

We've **witnessed FOUR ROUNDS** – of the **Cage Fight**
between **Jesus** and the **Religious Leaders** of Jerusalem

& **most scholars** agree – **ALL FOUR** of these **Rounds**
Occurred on the **Same Day**

1. They **Questioned** the **Authority** of **Jesus** in **11:27**
2. He **told** them the **Parable** of the **Wicked Farmers** in **12:1**
3. They **threw** the **'Taxes For Caesar' punch** at him in **12:13**
4. They **tried** to **trip him up** with the **Resurrection** Question in **12:18**

But **then** – **Suddenly Today**

A **Scribe** is going **to ask** a **Sincere Question**

& **Jesus** is going to **tell him**
that **he** is "**Not Far from the Kingdom of God**"

& **Altho this ends** the **attacks** from the **Religious Leaders**
For **THIS particular day**

Jesus continues to **teach THREE more** Great **Eternal Truths**
on this **SAME DAY**

AFTER FACING - FOUR Rounds in the **CAGE**
with the **Religious Leaders**

THAT makes up **ONE BIG DAY** – **Even** for **Jesus**

Let's Pray

Mark 12:28(a) (NLT)

28 One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate . . .

This “***Teacher of Religious Law***” was a **SCRIBE**

Scribes were **mostly Pharisees**

& **they** were **Professionals**
in **Interpreting** & **Applying** the **LAW**

& **some** were **members** of the **Sanhedrin**

the **group** that is **orchestrating** this **Cage Fight** with **Jesus**

& **vs. 28** says – **THIS Scribe** had been “**Standing There**”

Listening to the **First FOUR Rounds** of **this Battle**

& **then** – in the **Middle** of **V.28** we **read**

Mark 12:28(b) (NLT)

28 . . . He realized that Jesus had answered well . . .

Now – **This Scribe** - **WAS** part of the **Pharisees**
& he **WAS there** doing **his job**

But – **His Mind** & **His Heart** were **OPEN Enough**
that **he** was **Actually Listening** to the **words** of **Jesus**

**Wouldn't it be INCREDIBLE – if we could see MORE of THAT
in our world today**

**People listening to the Words of Jesus
WITHOUT a Pre-Determined Verdict**

This Scribe realized – that Jesus had answered well

**& then – the end of Mark 12:28(c) (NLT)
28 . . . so he (the Scribe) asked, “*Of all the commandments, which
is the most important?*”**

It seems like - This was This Scribes - OWN Question

It seems like it just Came Out – from this Scribe

After he heard Jesus answer the other challenges so well

**Because - Within the Pharisees & Scribes there was
kind of an “Intellectual Game” they played**

**Where they challenged each other to SUM UP
the entire Law of Moses in a single sentence**

**& so – this would most likely be– the Default Question
this Scribe would come up with – for Jesus**

But – the answer from Jesus
was like nothing the Scribe had ever heard before

& here's (*at least one reason*) why

Because the Pharisees had become CONSUMED
with the MINUTE Details of the Law

They were Obsessed – with ACTING right
down to the smallest detail

& they were determined – in their own strength
to fulfill all the religious laws – they had set in place

But – what this Scribe is about to hear
is what R. Kent Hughes calls

“A Marvelous Symmetry of Devotion”

It is ONE – TWO-PART Commandment
Centered on LOVE – in TWO DIRECTIONS

Let's read it all
then we'll go back & break it down

So again – in V.28 – the Scribe asks
“Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

Mark 12:29-31 (NLT)

29 Jesus replied, “The most important (the foremost, the primary) commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord.

30 And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’

31 The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”

**THIS – is the Perfect Summation
of all of the Law of God**

1Jn 4:8 says “*God IS Love*”

AND - *Anyone who does NOT Love - does NOT know God*

& when **Jesus SUMS UP**
the **Entirety** of the **LAW of God**

He **does it** – in **ONE Commandment of LOVE** –
in **TWO Directions**

This **Greatest Commandment** – in **TWO Parts**
SUMS UP the entire **10 Commandments**

Because the **First FOUR** – (*of the 10 Commandments*)
are all about – **LOVING GOD**

& the **Second SIX** – (*of the 10 Commandments*)
are all about – **LOVING OTHERS**

& so – in this perfect SUMMATION

EVERY PART of God's Law is Encompassed in
LOVING GOD - & - LOVING OTHERS

But – there is something Even Greater here

Which is what I think REALLY
'Opened the eyes' of this Scribe

The Pharisees had gotten SO caught Up
in Doing what they defined As RIGHT

But – they were doing it - in their OWN STRENGTH

AND they were doing it – in order to EARN something from God

They had gotten – VERY CONFIDENT
in their Own Effort – & In their Own Determination

To do what was "Right"
Which made them FEEL – Very "Right with God"

& guys – THAT is EXACTLY what SO MANY people
WE KNOW – Are Doing

"I just try to do what's right, & be a good person, so I think God will accept me . . ."

**BUT Suddenly – This Scribe HEARD something
That he HADN'T HEARD before**

**& it's Something that some of us
REALLY need to HEAR - & RECEIVE**

**What this Scribe understood
& what WE need to understand – is THIS**

***“A CORRECT Love of GOD – FIRST
Will PRODUCE - a CORRECT Love of others”***

Jesus is saying

***“When you Love GOD with everything in you –
it will ENABLE you (empower you) - to Love others***

& Thereby - FULFILL All of the Law

**In fact – This level of love for others - can ONLY come
from us Loving God with everything we have**

Again - Mark 12:29-30 (NLT)

***29 Jesus replied, “The most important (the foremost, the primary)
commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the
one and only Lord.***

***30 And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all
your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’***

THIS – is the Beginning of the SHEMA

Which was the Spiritual CREED for the Jewish Faith

The **Shema** - **WAS** - **& STILL IS** – The **CENTER PIECE**
of the **Daily Jewish Prayers** (Morning & Evening)

It is the **prayer** that is **found** in “**PHYLACTERIES**” (leather boxes)
worn (*arm & forehead*) by **Orthodox Jews** while **Praying**

AND – it is the **prayer found** in the **MEZUZA** that is **fastened**
to the **door jamb** of every **Orthodox Jewish** home

SHEMA means “**HEAR**” – or “**LISTEN**”
Hear O Israel, *The Lord our God the Lord is ONE*

& you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength

& - **WHEN** you **Do THAT** – the **SECOND-HALF** will **come**

V.31 - (thru your Love of God, you) *Love your neighbor as yourself.'*

& NO - **Jesus** is **NOT** promoting **SELF-LOVE** as our
SELF-CENTERED World - would **like** to **Hear** or **Believe**

Jesus is referring to the fact that in your 'Nature'

You already **LOVE yourself**

You already **think** very **HIGHLY of yourself**

& **Jesus** is **saying** here

To **Put OTHERS** in **that place** – **INSTEAD of yourself**

& so – Jesus ROCKS this SCRIBE
with this Phenomenal SUMMARY - of all of the Law of God

& the SCRIBE is Standing there
with all his Pharisee buddies

& His Religious Career – is Hanging in the Balance

AND – His Financial Provision for his Family
Is HANGING in the Balance

But - He was BRAVE enough to ask the Question

& - he was READY to have his eyes opened - with the Answer

& SO NOW – He has to RESPOND

& he does - Mark 12:32-33 (NLT)

32 The teacher of religious law (the scribe) replied, “Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other.

33 And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbor as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law.”

This "Teacher of Religious Law" – just put the Words of Jesus
Above the Jewish Religious Ceremonies

SIGNIFICANTLY Above them

LOVING God – with **everything I Have**
& **That - LEADING** to **Loving others AS IF** they were **MYSELF**

Is **MORE Important** than **Following ALL** the **Religious Ceremonies**
or **going** thru **ALL** the **Religious Motions**

Let me REPEAT that

This **Scribe REALIZED** – in **this instant**
that **God** is a **RELATIONAL GOD**

He **REALIZED** – that **Eternal Life**

is **about** a **REAL Relationship** with **GOD**
LEADING TO – **Real LOVE** for **those** around **us**

His **EYES were Opened** - & **He** was **GETTING IT**

BUT – with **ALL of his training,**
& with **ALL of his learning**

& **even** with **ALL the Deeper Understanding**
That **he's displaying** here

This **Scribe** was **STILL JUST**
“not far from the Kingdom of God”

Look at - Mark 12:34(a) (NLT)

34 Realizing how much the man understood, Jesus said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God” . . .

This – was a COMPLIMENT

But – it was ALSO – A WARNING

This **SCRIBE** – **Even** with this **New Understanding**

He was **still just** - **CLOSE** to the **Kingdom of God**

& **guys** - **there** are **SOME THINGS**

Where “**CLOSE**” - is **just** not “**Good Enough**”

If you **decide** to **jump** – from **one ROOF** to the **other**

Between a **PAIR** of **10-Story Buildings**

You **don’t want** to **JUST be** - **CLOSE** - to **making it**

& **when** we’re **talking about** entering the **Kingdom of Heaven** for **Eternity** – you **DON’T WANT** to **JUST be** – **CLOSE** - to **making it**

I **don’t know** how **many times** I’ve **had people** say to me

“I try to be a ‘Pretty Good Person,’

I THINK I’ll make it in, when I get there”

Listen please – **WHEN** you “**Get There**” – it’s **TOO LATE** to **find out** **that** you **were** – Just “**CLOSE**” to **getting in**

WHY would **Jesus Say** – to this **SCRIBE**
“You are not far from the Kingdom of God.”

Because this **Scribe** – with **all his Knowledge**

Was Just 18 INCHES Away – from **having**
a **Guaranteed Assurance** of **Entering** the **Kingdom of God**

That **18 INCHES** – is the **Journey**
from your **HEAD** – to your **HEART**

It's the **JOURNEY**
From **KNOWING ABOUT God** – on the **OUTSIDE**

To **RECEIVING God's Salvation** – on the **INSIDE**

We **MAKE** this **journey** – from the **Head** to the **Heart**

When we **put** our **Full Faith & Trust**
in **Jesus Christ Alone** - **for** our **Salvation**

John 1:10–13 (NLT)

10 [Jesus] came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.

11 He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.

12 But to all who believed him and accepted (received) him, he gave the right to become children of God.

13 They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

These are words of THE HEART - -

To Fully BELIEVE that God sent his Son, Jesus

to Die in our place on the Cross – & to Pay for our Sins
SO THAT we could enter eternity with God

These are NOT WORDS of us Trying Hard
to Do What's Right - & Live A Good Life

Because nothing we can do – can wash away the SIN
that PREVENTS US from spending our eternity with God

Our Eternal Salvation comes – Only By God's GRACE
& Only Thru our FAITH in Jesus Christ as our Savior

THAT is the plain truth – of ALL of God's Word

Guys – If you live your entire life In church

But Never put your Full Faith in the Person of Jesus Christ
as your ONLY Way to Salvation

Then God's Word says you will face that day
JUST OUTSIDE the Kingdom of God

If you live the most Religious & Moral life Possible

But you NEVER Personally Receive Jesus Christ as your Savior

The BIBLE SAYS you will MISS the Kingdom of God - by 18 Inches

THE BIBLE SAYS

There is ONLY ONE WAY
to enter the Kingdom of God, in Heaven

& That is thru BELIEVING and RECEIVING Jesus Christ
As your Personal Savior & Lord

Because THAT is the ONLY WAY God has made
for your sins to Be Forgiven

thereby granting you
a Grand Entrance, into His Eternal Kingdom

Please - Don't come up - 18 inches SHORT
of Receiving Eternal Life - with God in Heaven

Take that Journey – from Head Knowledge ABOUT God
To a Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ

& When you Do – Your sins will Be Forgiven
thru your faith in Jesus Christ

& you WILL HAVE a Guaranteed Entrance
into the Kingdom of Heaven – AS a Son or Daughter of God

Let's Pray