now, the Sadducees are seeking here to discredit Jesus' belief in the resurrection. This is something, as the text says, the Sadducees as a group denied..."
- **Their Limited Scriptural Authority:** A key point is the Sadducees' exclusive recognition of the Pentateuch (the first five books of Moses) as scriptural authority. This explains why they wouldn't be swayed by Old Testament passages from prophets like Isaiah or Daniel, which do contain foreshadowings of resurrection.
- "Now, the Sadducees recognize only the Pentateuch... And the Sadducees recognized only the Pentateuch as scriptural authority, and so they denied the resurrection."
- **Jesus' Scriptural Rebuttal from the Pentateuch:** Jennings marvels at Jesus' strategic response. Instead of using prophetic texts, Jesus refutes the Sadducees' denial of resurrection by quoting from Exodus (the passage about the burning bush), which is within the Pentateuch they accept.
- "As for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not God of the dead, but of the living."
- Jennings explains that the implication is that God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob persists because God is the God of the living, not the dead.
- **Ignorance of Scripture and the Power of God:** Jesus accuses the Sadducees of "knowing neither the Scriptures nor the power of God."

- He argues that they misunderstand the nature of resurrected life, which is not simply a continuation of earthly existence with marriage. Instead, resurrected beings will be "like angels in heaven," where marriage is irrelevant.
- "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."

4. The Scribe's Question About the Greatest Commandment (Mark 12:28-34):

- **A Different Encounter:** Unlike the confrontational approaches of the Pharisees and Sadducees, this interaction with a scribe is described as "very amicable." Jennings emphasizes that this particular scribe's positive response should not be taken as representative of all scribes, as later in chapter 12, Jesus will issue harsh criticisms against them.
- **The Nature of the Question:** The scribe asks which commandment is "the most important of all," which Jennings clarifies is akin to asking which commandment is "incumbent on everyone," "supersedes the other commandments," or serves as the "hermeneutical key" for understanding the entire Law (Torah). He notes this was a common topic of discussion among Jewish scholars.
- **Jesus' Answer: Love of God and Neighbor:** Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (the Shema), emphasizing the oneness of God and the command to love him with "all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." He then adds Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," stating that there is no commandment greater than these two combined.
- "Jesus answered, the most important is 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.' 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.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."
- **The Scribe's Affirmation:** The scribe agrees with Jesus' answer, quoting and paraphrasing scripture (including Deuteronomy, Leviticus, and prophetic texts like Hosea) to emphasize that loving God and neighbor is more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices. This aligns with the prophetic critique of empty ritualism.
- "The scribe said to him, 'You are right, teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all your heart and with all

your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

- **Jesus' Positive Assessment:** Impressed by the scribe's wise understanding, Jesus tells him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." Jennings interprets this as acknowledging that the scribe's grasp of the core principles of God's will (love of God expressed through love of neighbor) aligns with the essence of Jesus' own message about the nearness of the Kingdom. This understanding should lead the scribe to recognize Jesus' role and mission.

5. Jesus' Question About the Christ and the Son of David (Mark 12:35-37):

- **Jesus Takes the Initiative:** After the amicable exchange with the scribe, and with no one daring to ask him further questions, Jesus initiates a discussion about the scribal understanding of the Messiah.
- **The Paradox:** Jesus poses a problem by quoting Psalm 110:1 ("The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet'"). He then asks how the Christ can be both David's son (a common Messianic expectation based on 2 Samuel 7) and David's Lord.
- "As Jesus taught in the temple, he said, 'How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself in the Holy Spirit declared, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.'" David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?'"
- **No Explicit Answer Provided (in this passage):** Jennings highlights that Jesus doesn't explicitly resolve this paradox in this passage.
- **The Reader's Understanding:** However, Jennings points out that the reader of Mark, having witnessed Jesus' baptism, divine affirmations, and the transfiguration, understands the answer: the Son of David is also the Son of God.
- **The Crowd's Positive Reception:** The "great throng heard him gladly," suggesting they were receptive to Jesus' challenging of traditional interpretations and the deeper understanding of the Messiah he implied.

Conclusion:

Dr. Jennings' lecture provides a detailed analysis of the conflict narratives in Mark 12:13-37. He emphasizes Jesus' wisdom, his command of scripture even when engaging opponents on their own terms, and the profound theological implications of his responses. The passage reveals the diverse challenges Jesus faced from the religious and political authorities in Jerusalem during his final week, highlighting the fundamental differences in their understanding of God, scripture, and the coming Messiah. The encounter with the scribe offers a moment of positive affirmation, suggesting that some within the religious establishment were open to Jesus' teachings. Finally, Jesus' own question about the Messiah's identity sets the stage for a deeper understanding of his divine nature.

4. Study Guide: Jennings, Session 19, Conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees (Mark 12:13-37)

Study Guide: Mark 12:13-37 - Conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees

Key Themes:

- Jesus' authority and wisdom in the face of opposition.
- The contrasting beliefs and approaches of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
- The nature of true obedience and the most important commandments.
- The Messianic identity of Jesus and its implications.
- The relationship between earthly authority (Caesar) and divine authority (God).
- The Sadducees' denial of the resurrection and Jesus' counter-argument.
- The shift in focus from external rituals to internal devotion and love of neighbor.

Quiz:

1. Describe the unlikely alliance formed to test Jesus in Mark 12:13. What was their shared motivation despite their differences?
2. Explain the dilemma the Pharisees and Herodians attempted to create for Jesus with their question about paying taxes to Caesar. What made their question a potential trap?
3. Summarize Jesus' response to the question about taxes. What principle did he articulate, and how did it satisfy both groups present?
4. What was the central theological belief denied by the Sadducees? How did this belief influence the question they posed to Jesus?
5. Describe the scenario the Sadducees presented to Jesus regarding a woman married to seven brothers. What was the intended purpose of this hypothetical situation?
6. How did Jesus refute the Sadducees' argument against the resurrection? What scriptural authority did he use, and what key point did he make about God?
7. In the conversation with the scribe, what question did the scribe ask Jesus? Why was this question considered significant in Jewish tradition?

8. What two commandments did Jesus identify as the most important? How did he connect them, and what Old Testament passages did he cite?
9. Explain the scribe's positive response to Jesus' answer. What did the scribe affirm, and how did he elaborate on Jesus' teaching?
10. What question did Jesus pose regarding the scribes' understanding of the Christ's identity in relation to David? What Old Testament passage did he reference, and what was the implicit challenge in his question?

Answer Key:

1. The Pharisees and Herodians, two normally opposed groups, formed an alliance to trap Jesus. Their shared motivation was to discredit him in the eyes of the people or the Roman authorities.
2. The dilemma was that if Jesus advocated paying taxes, he could be seen as supporting Roman rule and alienating Jewish nationalists. If he opposed paying taxes, he could be accused of sedition against Caesar.
3. Jesus responded, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." He affirmed the legitimacy of earthly government while also asserting God's ultimate sovereignty over all. This response was difficult for both groups to directly oppose.
4. The Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead. This disbelief shaped their question, as they aimed to demonstrate the supposed absurdity and logistical problems of a resurrected life based on their understanding of earthly customs.
5. They presented a scenario of a woman who, according to the law of levirate marriage, was married successively to seven brothers who all died without leaving her any children. The purpose was to highlight what they perceived as a ridiculous outcome in the resurrection regarding marital relationships.
6. Jesus refuted them by accusing them of not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God. He used the passage from Exodus about the burning bush, where God refers to himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, arguing that God is the God of the living, not the dead, implying their continued existence.
7. The scribe asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" This question was significant because it explored the core principles of Jewish law and the hierarchy of commandments, a topic of ongoing discussion among religious scholars.

8. Jesus identified the two most important commandments as: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 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," (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). He connected them by implying that love of neighbor is a natural outflow of a complete love for God.
9. The scribe agreed with Jesus, stating that loving God with all one's being and loving one's neighbor as oneself is "much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." He affirmed the priority of inward devotion and ethical behavior over ritualistic practices.
10. Jesus asked, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?" He referenced Psalm 110:1, where David says, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.'" The implicit challenge was to reconcile the idea of the Messiah being David's descendant while David himself calls the Messiah "Lord," hinting at a greater identity for the Christ.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the distinct strategies and underlying beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees as revealed in their attempts to test Jesus in Mark 12:13-27. How do their questions reflect their respective concerns and interpretations of religious authority?
2. Discuss the significance of Jesus' response to the question about paying taxes (Mark 12:13-17). How did his answer navigate the political and religious tensions of the time, and what enduring principles does it offer regarding the relationship between civic and divine duties?
3. Examine Jesus' argument against the Sadducees' denial of the resurrection (Mark 12:18-27). How effective was his use of the Pentateuch, their accepted scripture, and what does his response reveal about the nature of resurrected life?
4. Compare and contrast Jesus' interactions with the opposing religious groups (Pharisees and Sadducees) and the individual scribe in Mark 12:13-34. What does this series of encounters reveal about Jesus' teaching style and his ability to engage with different perspectives?

5. Explore the implications of Jesus' question concerning the Messiah's relationship to David (Mark 12:35-37). How does this passage challenge conventional Messianic expectations, and how does it foreshadow the understanding of Jesus' identity presented in the Gospel of Mark?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Pharisees:** A prominent Jewish religious and social group known for their strict adherence to the Law (Torah) and oral traditions. They were generally opposed to Roman rule and held significant influence among the common people.
- **Sadducees:** Another influential Jewish group, primarily composed of priests and wealthy elites, who accepted only the Pentateuch as authoritative scripture and denied the resurrection of the dead and the existence of angels and spirits. They often collaborated with Roman authorities to maintain their power.
- **Herodians:** A political faction that supported the Herodian dynasty and their alliance with Rome. They were generally more open to Hellenistic influences than the Pharisees.
- **Sanhedrin:** The supreme council of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus, composed of members from the priestly aristocracy (often Sadducees), Pharisees, and scribes. It held legislative and judicial authority under Roman rule.
- **Denarius:** A Roman silver coin that bore the image and inscription of Caesar. It was a common form of currency and was used to pay the Roman poll tax in Judea.
- **Poll Tax:** A tax levied as a fixed sum on every liable individual. In Judea, this tax was paid directly to Rome and was a source of resentment among the Jewish population.
- **Hypocrisy:** The practice of claiming to have moral standards or beliefs but behaving in a way that contradicts them. Jesus frequently accused the religious leaders of hypocrisy.
- **Leveret Marriage:** A custom described in the Pentateuch (Deuteronomy 25:5-10) where if a man died without leaving an heir, his brother was obligated to marry the widow and raise up offspring in the name of the deceased brother.

- **Pentateuch:** The first five books of the Hebrew Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It was the only part of scripture recognized as fully authoritative by the Sadducees.
- **Shema:** A central Jewish prayer affirming the oneness of God, taken from Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." It was recited daily by devout Jews.
- **Messiah:** The awaited anointed king and deliverer of the Jewish people, prophesied in the Old Testament. The expectation of the Messiah was a significant aspect of Jewish religious thought in Jesus' time.
- **Son of David:** A traditional title for the Messiah, indicating his lineage as a descendant of King David, according to Old Testament prophecies (e.g., 2 Samuel 7).

5. FAQs on Jennings, Mark, Session 19, Conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees (Mark 12:13-37), Biblealearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Mark 12:13-37

1. Why did the Pharisees and Herodians, typically opposing groups, unite to question Jesus about taxes? The Pharisees and Herodians formed an unlikely alliance because they shared a common goal: to trap Jesus. They believed that asking him about the lawfulness of paying taxes to Caesar would force him into a difficult position. If he advocated for paying taxes, he could alienate his Jewish followers who resented Roman rule. If he opposed it, he could be accused of sedition against Rome by the Herodians. This alliance highlights their desperation to discredit Jesus, even requiring them to set aside their own political and religious differences.

2. How did Jesus' answer regarding paying taxes ("Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's") address the trap set by the Pharisees and Herodians? Jesus' response was brilliant because it avoided both potential traps. By acknowledging that things bearing Caesar's image (the denarius) belonged to Caesar, he did not incite rebellion against Roman authority. At the same time, by stating that things belonging to God should be rendered to God, he asserted God's ultimate sovereignty over all aspects of life, including earthly governance. This answer was difficult for either group to openly criticize, as it respected both civil authority (to a degree) and divine authority.

3. Why did the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, question Jesus about marriage in the afterlife? The Sadducees' question about a woman married to seven brothers, asking whose wife she would be in the resurrection, was a calculated attempt to expose what they believed to be the absurdity of the resurrection. Since they held a materialistic worldview and only accepted the Pentateuch as authoritative scripture (which they interpreted as not explicitly teaching resurrection), they used this seemingly illogical scenario to mock the idea of a future resurrection and undermine Jesus' authority.

4. How did Jesus refute the Sadducees' denial of the resurrection using only the Pentateuch, which was their accepted scripture? Instead of referencing prophetic books that the Sadducees rejected, Jesus cleverly used a passage from Exodus (the book of Moses) concerning the burning bush. God's statement, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," implied that these patriarchs were still in a relationship with God. Since God is the God of the living, not the dead, Jesus argued that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must still be alive in some sense, thus demonstrating the reality of resurrection based on the Sadducees' own accepted scriptures.

5. What additional point did Jesus make to the Sadducees regarding the nature of resurrected life? Beyond proving the reality of resurrection from the Pentateuch, Jesus also addressed the Sadducees' assumption that resurrected life would simply be a continuation of earthly life. He stated that in the resurrection, people "neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." This indicates that resurrected life is of a different quality and nature, where earthly institutions like marriage are no longer applicable.

6. How did the scribe's question about the most important commandment differ from the questions posed by the Pharisees and Sadducees? Unlike the Pharisees and Sadducees, who sought to trap and discredit Jesus with their questions, the scribe approached Jesus with a genuine inquiry. Having observed Jesus' wise responses to the other groups, this scribe was interested in understanding the core principle of God's law, asking which commandment was the most important or the hermeneutical key to understanding the others.

7. What was Jesus' response to the scribe's question about the most important commandment, and why was it significant? Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (the Shema), emphasizing the absolute priority of loving God with one's whole being (heart, soul, mind, and strength). He then added Leviticus 19:18, stating that the second most important commandment is to love one's neighbor as oneself. This response was significant because it summarized the entirety of God's will in these two interconnected commands, highlighting that love for God should naturally lead to love for others. The scribe's positive affirmation of Jesus' answer and understanding that these commands supersede ritualistic sacrifices was also seen by Jesus as putting him "not far from the kingdom of God," suggesting an understanding of the true nature of God's desires.

8. What was the significance of Jesus questioning the scribes' understanding of the Messiah as solely the "son of David" by referencing Psalm 110:1? By quoting Psalm 110:1, where David refers to the Messiah as "Lord," Jesus challenged the limited Messianic expectations of the scribes (and many others) who primarily focused on the Messiah's Davidic lineage. Jesus posed a problem: how could the Messiah be both David's son and David's Lord? While Jesus didn't explicitly answer the question in this passage, the implied answer within the broader context of Mark's Gospel is that the Messiah is not just a human descendant of David but also divine – the Son of God. This questioning aimed to broaden their understanding of the Messiah's identity and authority.