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TEACHING WITH AUTHORITY

– MARK 12:13-27. – *SEPTEMBER 16*. –

Golden Text: – "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

TODAY'S lesson considers the events of the last day of our Lord's public ministry. As already noted, he rested at Bethany over the Sabbath and participated in a feast to his honor that (Jewish) Sabbath eve. The next day, the first day of the week – Sunday – he rode on the ass, making a triumphal entry into the city of the great King. Mark informs us that he visited the Temple on that occasion, looking about on the condition of things, and that it was the next day, Monday, that he drove out the money-changers, etc. Now we come to the day following, Tuesday, the last day of his public teaching. Note the record thus: John 12:1 informs us that the Feast at Bethany was "six days before the Passover" – Sabbath; Mark 11:1 records the events of the next day, Sunday; Mark 11:2-19 relates the events of Monday; Mark 14:1 shows that Wednesday and Thursday intervened before the Passover Feast began.

PERPLEXITY OF THE JEWISH RULERS

The leading men of all the various sects and parties were in perplexity how to deal with Jesus. They believed him to be an impostor, because his claims seemed to them to be absurd, contrary to all worldly wisdom, the only kind which they possessed. True, they recognized that he was a brilliant man, that he had great force and power with the common people. But they said to themselves, "Although he does not publicly claim to be the Messiah he nevertheless gives that intimation – promising his disciples participation with him in the Kingdom when he shall be exalted to power – and is leading the people to believe

that by and by the long-expected Kingdom of God will be established. He is making headway, his miracles being especially effective in supporting his claims; he is establishing thus a new sect, a new party, that will prove antagonistic to all present sects and parties, and diminish our influence with the people. Although we have differences of opinion on many subjects we are all striving together for the favor of the great Roman empire, under whose control we are now. We are seeking to have greater and greater liberties and privileges, and if this new party succeeds it will diminish our influence at Rome and appear to the emperor and senate like a rebellion. The Romans already have that opinion of us as a people, that we are rebellious, etc., and we have been endeavoring to allay that sentiment and establish confidence in the stability of our religious system and its power over our people. This new religious system, therefore, threatens not only the prosperity of our various denominations but also the prosperity of our nation. Jesus should be killed for the good of the cause: as patriots we owe it to ourselves and to the whole nation and its future welfare."

We are informed that they sought to kill him, and that privately they had determined this from the time of his calling Lazarus back from the tomb. His triumphal entry at the head of a multitude shouting, "Hosanna to the son of David," increased their concern and their determination against him. His driving out of the money-changers, etc., from the Temple was a further manifestation of his consciousness of his power with the common people. Apparently there was only one way to get to him: the people evidently would not stand by quietly and see him injured. Whatever was to be done must be accomplished in a quiet and stealthy manner and quickly. Moreover, the people had a reverence for the Roman soldiers, and it would be desirable therefore to have him executed under Pilate's decree. But how could they bring the matter before Pilate? What charges could

they make? It was the people who had proclaimed him king and not himself. They must if possible get him to commit himself to some treasonable statement, on account of which they could bring him before Pilate as an enemy of the Roman [R3852 : page 285] empire, and thus have him legally executed in a manner which the public could not resist. The Romans permitted the Jews to govern themselves, merely stipulating for tribute and loyalty to Rome; and Pilate with his soldiers resided at Jerusalem, not to interfere with Jewish laws and customs, but merely to preserve the peace and the dignity of Rome.

AN ENTANGLING QUESTION

With a view to getting Jesus to commit himself as an opponent of the Roman Empire, two groups of Jews came to Jesus with a question. The Pharisees in a general way held that the Jews as the people of God were to be the rulers of all other peoples, and that they should never pay tribute, taxes, to other rulers. Their teachings on these lines, however, were privately given, for fear of being apprehended as traitors to [R3853 : page 285] Rome. The Herodians, on the contrary, were Jews who took sides with Herod, and stood firmly and boldly and publicly for the suzerainty of the Roman Empire, claiming that it was to the advantage of the people of Israel to be under the Roman power, and that the paying of tribute was right and proper. The common people were understood to specially favor the view held by the Pharisees and were opposed to the view of the Herodians. Representatives of these two classes, coming to Jesus in public where he was teaching and where the common people could hear the question and note the answer, hoped to get him to do one of two things: either declare with the Herodians that the tax was right and proper and thus break his influence with the common people, or publicly to side with the Pharisees and common people, denounce the tax tribute, declare it improper and contrary to the divine will, etc., and thus make declaration that

under no conditions then prevailing could the instigation of insurrection amongst the Jews in opposition to the tribute tax be construed as traitorous.

Note the subtlety of the entire program: they addressed Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we know that thou art true and carest not for any one: for thou regardest not the person of man, but of a truth teachest the way of God." Here all the stress was laid upon his courage to utter truth, to be faithful to God at any cost, to be a teacher of the people on whom they could thoroughly rely, fearing nothing for himself. All this was so stated in order that the Master in the presence of the multitude might be compelled to give a straightforward answer to the question they were about to put, and that answer they fully believed would be one that would convict him of treason. Then came the question: "Is it lawful [according to the Law of Moses] to give tribute unto Caesar or not?" Shall we give or shall we not give?

A HEAVENLY-WISE REPLY

Our Lord understood the situation in an instant and said, "Why tempt ye me?" – Why do you try to entrap me? Look at the motives in your own hearts and judge of how much sincerity or falsity is there. Get a lesson out of this matter that will do you good; show me the tribute coin. They handed him a silver penny or denarius of Tiberius Caesar, stamped with the likeness of Caesar and an inscription concerning him, just as coins of today in Europe bear the image and superscription of the reigning sovereign. Jesus inquired of his tormentors, "Whose image and superscription is this [on this coin]?" They replied, "Caesar's." Then he gave them the answer to their question, saying, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

Jesus did not go into the question of how much advantage the Jewish nation was reaping from the protection afforded the

Jews against the assaults of other nations. He did not attempt to declare that justice was connected with every feature of the tribute tax, but he did sum up the matter in those few words, "If Caesar has some just claims against you, render to him accordingly – this will not interfere with God's just claims against you, which you should be equally ready to meet." This answer was not merely an evasion of the question: it was an answer in the full sense, probably far beyond what they could fully comprehend; but they did comprehend that they had failed to entrap him, that he had answered their question in a manner which would never have occurred to them, that he had a wisdom far beyond theirs and all natural earthly wisdom – he had the wisdom from above, first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy of entreatment, full of mercy and good fruits. – Jas. 3:17.

ADMONITION APPROPRIATE TO US

The Scriptural assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God is illustrated in this matter. The Pharisees, the Herodians, intended evil to the Lord and his apostles, their teachings, etc. – they designed their overthrow. But in the Lord's providence the very reverse of this resulted. A lesson came to the common people who heard, a lesson which doubtless bore fruit in any who were in a right condition of heart; but the lesson was especially profitable, we are assured, to the apostles and to all of the Lord's followers since. Its lesson is that we are not called upon to war with carnal weapons against the powers that be – that all the followers of the Lord Jesus are to seek peace and pursue it, endeavoring to do good unto all men as they have opportunity, especially to the household of faith, and to speak evil of and to do evil to none.

To the disciples this would imply that the affairs of the world may be safely left with the world, under the Lord's supervision, for he is able to make even the wrath of men to

praise him; the remainder he can restrain, and in due time all of his gracious purposes will be accomplished. (Psa. 76:10.) Until that due time shall come we are with patience to wait for it, knowing that in the end it will come and will not tarry. The Lord's due time for the changes in the world's affairs is what we are waiting on, and meantime we are occupying, using, our talents and opportunities, not in fighting worldly battles either by tongue or pen or with other earthly weapons, but fighting the good fight of faith, laying hold upon eternal life, whereunto we **[R3853 : page 286]** are called, that we may thus be prepared by the trials and difficulties and sacrifices of the present time for the glorious share in his Kingdom reign and blessing which the Lord has promised to us as his followers if we are faithful.

If Caesar commands taxes and they are general we are not to dispute them. When the Lord's time shall come, when Caesar no longer shall collect taxes from the heirs of the Kingdom, it will be manifest to us, for then Caesar will have no power or authority to collect these. If Caesar merely gives us liberty to vote it is not at all necessary that we should accept or use that liberty; should he by and by command us to vote, it would be proper for us to comply and use our best judgment. But in the absence of any command or compulsion it would seem that those consecrated to be followers of the Lamb, to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, would have plenty to do in following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth – in fulfilling the terms of their consecration as members of the body of Christ, in doing good unto all men as they have opportunity, especially to the household of faith.

WHAT WE RENDER TO GOD

What we shall render to God depends upon who we are and what we see and know respecting him and his will. The world in general realizes some responsibility to a Creator or First Cause,

but their enlightenment being limited their responsibilities are correspondingly limited. Those who have seen and heard and tasted that God is gracious, that his favor has been manifested in the redemption price paid at Calvary, have greater privileges than their less enlightened neighbors and correspondingly greater responsibilities. To these it is but a reasonable service that they should present to the Lord the little all that they possess in this present life, and this becomes a still more reasonable matter when they learn that God has sent forth during this Gospel age a special message of invitation to joint-heirship with his Son in the Kingdom. Those who are thus enlightened and who possess any measure of wisdom should, it would seem, joyfully lay aside every weight and besetting sin and earthly ambition, and strive to attain to the gracious things of the divine promise to the seed of Abraham. – Gal. 3:29.

The Prophet, speaking for this class of holy favored ones of this Gospel age, the consecrated, inquires, What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits to us? What would be the proper course for such to pursue in their relationship to God? The Lord through the Prophet gives the correct answer, saying, "I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord." (Psa. 116:12,13.) The cup of salvation, as our Master explains, has a two-fold significance: it implies that we all share with him in his cup of suffering, of self-denial, of self-abasement for the sake of the Lord's cause in this time when sin abounds, when the prince of this world rules in the hearts of the majority, when darkness covers the earth, society, and gross darkness the heathen. We have the promise that those who drink of the Lord's cup now will also drink of his cup of rejoicing and blessing and refreshment in the Kingdom.

In other words, in the divine order these two features are indissolubly joined, "If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him," if we partake of the trials and difficulties and

oppositions incidental to faithfulness to the Lord, we shall have a share with him in the glory, honor and immortality by and by; but if we refuse the cup of trial and discipline and experience and suffering of this present time we are thus also incidentally refusing and passing by the cup of glory and blessing of the Millennial age and of eternity. Let us take the cup, let us appropriate it, let us render unto the Lord our God our reasonable service – a full consecration of heart and life. And this appreciation of a reasonable service will doubtless continue to increase before the mental vision: as we go onward we will perceive greater privileges and opportunities of sacrifice, and as we measure up to these will get clearer and better and grander views of the coming glories, and also our heavenly rewards.

"WHOSE WIFE SHALL SHE BE?"

When the Pharisees and Herodians withdrew, discomfited by our Lord's wise answer, representatives of another sect, the Sadducees, came with a question to entrap him. To appreciate their question we must understand **[R3854 : page 286]** that the Sadducees were a class of Jews well educated, intellectual, but utterly lacking in any faith respecting a future life. Whether or not they believed in a God, we are not informed, but that they did not believe in invisible angels or spirit beings of any kind, and that they denied that there would be a resurrection for mankind more than for the brute beast was clearly stated. These were worldly-wise men who believed that their countrymen were laboring under a foolish delusion in expecting any blessings in the future. They held that when a man dies that is the end of him. The Sadducees presented a question which they thought would show up the weakness of Jesus' position before the people, and incidentally also the weakness of the theories of other Jews.

Their question was probably a suppositious one, though stated as a fact. They cited the Jewish Law respecting Jewish marriage stated in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. The object of that law seemingly was to prevent the obliteration of any family. The suppositious case was that under this law one brother married and, dying without children, the second brother married his wife, and so on until the seven brethren had married the one woman, each in turn. Now the query was, Whose wife should she be in the resurrection, since she was the wife of the seven during her earthly life? The question was intended to show the absurdity of believing in a resurrection, that it would occasion all kinds of confusion, etc.

Our Lord's answer was, Is not your difficulty, your error, this – that ye understand not the Scriptures nor the power of God? If you sufficiently appreciated the power of God you would know that he who is able to raise the dead is able also to order and direct all the **[R3854 : page 287]** incidental affairs connected with the resurrection of mankind. If you had a proper appreciation of God's character you would have faith in him and would not stumble over such a trivial matter as this. Leave it with God. Let me explain, however, that when they shall rise from the dead they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but will be like the angels in heaven, sexless. This was a new thought to them.

Our Lord did not attempt a particular answer to their question, knowing (1) that they were not sincere questioners, and that such an explanation would be like casting pearls before swine; (2) furthermore, it was not yet time to give an explanation of many of the details respecting the resurrection. Many of those details belong only to the spiritual, and could not be understood by any except those begotten of the Spirit, and the Spirit begetting could not come until Pentecost, and Pentecost could not come until after the Lord had paid our penalty with the

sacrifice of himself and had ascended up on high and appeared in the presence of God on our behalf.

From our standpoint, however, we see that our Lord, without designating the resurrection of the Church or the resurrection of the world, stated the matter broadly in such a way as to apply to both. For instance, those who will constitute the Church, and who will be changed from earthly to heavenly nature in the First Resurrection – "changed in a moment" – will be Spirit beings like unto our Lord, and like unto the angels also in respect that they will be sexless. As for the world, which will not be changed from earthly to heavenly nature, and will not experience a resurrection change in a moment, but a gradual change or uplift, progressing step by step during the thousand years of the "times of restitution," it will also be true that when they shall have attained that world and shall have attained the resurrection from the dead they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but be sexless. That is to say, the restored human family will, during the period of restitution, lose their sexual distinctions, and at the end of the thousand years be all of them in perfection, like Adam was before Eve was taken from his side.

"NOT THE GOD OF THE DEAD"

Having answered their question that the resurrection difficulties they anticipated arose from a failure to appreciate the divine power then in control, our Lord passed onward in the argument to show that they did not grasp the spirit of the Scriptural testimony. They had reasoned that the Old Testament said very little about resurrection anyway. Our Lord proceeded to show them that there were various features of the Scriptures which indirectly taught the resurrection without mentioning it in so many words. He pointed them to the time when the Lord appeared to Moses and spoke to him from the burning bush, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God

of Jacob." Jesus' argument with the Sadducees was that since Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were at this time dead, for God to thus speak of them implied a resurrection of the dead, implied that he still recognized them in some sense or degree, that they were not extinct – that God, for instance, would not speak of being the God of a dead camel or a dead dog, because he had made no provision for a resurrection of camels, dogs, etc., but his provision for the resurrection of the human dead is a fact, and constitutes a full explanation of his statement here – that he is still the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

We live in a day when Satan's delusions through Platonic philosophy has gained a large control over the world. All the heathen today believe that death is not death, but an entrance into a fuller life, and Christian people in general so believe, some of them even using this passage of Scripture to demonstrate their belief, saying that if God be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob they could not have been dead in any sense of the word, but must have been alive somewhere, they know not where. We answer that these also err in not giving proper attention to the Scriptures, which teach not that the dead are alive, but that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. This is what our Lord taught, and this is therefore what all of his followers should believe if they would have the full blessing intended for those who contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Note that our Lord so expresses it: his argument is based upon and introduced by the words, "As touching the dead that they arise, have ye not heard," etc. – he does not say "as touching the living that they shall arise," for how can the living arise? it is the dead who need a resurrection. The Scriptures never suggested the absurdity of the resurrection of the living, but continually assure us of the resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust. – Acts 24:15.

Every doctrine of the Bible is intimately associated with the statement that the wages of sin is literal, actual death – not merely the death of the body, but "the soul that sinneth it shall die." (Ezek. 18:4.) The death of the soul was the penalty upon Adam and upon all of his race; hence our Lord redeemed our souls from the tomb (Psalm 49:15), and the redemption price he gave was his own soul, his own being, when "he poured out his soul unto death," "he made his soul an offering for sin." (Isa. 53:10,12.) Since it is the souls of men that are redeemed the resurrection is to be a resurrection of the souls, and the resurrection of our Lord, we are told, was a resurrection of his soul, as foretold by the Prophet and confirmed by the Apostle, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol," hades, in the tomb. – Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:31.

While it is unwise to push this feature of the Truth to the front because of the prejudice that exists in the minds of so many of the Lord's people, and because it is proper that we should be wise fishers of men, nevertheless it is absolutely indispensable to an appreciation of the divine plan that all should come ultimately to see that this is the fundamental teaching of God's Word, and to build the proper faith structure in harmony therewith. Adam died and we in him – Christ died as our Redeemer, and thereby made possible the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust, as promised in God's Word. We who now are called have the special invitation to be of the just, the justified, the acceptable with God – to have part in the First Resurrection and be the kings and priests to reign with our Lord on the earth, to bless the world and to grant to mankind in general the gradual uplifting or raising up out of sin-and-death conditions to the full perfection of human nature lost in Adam and redeemed by the precious blood.
