

Mark 11:27-12:44

THEME SENTENCE:

Jesus the judge systematically exposes the fruitlessness of Israel: her end is inevitable.

Jesus has now entered Jerusalem as the king-judge: Judaism and the whole of its sacrificial system is to be destroyed because it is not producing fruit. But we haven't yet been told how exactly she is fruitless. Meanwhile, inevitably, opposition from the leaders of Israel grows from 11:27 all the way to the cross ... and this comprehensive rejection of Jesus by each of the religious groupings is their fruitlessness: God is looking for the acknowledgement of his Son.

What is wrong in Israel?

11:27-12:12	opposition from chief priests, etc	Their question is: who do you think you are? The obvious question to ask of someone who's just threatened to 'destroy' the temple (cf 14:58 for their distorted version of what they claim he said). Probably 'the baptism of John' is 'John's baptism-and-preaching-of-preparation-for-Jesus'; in other words, who do you think John was (since he was preparing for me)? The parable is clear that both John (one of the servants) and he himself (the Son) are from God. So Jesus' question to them is: will you accept Jesus' authority? Their answer is a clear 'no' (11:31-33; 12:7).
12:13-17	opposition from Pharisees/Herodians	As at 3:6, groups with almost opposite aspirations (ie pro-Jew <i>versus</i> pro-Rome) find themselves united in hatred to Jesus. Their attitude to the poll tax shows their concern is with this world and its rulers (... which is to be like Satan and to oppose God 8:32-33). The real issue for Jesus is their poor attitude to God: they've marginalised him.
12:18-27	opposition from Sadducees	Jesus' real criticism of these theological conservatives is in 24. God has made himself known as God of past, present and future, so he's far too much the God of life to name himself after men who were dead <u>and gone</u> . But their ignorance of this most basic fact of who God is, despite his revelation, shows they are effectively ignoring him.

Application: The problem with these groups is their relationship with God: (in the 3 paragraphs) they will not humbly accept this authority, give him his due or know him (in Scripture, and experientially). They have utterly missed the point: the fruit God wants is not religious observance, but relationship with him.

What will happen to Israel?

12:1-12	the covenant is taken ... and given to others	This is a reworked parable from Isaiah 5:1-7 where the owner is God, the vineyard Israel, and which ends with the vineyard destroyed because the fruit was so bad. In this version though, it's the <u>tenants</u> who are destroyed (so no wonder they heard this story as 'against them' 12). The main point here seems to be what will happen to the nation of Israel. They had ignored the prophets God had sent, and now they wilfully reject the Son. And the result? God will make a new covenant with a new people. And, of course, this happens precisely through the dreadful thing of their rejection of Jesus: that's the means by which God does the 'marvellous' thing of putting Jesus at the centre of the people of God (as pictured in 3:31-35).
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Application: This parable is scary. Note the unsubtle rejection of Jesus (- they know who he is); note the finality of God's judgement (- they're destroyed).

Two important questions about Israel

12:28-34	is every single Jew to be condemned?	We don't know if this Jewish leader became a follower, but he's warm towards Jesus (32a) and recognises that God isn't interested in religion, but demands everything (33b). So, yes, even a Jew <u>can</u> be 'not far' from salvation.
12:35-44	is Jesus right when it all looks so impressive?	Yes Jewish religion looks good. But the teachers were wrong in their teaching (- reducing the Messiah whom David called his Lord) and in their showy religion (which will not save them). What God values instead is in 41-44.