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# The Jesus Identity

## Studies in Mark's Gospel

### Introduction: Mark 11:27-12:34

*Starter:*  
What, if any, is the place of religious debate among Christians?

Jesus has previously 'condemned' the temple as a 'den of thieves'. His cursing of the fig-tree (Mark 11:14) was also a parable to show that the entire religious system housed by the temple was fruitless and dead. In this next part of Mark's gospel we get a window on just how 'dead' the Jewish religious leadership had become, as one by one, they seek to trick Jesus into sin. Jesus' responses serve to highlight their own folly.

### Read Mark 11:27-33.

1. Why do you think the Jewish leaders were challenging Jesus' authority?  
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2. Why do you think Jesus refused to directly answer the question that the Jewish leaders put to him?  
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### Read Mark 12:1-12

3. The Old Testament background to the Parable of the Tenants is Isaiah 5:1-7. How does the warning inherent in Isaiah 5 make the parable all the more tragic?  
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4. The religious leaders recognised that this parable was "spoken against them." Which parts of the parable do you think would have particularly impacted them?  
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5. How might we deliberately or inadvertently challenge Jesus' authority today? Why is persistent rejection of Jesus dreadfully dangerous?  
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Three groups of religious leaders approach Jesus. The Pharisees believed in the strict separation of the Jews from Gentiles such as the Romans. The Herodians were supporters of Roman rule in Israel. The Sadducees were also happy with the status quo, but had some very tight rules in relation to their scriptures. Together these three groups make unlikely co-conspirators!

### Read verses 13-17

6. The Pharisees and the Herodians 'butter up' Jesus before they ask him their question. Why?  
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Jesus literally asks, "Whose *image* is on this coin?" His reply then demands that whatever bears God's image should be fully given over to him. In view of Gen 1:26-27, how do you give yourself back to God?

- 7. If the coin is Caesar's, what is God's that it might be given back to him?  
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- 8. [optional] How might Jesus' response here lead Christians to support the notion of the separation of 'church' and 'state'?  
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**Read Mark 12:18-27**

- 9. The Sadducees (who acknowledged only the first 5 books of the Old Testament) were obviously attempting to make the resurrection seem ridiculous by interpreting the Bible literalistically. How does Jesus use their own 'technique' to show them their mistake?  
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- 10. Jesus prefaced his reply to the Sadducees with a more serious accusation: "you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God." How might we benefit from this warning?  
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**Read Mark 12:28-34**

- 11. How is this teacher of the law's response different from those who've previously argued with Jesus? What in his answer would have indicated to Jesus that he was not far from the kingdom of God?  
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- 12. How do you think God's "greatest commandments" apply to you today? Be concrete and specific about your own life.  
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- 13. At St Marks and St Davids we believe we have a solid understanding of the Scriptures. In what ways are the teachers of the law to be a warning to us?  
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