



# Mark - Lesson 12D

## Chapter 12:28-34

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- Jesus has been dealing with non-stop inquiries from the religious leaders of Israel as a means of discrediting His ministry, work, and Person (Messiah).
  - This exhaustive encounter began with the members of the Sanhedrin Counsel seeking ways to entrap Jesus. (Mark 12:11).
    - From there, Jesus gave a Parable to the people with the religious leaders amongst them.
    - And this Parable was the Parable of the Tenants.
  - It spoke to the lack of respect that the religious leaders had towards the owner's son and due to their lack of respect, they killed him.
    - Ultimately, the religious leaders were able to see through deductive reasoning that the parable was about them.
  - From there, the Pharisees and the Herodians approached Jesus together (this unlikely pair).
    - Their questioning concerned matters of dutiful obligation to the State concerning taxes.
    - And in response Jesus “one-ups” them and says, in the same way you give to Caesar what is his, “Give to God what belongs to Him.”
    - And being that we are made in His image and likeness, we are to submit ourselves wholly to Him.
  - After that, Jesus is then questioned by the Sadducees regarding matters of the resurrection.
    - They attempt to use the theological premise of the Resurrection in a sarcastic scenario in an effort to discredit the resurrection itself.
    - However, Jesus refutes their faulty theological position using the very section of scriptures they deemed authoritative.
  - And now, after having defeated that group, Jesus is now faced with round four, which consist of a scribe.
    - And it will be in tonight's teaching that we will further see the grandeur of the Trinity while also observing the significance of Jesus' purpose and His work.
  - If I were to outline our text for tonight, we will see the following:
    - 1. The Scribe Probes – (v.28)
    - 2. Jesus Responds – (v.29-31)
    - 3. The Scribe Compliments – (v. 32-33)
    - 4. Jesus Probes – (v. 34)
  - The tag on our text tonight is: “Not Far from the Kingdom of God”.
    - With that being said, I invite you to open a copy of the scriptures and meet me in Mark 12:28-34.

**Mark 12:28** One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?”

**Mark 12:29** Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God

**is one Lord;**

**Mark 12:30** 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.'

**Mark 12:31** The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

**Mark 12:32** The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that He is One, and there is no one else besides Him;

**Mark 12:33** and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

**Mark 12:34** When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

- It's after Jesus has informed the Sadducees of how misinformed of the scriptures they truly were, that Mark mentions, in passing, that one of the scribes overheard the conversation being held.
  - And while overhearing the discussion, the text makes mentions that they "recognized" that Jesus had answered the question well.
    - One question that may arise is: What sect is the scribe representing that they recognized the legitimacy of Jesus' response?
  - I want to bring this graphic up again to remind us of the different groups that Jesus was encountering in the temple during His inspection.
    - If you notice, the scribe is someone that was deemed a copyist, a recorder, and an expert of the Law.
    - What we must keep in mind is that the scribes could be recruited for services either for the Sadducees, Pharisees, or any other State matters.
  - And based upon the phrase that we just mentioned regarding how well Jesus answered the previous question, it alludes to the fact that this scribe:
    - 1. Knows the Law very well
    - 2. Also agrees with Jesus' teaching of the resurrection.
    - Which means that it eliminates this scribe working for the Sadducees and therefore we can conclude this scribe is probably a Pharisee.
  - Furthermore, it's confirmed for us by scripture in Matthew's gospel, more specifically, in Matthew 22:34-35. Check out the text.

**Matthew 22:34** But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together.

**Matthew 22:35** One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him,

- Even more detail is revealed in Matthew's gospel because he informs his audience that this Pharisee is in fact a lawyer.
  - What becomes different in the questions asked of the other religious leaders

versus this scribe is that there seems to be no sense of ill-will or hostility in the question of this scribe.

- It looks to be that he is rather impressed with Jesus' ability to maneuver around the foolish understandings of the Sadducees.
- So instead, the lawyer's primary objective is to test Jesus' understanding of the Law in its fullness.
  - So, he asks Jesus: "What commandment is the foremost of all?"
  - Now, the NASB 95 translation provides a more accurate understanding of the Greek text here.
- One of the words that we must consider at this point in the text is the word "foremost".
  - This word in Greek is *protos* (pro-tos) which means "first" or the earliest.
  - In other words, if you were to sum up all the law into one phrase or command, this statement establishes it in summary format.
  - However, it does not mean that one command is more important in the sense that you negate this one for the sake of the other.
- So, where the NIV translation mentions which commandment is "most important" a better translation would be: "Which of the commandments supersedes everything and is incumbent on all humanity?"
  - So, with this question in mind, one would have to consider the Jewish laws themselves (Mosaic Law).
- Given that the laws of the Jewish people were important, the reality was there were times in which their laws would come into conflict with one another. (Lighter vs. Heavier commands)
  - And when this occurred, the religious leaders would gather to figure out which law was "greater".
  - And that debate, over time, would lead them to ask questions regarding which of the laws superseded them all.
- So, Mark's account tells us that the scribe asks Jesus to respond to this question of which command He deemed the foremost command, as a means of testing Jesus' knowledge of the Law.
  - Check out verses 29-31.

**Mark 12:29** Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord;

**Mark 12:30** 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.'

**Mark 12:31** The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

- So, Jesus begins, only in Mark's account, with the Jewish Sh'ma found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5.
  - The Sh'ma were the very words that every Jew recited daily, once in the morning

and the evening.

- It was the command vocalizing the Jewish individual's love for Yahweh and declared that their highest duty was to love God with their whole being.
- As Dr Alfred Edershim mentioned in his work, "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah", "...this was the inmost expression of faith for a Jew".
- It begins with these words: "Hear oh Israel! The LORD our GOD is ONE LORD."
  - This "preamble" set forth the very theological premise that there is only One True and Living God. (Monotheism)
  - This solidified that the individual's devotion and affections were not divided amongst "other gods".
  - In other words, it spoke to the very "first command" in the 10 commandments: "You shall have no other gods before Me."
- After the preamble, Jesus moves into the body of the Sh'ma: "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."
  - It is important to note that although Matthew's account only mentions three nouns (heart, mind, strength), we should not see this variation as somehow critical or problematic.
  - But rather, we should recognize Mark's use here as a more comprehensive understanding of Jesus' point in his account.
  - And that is, the foremost command should be that nothing comes before or beside our love for God.
  - With that in mind, Jesus mentions how our love for God is to be accomplished or lived out.
- He begins with the fact that we are to love the Lord with all our heart.
  - In other words, our affections should be centered upon God being the primary focus.
  - That above our love for things, careers, and anything else that can draw away our attention, God should be primary.
- Secondly, we are to love Him with all our soul.
  - Meaning, with our very worship and lives, we are to esteem God as the focal point of who we are.
  - Put differently, this place of worship can't be shared with another, but wholly belongs to God.
- Thirdly, Jesus says we are to love God with all of our mind, meaning our understanding, our disposition.
  - Our very minds and dispositions as believers in Christ, as Paul says in Romans 12:2, should be based upon our renewed minds in Christ.
  - In other words, our minds and understanding should be centered upon the word of God and not the world around us.
  - The word of God leads our thoughts, actions, and beliefs, and the only way we conform to that is if we are in the word of God.

- Lastly, Jesus says we are to love God with all our strength.
  - This is our ability to use the wisdom, knowledge, and might we have to resist or evade the sin and struggles within this present life.
  - In other words, our strength is found in our dependence upon what and who we possess to overcome the trials and struggles we may face.
- However, Jesus does not stop with the Sh'ma, but He further extends His response by mentioning a second command that is directly tied to the first and that is: "You shall love your neighbor as Yourself."
  - Jesus, using this command, is quoting from Leviticus 19:18. This is how it reads.

**Leviticus 19:18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.**

- From this, Jesus makes a powerful statement and that is: "There is no other commandment greater than these."
  - But did you notice how Jesus ends His statement: "There is no other commandment (singular) greater than these (plural)."
  - This is a peculiar yet powerful statement!
  - Ultimately, Jesus is saying when these two commandments are put together, that they summarize the entire law.
    - This is why in Matthew 22:40, Matthew records Jesus saying: "On these two commandments, "depend" the whole Law and the prophets.
  - Friends, this is huge!
    - The word "depend" in the Greek is *kremannymi* (kre-mah-me) which means "to hang from" or to depend upon.
    - In other words, if you were to take the entirety of the Law and prophets and sum them up into one statement it would be:
  - Love God with all your being and love your neighbor as you love yourself.
    - As Edersheim quotes: "As God is love – His nature so manifesting itself – so is love to God also love to man."
  - Well, this begs a more serious question then and that is: "Why not just name these two laws and leave it at that?"
    - Why list out 613 commands which, as Jesus has made clear, can be summed up in two commands?
    - Perhaps, more clarity in commands was given to outline a greater problem being revealed.
  - It's like when I give my kids a general instruction: Clean your room.
    - About 30 minutes later, I go in and only the clothes on the floor are picked up.
    - Clarity is provided and further outlined to show my kids where the mark has been missed.

- In the same way, the Law is further outlined in an effort for the people to realize their failure in truly loving God and obeying Him.
  - Paul puts it this way in Galatians 3:23-24:

**Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.**

**Galatians 3:24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.**

- ◦ They needed to be made right, internally! We all need to be made right, internally (the heart)!
- Perhaps this was the very means by which the Pharisees struggled in truly understanding the scriptures.
  - They had an external means of worshipping and loving God while all the while their hearts needed to be cleansed.
  - Scripture tells us they were more focused on feeding themselves rather than feeding the flock. (Ezekiel 34:3-4)
  - The Pharisees were more focused on ceremonial processes that they missed the heart of the Law.
- Herein lies the very dangers of religion and religiosity rather than truly attaining a relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
  - As we will see later tonight, you cannot separate loving God from loving those created in His image. The two go hand in hand.
- So, what we are witnessing practically is the ethical and moral conundrum by which humanity fails in loving God, therefore someone must meet that standard.
  - Well, it's after hearing Jesus' summation of the foremost commandment, that the scribe provides Jesus with a compliment of sorts.
  - Check out verses 32-33

**Mark 12:32 The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that He is One, and there is no one else besides Him;**

**Mark 12:33 and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."**

- The scribe responds positively to Jesus' response and provides Him with a compliment, saying "Right teacher, you have truly stated...".
  - Now, the English translation does not properly articulate the compliment which is being given here.
    - In the Greek, the scribe is saying, "Well said, or, commendable response Jesus!". It is this sense of approval from the scribe.
    - So note, this response from the scribe is not one of sarcasm, but rather, one of true and sincere commendation.

- The scribe continues by telling Jesus that He has addressed the very matters of the Law by beginning with a foundational theological premise found in the preamble of the Sh'ma:
  - That is, that God is One and that there is none other beside Him.
    - And I believe, herein lies where the test of the scribe comes in to play. (We will expound further)
  - The scribe referred to Deuteronomy 4:35 which solidified monotheism: That there is but One God!
    - Check out what Deuteronomy 4:35 says:

**Deuteronomy 4:35 To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord, He is God; there is no other besides Him.**

- ◦ So, with Jesus having affirmed the Sh'ma, the scribe, in his mind, sees an “out” to completely deny Jesus’ claim as the Son of God (Messiah).
  - So what’s the test you ask: If Jesus confirms that God is One, then He most certainly couldn’t claim to be God, Himself.
  - This is the premise of the test.
- After establishing the reality that God is One, the scribe reaffirms the means by which we are to love God and love our neighbor. (Mark 12:33)
  - Again, before we lose our minds and say, what is the purpose of the variance between what Jesus said and what the scribe said, know that God’s word does not contradict itself.
  - Therefore, the text and its meaning as quoted in Mark’s account does not impact or change the summary of the Sh'ma.
- Both point to the same thing, in that with understanding for the Jew came application/doing/living.
  - I say that because in the Jewish mind, for one to hear the word of God also meant that they were to live out and to do what the Law of God required. (Obedience)
  - All of this was to be accomplished because of our love for the Lord and because He commanded it from His people.
  - Check out how Moses reinstates the Law for the generation who will inhabit the Promised Land.
  - Check out Deuteronomy 6:1-3:

**Deuteronomy 6:1 “Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, Deuteronomy 6:2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.**

**Deuteronomy 6:3** O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

- ○ So, the point of the Law given a “second time” hence where the name Deuteronomy comes from (second Law), speaks to God’s point.
  - Do these things that you may prosper and see the promise (Blessing)!
- Finally, it is at Mark 12:33b that the scribe demonstrates a level of spiritual insight that has not been seen by the other leaders who have questioned Jesus before.
  - He says loving God wholeheartedly with all our affections, ways, understanding and strength (complete obedience and submission) is better than burnt offerings and sacrifices.
  - This realization is huge and is why Jesus tells him in verse 34 that he answered “intelligently”.
- This word “intelligently” is only found once in the Greek New Testament, and it is here in Mark 12:34.
  - It is the word “*nounechos*” (noon-ech-os) which means he answered with wisdom or with understanding.
  - Something has been revealed to this scribe that was not understood by other religious leaders before
- It is as if this man’s eyes are being slowly opened to divine perspective and understanding of the scriptures which would eventually lead him to see the reality of who Jesus truly is.
  - The question becomes: “What has been made known to him in this illuminating way?”
- The Ceremonial sacrificial system in Israel had become the “default” for individuals to be made right with God to the point that it became ritualistic.
  - The primary focus for the Pharisees were to become experts of the ceremonial rituals rather than truly seeking to love God relationally and not religiously.
  - In other words, the most sacred duties of sacrificing to God was meaningless unless done out of intimacy (relationship) rather than legitimacy (ritual).
- The purpose of the Law itself was not to take on these ceremonial rituals as some type of badge of honor and to one up the next person to see how ritually clean and pure one was, but rather for them to recognize how much in need of God’s intervention they were in.
- The purpose of the burnt offerings and sacrifices was intended to put people in right standing with God in a temporary sense.
  - However, the intent was not to make the sacrificial/ceremonial system the desirable thing, but rather it was to be a constant reminder to the people that they are constantly in need of a sacrifice.
  - Check out what Samuel said in 1 Samuel 15:22.

**1 Samuel 15:22** Samuel said,

**“Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices  
As in obeying the voice of the Lord?  
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,  
And to heed than the fat of rams.**

- ○ This constant need of sacrifice was to point the people of Israel to the one that could completely obey the Father: The God-man (Messiah).
  - He would be the One to take on sin so that we would be made right before God.
  - The sacrifice of animal’s blood was to simply point to a greater sacrifice that was to come, only this time, the shedding of blood would be from the God-man (fully God and fully human) done once for all.
  - Check out with me Hebrews 10:1-10.

**Hebrews 10:4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**

**Hebrews 10:5 Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says,  
“Sacrifice and offering You have not desired,  
But a body You have prepared for Me;**

**Hebrews 10:6 In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have taken no pleasure.**

**Hebrews 10:7 “Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come  
(In the scroll of the book it is written of Me)  
To do Your will, O God.’”**

**Hebrews 10:8 After saying above, “Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the Law),**

**Hebrews 10:9 then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will.” He takes away the first in order to establish the second.**

**Hebrews 10:10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

- The question that should be percolating in the mind of the scribe is: How?
  - “How does one perfectly obey God’s instructions and love Him wholly and completely in perfect submission all the while loving their neighbor?”
  - Especially if God desires whole devotion and love over sacrifice?
  - Well, the quick answer is we can’t. The Law points us to our need of the promise God made regarding His Provision (The Son).

**Galatians 3:19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.**

**Galatians 3:20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.**

**Galatians 3:21** Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

**Galatians 3:22** But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

- Friends, this obligation in which Jesus explains is the foremost command (which He provides two) deals with matters of an ethical/moral standard. (Holiness)
  - In other words, for someone to love the Lord and to obey Him, requires Holiness/perfection and the standard by which holiness is accomplished is solely in one that is deemed Holy.
  - Scripture tells us this in Psalm 14:1-3.

**Psalm 14:1** The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good.

**Psalm 14:2** The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God.

**Psalm 14:3** They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.

- There is none that is good! There is none that meet the holy ethical/moral standard by which God deems acceptable to stand righteous before Him.
  - There is only One, Jesus Christ!
  - Therefore, in order for man to be in right standing with God, it would take God Himself to come on our behalf, in the form of a human being so that we could become the righteousness of God.
  - Again, as the scribe mentioned, a sacrifice was necessary because the reality was no person could obey and submit to God according to the Law.
  - To miss this section is to miss the significance of the Person of Christ and His work and need to die!
  - So, in this scribe recognizing loyal love is better than the sacrificial system, Jesus makes a profound statement.
  - Jesus essentially tells him, based on the scribe’s statement: Salvation is within reach.
  - It’s in reach in the sense that Jesus, the Messiah is standing before him – the answer to humanity’s very need.
    - The only thing that the scribe must now come to is transferring his trust to Jesus (believe in the Lord Jesus).
  - I believe that what Jesus was doing here was inviting this man to truly see that the Promise was made revealed and complete in the Person of Jesus Christ.
    - God, the Second Person of the Trinity, wrapped in human flesh.

- Jesus wants Him to see that truth is found in a Person.
  - Jesus wants the man to see that the unhindered love of God was fully demonstrated in the God-man.
  - And that it would be Jesus' coming death, just days away, that would demonstrate God's love that would bring salvation to those who believed.
  - This is why Paul said this in Romans 5:6-8:

**Romans 5:6** You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

**Romans 5:7** Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.

**Romans 5:8** But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- Friends, herein lies the necessity of a crucified Christ.
  - That the answer to the Gospel is found not in the duties and works of mere men or the Law, but in the finished work and Person of Jesus Christ.
  - Next week we will see Jesus' point being driven to a singular point: His very deity as the God man, being fully God and fully man.
    - For where the scribe struggled to understand how God could take on flesh or how there could be plurality in the God-head will be further explained.
    - Join us next week for this discussion. You don't want to miss it!
    - Let's Pray.