

# THE SCROLLS

## Meeting The Messiah | Mark 12:35-44

### Life Lesson

God is not impressed by outward religion, position, or appearance, but by hearts that truly recognize Jesus as Lord. Genuine faith is revealed in how we honor God rather than seek attention for ourselves. It is also seen in how we love and protect others, especially the vulnerable. Like the widow, God delights in sacrifices that flow from sincere devotion, not impressive amounts. Jesus always sees the heart behind what we offer Him.

### Examine Scripture

*35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he asked, "How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? 36 David himself says by the Holy Spirit: The Lord declared to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.' 37 David himself calls him 'Lord.' How, then, can he be his son?" And the large crowd was listening to him with delight. 38 He also said in his teaching, "Beware of the scribes, who want to go around in long robes and who want greetings in the marketplaces, 39 the best seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at banquets. 40 They devour widows' houses and say long prayers just for show. These will receive harsher judgment." 41 Sitting across from the temple treasury, he watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury. Many rich people were putting in large sums. 42 Then a poor widow came and*

### Turning God's Head

For the past three weeks, we have seen the Sanhedrin attempt to trap Jesus by asking three types of questions: political (paying taxes to Caesar), theological (the resurrection and eternal life), and practical (which commandment is the most important). It was not uncommon for rabbis, scribes, and other religious leaders to engage in theological and biblical "wrestling matches." However, with the exception of the one scribe, the intent of these questions was evil. They were trying to discredit Jesus or even have Him arrested. Yet, Jesus answered with such authority and wisdom that "no one dared to question him any longer" (v. 34).

In our text, we have three distinct teaching moments. First, Jesus teaches that the Messiah is a greater David (vs. 34-37). Second, Jesus teaches that His followers have greater accountability (vs. 38-40). Lastly, Jesus teaches about greater sacrifice (vs. 41-44).

### Vs. 34-37

Here, Jesus turns the tables. With a great crowd as an audience, Jesus asks a question. Jesus does not waste this moment on trivial theological or political debate. Jesus asks the most important question any Jew, or anyone for that matter, has to answer. It is a question about the Messiah.

Jesus asks the crowd, in direct confrontation with the scribes (the experts in the law), "How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David?" (v. 34). In his Gospel, Matthew gives a clearer version of this question: "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?" (Matt. 22:42). With his Gospel written to the Jews, Matthew probably wants his audience to understand the significance of this moment as a people waiting for the coming Messiah. Mark seems to have a more succinct purpose in showing that the Messiah, Jesus, is greater than David. Either way, Jesus' audience understood the significance of this moment. He was teaching about the long-awaited Messiah who comes to free them from tyranny and bondage.

*dropped in two tiny coins worth very little. 43 Summoning his disciples, he said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had—all she had to live on.”*

- In the margin, write “Greater David” beside (vs. 35-37), “Greater Accountability” beside (vs. 38-40), and “Greater Sacrifice” beside (vs. 41-44).
- Bracket (v. 36) and write “Ps. 110” above it.
- In (v. 36), circle “The Lord” and write “YHWH” above it. Also, circle “my Lord” and write “Adonai” above it.
- Bracket (vs. 38-40) and write (James 2:1-11).
- Read (James 2:1-11) and write any similarity between the scribes and the favoritism of the early Church.
- Circle “many rich people” in (v. 41) and “they all gave out of their surplus” in (v. 44). Draw a line to connect the two.
- Circle “poor widow” in (v. 42) and “she out of her poverty” in (v. 44). Draw a line to connect the two.

## Personal Notes

Jesus does not wait for an answer. His question is rhetorical. Jesus immediately answers His own question and even exegetes Old Testament Scripture to teach about the nature of the Messiah. In (v. 36), Jesus quotes (Ps. 110:1): “David himself says by the Holy Spirit: The Lord declared to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’” Psalm 110 is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament; verse 1 alone is quoted or alluded to over 33 times.

Before we look at Jesus' exegesis of David's psalm, we must notice how Jesus introduces the text: “David himself says by the Holy Spirit” (v. 36). This was a common introduction when rabbis began teaching Scripture; it served as a reminder of Scripture's divine inspiration. Not only was Jesus affirming that the author of Psalm 110 was David, but He was also affirming that though Scripture is written by the hand of man, it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Scripture is divinely inspired, the very words from the heart and mouth of God (2 Tim. 3:16). Therefore, Scripture is not some religious construct to help us understand the things of God; it is the very breath of God whispered in our ears and hearts to guide us to Him. Scripture, divinely inspired, is God's heart speaking to ours! Therefore, we should not and cannot so easily dismiss what we read in Scripture. It does not simply contain the Word of God; Scripture is the Word of God. It is infallible, inerrant, and inspired; it is fully authoritative in all matters of faith and life. Interestingly, the Jews (even the Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees, only in regard to the Pentateuch) would not have to be convinced of the inspiration of Scripture. Yet today, we question and doubt its authority and validity. May we understand and revere Scripture as the very breath of God . . . because it is!

Now, Jesus unfolds Psalm 110 to show that the Messiah is greater than David. There are two major aspects of this verse. First, the Messiah is referred to as the Son of David. This is one of Mark's favorite positive confessions of Jesus, as we see with Bartimaeus in (10:47-48). It reveals that the Messiah would be of human nature and lineage, specifically of the house of David. The belief that the Messiah was the Son of David would not have been controversial; even the Pharisees and scribes would have agreed with Jesus at this point. The Old Testament provides clear prophecies that the Messiah will be the Son of David (2 Sam 7:1-17; Jer. 23:5-6, 30:9, 33:15-17, 22; Hosea 3:5; Ps. 89:3-4; Amos 9:11; Is. 9:1-7, 11:1-9; Micah 5:2-5; 3; Ezk. 34:23-24).

However, here comes the “rub.” Jesus unfolds his question in (v. 37): “David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How, then, can he be his son?” Jesus is pointing to how David, as the inspired author of the psalm, writes of the Messiah: “The Lord declared to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet’” (v. 36). So, the Lord (YHWH in Hebrew) says to David's Lord (Adonai in Hebrew). So, David is acknowledging the lordship of the Messiah, not as a personal

## Personal Notes

preference, but as a divine appointment. So, how could David call the Messiah “Lord” if He is his son? Jesus is showing the connection between the Messiah’s human and divine natures. With His human nature, the Messiah (Jesus) is of the line of David; therefore, he is David’s Son. Yet, the Messiah (Jesus) is also the Son of God; therefore, he is completely divine. Therefore, the Messiah is not just David’s son; he is his Sovereign. Not just his son, but his Lord. The Messiah is not just the son of David to return to Israel’s throne, but He is the Son of God who will sit at the right hand of God, ruling the entire universe in authority and power. He is the greater David!

How did the people respond to this? They were impressed and excited: “And the large crowd was listening to him with delight” (v. 37). It was not that Jesus stumped the Sanhedrin, though that probably caused a few smirks among the people. Jesus was teaching them about their coming hope. They were looking for the Messiah, and He was closer than they knew. In a sense, they were still looking to the heavens when they should have been looking toward Jesus. Their Messiah was right in front of them, preparing to go to the cross and offer Himself for their salvation.

### Vs. 38-40

Mark provides no commentary on the transition from Jesus’ teaching on the Messiah to this warning from the scribes. Something must have happened to cause Jesus’ response to turn more negative toward the scribes than it was toward the one in (vs. 28-34). Perhaps the scribes began to sneer and grow angry with His teaching about the Messiah. They would have understood His subtle pointing to Himself as the Messiah, not just the son of David, but the son of God. Either way, returning to the typical portrayal of the scribes, Jesus refers to them in a negative light.

Jesus warns the people about the scribes’ behavior and attitudes. As with the Pharisees, the scribes seemed pious and holy, but they were far from God. Notice how Jesus’ indictment of the scribes outlines the greatest commandments (vs. 28-34). The first and foremost commandment is to love God. Desire Him as the greatest source of joy in your life. Seek to glorify Him and make Him known. Yet the scribes were too busy seeking attention and honor for themselves to be bothered with bringing honor and glory to God. Everything they did, even what they wore, was to bring attention to themselves. In other words, they wanted the people to worship them! This is far from “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (v. 30). Second, Jesus said that the scribes “devour widows’ houses” (v. 40). This was in direct violation of “love your neighbor as yourself” (v. 31). So these scribes obviously did not understand the first one; they were full of pride, arrogance, and self-

## Personal Reflection

1. Who is Jesus to me? Do I truly submit to Him as Lord, the greater David who has authority over every area of my life?
2. How do I treat Scripture in my daily life? With Scripture truly as the inspired, authoritative Word of God, how does that shape the way I read it, trust it, obey it, and submit my opinions and preferences to it?
3. Where might I be subtly seeking my own glory instead of God's? Like the scribes, are there ways I desire recognition, approval, or status—even in spiritual settings—rather than humbly loving God and serving others?
4. How does my love for God show itself in how I treat people, especially the vulnerable? Are there relationships or attitudes in my life that contradict the command to love my neighbor as myself, revealing a disconnect between my faith and my practice?
5. What does my giving of time, resources, or obedience reveal about my heart toward God? Am I offering God what is comfortable and leftover, or am I trusting Him with joyful, sacrificial devotion like the widow, believing that Jesus sees not only the amount, but also the heart?

## Commentaries

- Exalting Jesus in Mark* by Daniel Akin  
*MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Mark 9-16* by John MacArthur  
*BECNT: Mark* by Robert Stein

## Mt. Zion's Mission

Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to  
**MAKE, MATURE, and MULTIPLY**  
 disciples of Jesus Christ.

righteousness. They had more knowledge, more access, and more opportunity to know the things of God, yet their hearts were hardened, and they sought only their own honor and glory. Therefore, Jesus pronounces a scathing warning: “These will receive harsher judgment” (v. 40). Greater knowledge equals greater accountability.

Followers of Christ are not immune to self-seeking for glory and honor. In fact, James had to address this behavior in the early Church. Apparently, there were people in the Church who loved the attention their status brought them, just as the scribes did. So James writes: “My brothers and sisters, do not show favoritism as you hold on to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ . . . Indeed, if you fulfill the royal law prescribed in the Scripture, Love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well. If, however, you show favoritism, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors” (James 2:1-11). If the scribes received a harsh judgment, then surely those who confess Christ, enjoying His grace and mercy, yet act like the scribes, will receive even harsher judgment than the scribes!

### Vs. 41-44

The third text offers a glimpse of greater sacrifice. Jesus is sitting across from the temple treasury, watching people place their offerings in one of the thirteen chests. Each chest was for a particular type of offering: new shekel dues, old shekel dues, bird offerings, wood, frankincense, gold for the mercy seat, and six freewill offerings. The chests Jesus is watching are probably the money chest for freewill offerings. Many rich people placed large amounts in the chests. Yet one widow caught Jesus's eye. She placed two small copper coins in the chest.

Jesus calls His disciples over to teach them a valuable lesson on giving: God knows what and why we give. It's not the amount, but the heart behind it. Robert Stein writes, “No gift to God is insignificant when given in love and devotion. All humanity stands equal before the command to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength. The rich have no special advantage in this. This poor widow's example will be remembered throughout history for the great and generous gift of her two small coins.”

The greatness of a sacrifice is not measured by its amount but by its source. No matter the amount, if it comes from a heart that loves God with all its heart, soul, mind, and strength and from a heart that loves others, it is a great sacrifice. This is why Paul writes, “The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. Each person should do as he has decided in his heart—not reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:6-7). Others may see the amount, but Jesus sees the heart!