

Mark 12:28-44

What question did one of the teachers of the law ask Jesus (v. 28)? Which of all the commandments is the most important? The rabbis counted 613 commandments in the Mosaic Law, 365 positive and 248 negative. It was an honest question, and, in some ways, life's most basic question. He was really asking for a concise statement of the chief aim of man's existence.¹

How did Jesus respond to the teacher's question (v. 29)? Instead of promoting one commandment over another, Jesus defined the law in its essence by quoting two Old Testament sources - Deuteronomy 6:5 "*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength*" and Leviticus 19:18. "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*" In other words, the two greatest commandments are not something new that Jesus just invented. We see what God really wants from man is *love*, i.e. love God with everything you have and love your neighbor as yourself.

Why are these the two greatest commandments? Because they summarize the two basic responsibilities of the Law, our duties toward God and our duties toward other people. These are basic human responsibilities. They don't change. The termination of the Mosaic Law does not invalidate them.²

Was the scribe's response to Jesus on the mark (vv. 32-33)? Yes. It is easy to think that religious rituals and devotion are more important than love for God and our neighbor but that isn't the case as the teacher discerned. He realized that people could go through religious ceremonies and put on a public display of piety without inward, personal holiness. He acknowledged that God is concerned with what a man is inwardly as well as outwardly. (Psalms 51:16-17)

Why did no one dare ask Him any more questions (v. 34)? Jesus had effectively thwarted all attempts to discredit Him and had exposed the hostile motives and errors of His opponents.

What did Jesus mean that the scribe was not far from entering the kingdom (v. 34)? His openness to Scriptural revelation and his positive orientation to Jesus, if continued, would bring him to faith in Jesus and ultimately entrance into His kingdom.³ He knew the scriptures well but he didn't personally know the author of the scriptures quite yet. He was 12 inches away from entering the kingdom – the distance between heart and mind.

Application: **What role do the two greatest commandments play in our lives?**

What was Jesus doing in this section starting at v. 35? Teaching. Since Jesus is the Christ, here He spoke of Himself. He was getting to the heart of the matter, "Do you really know who I am?"

What was the question of vv. 35-37? How could the Messiah be David's *Son* and his *Lord* at the same time?

What is the answer? The Messiah was both Man and God. As David's *Son*, He was human. As David's *Lord*, He was divine. The Old Testament clearly taught that Jesus would be a descendant of David (in His humanity) (2 Samuel 7:8-16). David also described Jesus as his Lord (in His deity). As Revelation 22:16 says, "*He is both the root and offspring of David.*" Once again the silence of the religious leaders is ominous.

What warning did Jesus give to the people next (vv. 38-40)? He warned them about the teachers of the law/scribes. The scribes were outwardly very religious as they paraded around in their long flowing robes trying to look important. They loved it when the people greeted them by their high-sounding titles in the marketplace; it stroked their egos. They sat in the most important seats at church and at banquets so everyone would see them. But inwardly, their hearts were greedy and insincere. They robbed widows to make themselves rich. They said long prayers out loud trying to impress the people. They will suffer eternal punishment.

What did Jesus teach his disciples about giving, as they watched both the rich and the poor widow give their offerings (vv. 43-44)? The giving by the rich people was not a sacrifice. They gave out of their abundance. The poor widow, even though she gave very little compared to the rich person, gave all she had. The Lord appraises giving by our motive, our means, and by how much we have left.

A gift's value is determined by the *spirit* in which it is given; God doesn't want grudgingly given money, nor guilt driven money. God loves the cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

What should be our attitude toward money? Proverbs 30:7-9 *"Two things I ask of you, O Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."*

God does not *need* our money. If God needed our money, then *how much* we give would be more important than our *heart* in giving. Instead, it is our privilege to give to Him, and we need to give because it is good for *us*, not because it is good for God. Generous giving reveals where our heart is.

It's amazing how easily we can approve the widow's action and agree with the Savior's verdict without imitating her example. If we really believed what we say we believe, we would do exactly what she did – Sacrificial giving. Her gift expressed her conviction that all belonged to the Lord, that He was worthy of all, that He must have all.

Many Christians today would criticize her for not providing for her future. Did this show a lack of foresight and prudence? So men would argue. But this is the life of faith—plunging all into the work of God now and trusting Him for the future. Did He not promise to provide for those who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33)? Radical? Revolutionary? Unless we see that the teachings of Christ are radical and revolutionary, we have missed the emphasis of His ministry.⁴

¹ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1353). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Mark, 2020 Edition, (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 255

³ Ibid. p. 256

⁴ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1354). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.