



# M A R K

*The Gift of God*





# *Mental Chess*

Mark 11:27-12:17

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1. Dueling Dilemmas (11:27-12:12)
2. A False Dilemma (12:13-17)



## What is a *Dilemma*?

- *Dilemma*: a logical argument to force one to admit what he does not want to admit
  - *Horns*: two undesirable options
    - Pick one horn (to gore you)
    - Split the horns (give a third option)
    - Grab the horns (disprove the dilemma)
    - Get your own horns (counter-dilemma)

# Dueling Dilemmas



- Sunday: *Triumphal Entry / Palm Sunday*; recon in the temple
- Monday: cursing of the fig tree; cleansing of the temple
- Tuesday: teaching at the fig tree; back to the temple (27)

# Dueling Dilemmas



- Challenger #1: the Sanhedrin (28)
  - “By what authority... or who gave you this authority?”
    - Either embarrassment or blasphemy (see 2:6-7)
  - Jesus went over their heads

# Dueling Dilemmas



- Defensive counter-dilemma (29-30)
  - Horn 1: John's baptism was from heaven
    - "Then why didn't you believe him?"
  - Horn 2: John's baptism was from men
    - 'The people will stone us' (Luke 20:6)
- [Split: John's baptism was from hell]

## Dueling Dilemmas



- If they admitted John had God's authority they would be forced to admit He did, too (see John 1:19-34)
- Cowardly liars: "We do not know" (33)
- Since they refused to answer, He refused to answer (cf. 4:24-25)

# Dueling Dilemmas



- Counter-attack! (12:1; see Isa. 5:1-7)
  - Owner = God
  - Vineyard = Israel
  - Growers = religious leaders (as a whole - Matt. 23:29-39)
  - Slaves = Prophets
  - Son = Jesus

# Dueling Dilemmas



- What can we learn from this parable?
  - God graciously provides (1)
  - God expects fruit (2)
  - God is patient / *long-suffering* (3-8)
  - God is the righteous judge (9)

# Dueling Dilemmas



- What can we learn about these *leaders*?
  - Unfaithful stewards
  - Violent murderers
  - Scheming co-conspirators
  - Disrespectful rebels

## Dueling Dilemmas



- “Have you not even read this Scripture...”?
- Who is He talking to? (11:27)
- *Read with understanding? (eyes to see)*
- Ps. 118:22-23 (*Hallel* psalm – Passover)
  - Some things that people reject (stone, Israel, the Son), God exalts and uses



## Highlights / Game Summary

- He ruined their business (at Passover!)
- He embarrassed them
- He defied their authority
- He denounced them in a parable
- He challenged their Bible knowledge

***Checkmate!***

## A False Dilemma



- New Challenger: Pharisees/Herodians (13)
  - Rematch of sorts (see 3:1-6 – *is it lawful*)
  - Opening move: *flattery* (14)
    - *Truthful*: honesty, integrity
    - Impartial; no favoritism
    - *Teach the way of God*: Ps. 18:30; 77:13

## A False Dilemma



- “Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar?”
  - Herod the Great was given Palestine as a semi-autonomous tributary kingdom
  - On his death (4 BC) it was divided 3 ways
    - Archelaus – Judea and Samaria
      - AD 6 – he failed, so Rome took over

## A False Dilemma



- “Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar?”
  - Governor Cyrenius – census and taxes
    - Poll-tax: 1 denarius/head (ages 14-65)
- Judas of Galilee revolted (Acts 5:37):  
“Taxation is no better than slavery!”
- OT Law vs. Caesar (claimed to be a god)

# A False Dilemma



- Horns: “Shall we pay or not pay?”
  - “Pay” – traitor to the Jews
  - “Not pay” – treason to the Romans (Luke 20:20)

## A False Dilemma



- “Bring Me a denarius to look at” (15)
  - They were using these coins, showing they recognized Caesar’s rule over them
- “Whose likeness and inscription is this?”
  - ‘Who does this coin belong to?’
- They acknowledged Caesar’s authority and property

## A False Dilemma



- “Give to Caesar what belongs to him”
- “AND give to God what rightfully belongs to Him”
- They are not mutually exclusive but are compatible and expected (Rom. 13:1-7)

***Checkmate!***

## So What?



- Am I honoring 'Caesar'? (Rom. 13:1-7)
  - Render: *to give in fulfilment of an obligation or expectation*
  - "Yeah, but, ...they misuse it" "...they waste it" "...they don't deserve it"
  - Do you enjoy the benefits?

## So What?



- Do I have a right view of God?
  - God is loving & gracious & patient
  - And He is also holy & righteous & just
  - We may feel like we are getting away with something now, but judgment will come

## So What?



- Do I fear people?
  - God calls us to love people, not fear them
  - Jesus spoke the truth in love (Eph. 4:15)
    - With boldness! (confidence in God)
    - Regardless of the consequences

## So What?



- Am I really loving God?
  - “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” (Mark 12:30)
  - Christians should not fear *reason/logic*
  - Don’t bypass or disengage the mind