

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Mark 12:28-34 | The Only Two Things That Matter
 August 1, 2021

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Mark 12:28-34
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

We are in the last week of Jesus' earthly life.

This is Wednesday of Passion Week.

Monday was Jesus' Triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem.

Monday was also "lamb selection day" for the Jews. *Passover*

Tuesday is when Jesus cleansed the Temple.

Wednesday is a day of testing. *for Jesus - Day of Teaching*

~~Jesus has been tested by the religious leaders—and has passed all those tests as the perfect, spotless Lamb of God.~~

Thursday is the betrayal of Judas Iscariot during the Passover Meal.

On Friday, Jesus will be humiliated, beaten, and murdered as *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.* (John 1:29)

Sunday, Jesus walks out of His grave conquering sin's death.

As we're finding out, Wednesday is a very long day for Jesus and the Twelve Disciples.

Jesus has been tested three times so far by the religious leaders. *on this web.*

The first test came from the Sanhedrin.

The second test included both groups of Pharisees/Herodians.


The third test came from the Sadducees.

We learned how badly mistaken the Sadducees were when it came to the subject of the resurrection.

Jesus passed this test, and the Sadducees walked away with their tail between their legs.

We learned several key points from the Sadducees.

- 1. The afterlife is not identical to this life.

Isn't that good news? Isn't that encouraging? 

That God has a life planned for His children that is so majestic that we can't even begin to fathom its majesty?

- 2. We are led astray when we don't trust in the whole counsel of the Bible.

And we're going to learn that lesson again today as Jesus teaches us from the OT.

- 3. It's impossible to experience the power of God apart from the Bible.

When you read The Word of God, by the Spirit of God, then you will experience God day-by-day.

our middle name is "Bible" and...

And that's why we teach the Word of God verse-by-verse.

Now we ended our study of Mark on a somber note several weeks ago.

And that note is that we're all going to die.

We discussed how God uses this life and all its trials and tragedies to prepare for that moment to where you will see Jesus Christ face to face.

This is not your best life now if you are a child of God. *It is if you don't believe*

It takes perseverance and faith to endure to the end.

God has called you to finish your life well and for you to keep your faith to the end. (2 Timothy 4:7)

The apostle Paul says ~~this to the Believer.~~

cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16— ~~Therefore~~, we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. *Can you all relate that your body is falling apart?*

cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17— For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. *—Dang!*

cf. 2 Corinthians 4:18— So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

The apostle Paul also says ~~this to the unbeliever.~~

cf. 2 Corinthians 6:1—... We also appeal to you, "Don't receive the grace of God in vain." *beg*

cf. 2 Corinthians 6:2— For he says:

At an acceptable time I listened to you,
and in the day of salvation I helped you.,

See, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!

This is a beautiful reminder for us as the Church to continue inviting.

We are to continue handing out those invite cards.

We are to be ready and prepared for our God Intersections / Divine Appointments throughout the week.

That's why we have those Bibles we want you to take and give them away.

Think about it, today is the day of salvation for someone, and God is going to use you as the vessel of honor to be the human agent to reveal truth.

*We as the church get to participate in that process,
How fun!
To have a front row seat & watch people come to faith!*

So that's all a review from three weeks ago.

INTRODUCTION:

Well, today, we see Jesus navigate the last test from the religious leaders.

This is test number four.

This test is unique in that this particular test is not from a group of religious leaders—but rather a lone scribe.

This test is unlike the others in a sense; it's not a mob mentality.

This Scribe is a bit different, as we'll find out.

Why did Jesus have to endure four tests?

Because the Jewish leaders tested the sacrificial lambs for Passover for four days— all to make sure they were fit as a perfect sacrifice.

In other words, what was happening to the physical lambs— was also a spiritual reality for Jesus as the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world once and for all.

Today's test is by a Scribe.

A Scribe is someone who has devoted his entire life to studying and interrupting the OT Scriptures.

This man is gifted in reading and writing.

The word Scribe literally means "to write."

He has his Ph.D. in OT studies.

So this man is truly the religious leader's last hope to trap Jesus as a heretic.

If Jesus is a heretic, He can't be the Savior—Messiah

Everyone else has failed miserably in trying to trap Jesus in His words.

1 The Sanhedrin (Jewish Supreme Court) challenged Jesus' authority and failed.

2 The Pharisees and the Herodians challenged Jesus' view on government and taxes and failed.

3 The Sadducees challenged Jesus' theology on the resurrection, and they failed too.

What angle is this Scribe going to come at Jesus?

What kind of question is he going to pose that will once and for all be Jesus' downfall?

Let's find out!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:28-34 CSB

Mark 12:28— One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, "Which command is the most important of all?"

Mark 12:29— Jesus answered, "The most important is Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Mark 12:30— Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.,

Mark 12:31— The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself., There is no other command greater than these."

Mark 12:32— Then the Scribe said to him, "You are right, teacher. You have correctly said that he is one, and there is no one else except him.

Mark 12:33— And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Mark 12:34— When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to question him any longer.

PRAY:

EXEGESIS:

Mark 12:28— One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, "Which command is the most important of all?"

Ahh, we see the Scribe ask a question about the Scriptures/theology.

This really shouldn't be a surprise.

It make sense

Knows the most about.

The Scribe is going to ask a question about the thing he is most comfortable discussing.

The Scribe is an expert in OT law.

Your translation may refer to this man as an "expert in the law" or a lawyer.

Evidently, the Scribe witnessed the confrontation between Jesus and the Sadducees over the resurrection. *Because*

Verse 28—When he heard them debating...

So the Scribe heard "them"—Sadducees.

Pause...what's the purpose of a debate?

Is it to win? To learn? To be convinced of something and possibly change your mind? *U*

I've noticed that most of the time, a debate simply solidifies what you already believe.

And we see that here, eventually in the scriptures

+ *And saw that Jesus answered them well,*

Is it possible that this Scribe was one of the few religious leaders learning Jesus' true identity?

Maybe, just maybe, we could put this man in the same category as Nicodemus.

That may be true

But don't think that this Scribe is a supporter or a promoter of Jesus because Matthew's Gospel tells us that he intended to "test" Jesus. (Matthew 22:34)

Let's look at the Scribe's question:

+ *"Which command is the most important of all?"*

The KJV, ASV, and NKJV—"Which is the first commandment of all?"

In other words, "What is the single most significant command—that God has ever given?"

Now, of all the questions this Scribe could have asked, why this one?

Well, this question was a question that the religious leaders seemed to debate among themselves.

It reminds me of discussions that me and my pastoral colleagues have.

Boy, you talk about a good time—putting half a dozen pastors in a room, and we start asking questions nobody wants the answers to!

Just as with the questions about taxes and the resurrection—these religious leaders couldn't figure these things out on their own.

They
The Jewish leaders were constantly debating which commands were the greatest.

And in their ^{OPINION} studies, they found a distinction among the commands in Scripture.

They came up with 613 commands in the OT.

Why the number 613? Because there are 613 Hebrew letters in the Ten Commandments.

Once again, we see the cleverness of the Jewish leaders.

Their craftiness doesn't stop there.

They also determined that of the 613 commands, 248 were positive, and 365 were negative.

Now, here's the rub; they knew that they couldn't keep them!

So, in an effort to feel better about themselves, they went even further with their logic.

They said some of the 613 commands were lighter (smaller), and some were weightier (greater). ^{-less important} ^{-more important than others}

But, even still, they couldn't reach a consensus as to which laws fell into what category.

Finally, they realized that they couldn't even keep a handful of these laws perfectly

—so ultimately, they focused on their man-made traditions instead of God's biblical laws.

So with that context, what the Scribe is truly asking is this, "Jesus, which commandment supersedes all other commandments?"

Or we could ask it like this, "What is the one command to which everything else flows from?"

Question: How is this a trap question for Jesus?

Well, this Scribe is most likely a Pharisee.

And a Pharisee's hero is Moses.

In the Scribe's opinion, no one was closer to God than Moses.

The trap is this if Jesus gave a ^{ANSWER} ~~commandment~~ that is not found in the law of Moses—the Mosaic law—Jesus would be elevating and exalting Himself above Moses.

So, if Jesus answered this question apart from the OT—or maybe He chooses to give a new command, the Scribe would see say that Jesus is a heretic.

That's the trap.

So let's see how Jesus answers.

+ **Mark 12:29**— Jesus answered, "The most important is Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

+ **Mark 12:30**— Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Jesus is quoting a famous passage that every Jew was familiar with.

Devout Jews had this passage memorized and would recite it twice a day, morning and evening.

It comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

This passage is called the Sh'ma.

It is the central confession of the Jewish Faith.

Devout Jews would wear the Sh'ma in a tiny leather box, called a *phylactery*, either on the forehead and on the wrist while praying.

Jewish households hung the *Sh'ma* on their doors in a small round box called a (Meh-zoo-zuh) *Muzuzah*.

The *Sh'ma* was the first thing that was stated during a Jewish worship service.

It was the creed of Israel.

The Sh'ma means "Hear" or "Give ear."

The reason that the Sh'ma is so important to the Jews is that every other religion has multiple gods.

So the Sh'ma emphasized that the One True Living God is indeed One.

Back to.

Mark 12:29— Jesus answered, "The most important is Listen, Israel!"

Listen— listening in the Jewish context also means obedience.

Listening and obedience are two sides of the same coin.

Mark 12:30— Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

agapaō—agape love.

This is divine love. This is not a worldly love.

Agapaō is loyal love.

KEYPOINT 1:

Agapaō — a faithful love regardless of the cost to you.

This kind of love costs something — A giving love

The world does not know this kind of love—because their version of love takes.

What have you done for me lately?

Agapaō is a love that gives until you've got nothing left.

You can't know this kind of love unless you're a Christian.

You will never experience this kind of love unless you have ^{1st} confessed that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God the Father raised Him from the dead for your sin. (Romans 10-9-10.)

Agapaō love only comes from the Holy Spirit.

Mark 12:30— Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Notice the command.

Jesus doesn't say to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength,

Jesus says, to Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

The word "all" is repeated four times in verse 30.

Don't miss that. Circle that word "all" in your own Bible.

The sense here is that we are commanded to love God with our whole person.

It could be ^{translated} read this way— Love the Lord your God “from out of the entire heart,” “from out of the entire soul,” “from out of the entire mind,” and “from out of the entire strength.”

The Sh'ma stresses the source of the love.

Agapaō— arises out of your entire being. —All consuming love

We are to love God from the very core of who we are.

No other affection surpasses this kind of love.

Agapaō love doesn't have anything else mixed into it.

It's a pure love.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart. Why? Because the pure in heart will see God!” (Matthew 5:8)

Our love for Jesus is not to be lukewarm or indifferent or mixed into all this worldly stuff that we can see.

This kind of love is a blazing fire in our souls.

One church father said that once you set yourself on fire for the Lord, people will come to watch you burn. —That's Agapaō

Mark 12:31— The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other command greater than these.”

Notice that the Scribe only asked for the greatest commandment, but Jesus gives a second.

The second part of Jesus' answer is also taken from OT law—Leviticus 19:18.

Passage

This also was very familiar to the Jews.

Please note, Jesus is not answering this Scribe's question with anything that they didn't already know.

The other prophets, rabbis, and scribes have been repeating these ^{two} commands since Moses gave them—for the past seven thousand years.

So why is Jesus' answer so unique? Brilliant?

Because this was the first time, anyone ever placed them together.

The brilliance is this—Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments in His answer.

Verse 29 ^{recaps} summarizes the first four commandments... which have to do with our love for God (Exodus 20:2-11).

Verse 30 ^{sums up} summarizes the final six commandments... which have to do with our love for other people (Exodus 20:12-17).

Jesus did not give a new command—He simply summarizes 613 commands in two sentences.

Jesus is saying that love for God and love for people cannot be divided.

Your love for God is vertical, while your love for people is horizontal.

What a beautiful picture of the cross.

Back to...

Mark 12:31—The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself.

It's easy to love an invisible God.

Especially when your version of God is pretty much just like yourself, but maybe a tad more moral.

But the second command puts rubber on the road.

to love God only is incomplete

1 John 4:20— ...For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

We ask, "Jesus, have you met my neighbor?! He's crazy!"

And it doesn't stop there; we are not to simply love our neighbor—but to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves!



How do you love yourself?

By taking care of yourself. When you're hungry, you eat. When you're tired, you rest.

Each one of us is fixated? Addicted to ourselves? our comfort

Whether you want to admit it or not, you're always looking out for number one.

"Neighbor" is not just the folks who live next to you, but the everyone you know and meet.

KEYPOINT 2:

It takes two commands to embrace the one will of God.

Loving God and loving people are how you prove you're a child of God.

Mark 12:32— Then the Scribe said to him, "You are right, teacher. You have correctly said that he is one, and there is no one else except him."

Mark 12:33— And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices."

So once again, this religious leader was out to prove Jesus wrong, but actually admits now that Jesus is right.

Two things are surprising with the Scribe's answer.

Loving God? People
is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices."

1. This is Passover week. The main focus of this week is sacrifice.
2. The location of where the Scribe answers—the Temple.

This Scribe actually admits that Loving God and loving people are more important than the entire ceremonial and sacrificial system currently going on inside the Temple.

So all that to say this...Jesus turned this man's world upside down.

Because everything that he knew about loving God was based on his performance.

Just like the Rich Young Ruler who walked away from Jesus.

X **Mark 12:34**—When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to question him any longer.

Wow, Jesus complimented this man.

Jesus saw that this Scribe was thinking outside *his religion* the box.

In other words, the Scribe was starting to understand that the OT law that he loved so much was much more than a system of rules to follow.

The apostle Paul writes—*Love... is the fulfillment of the law.* (Romans 13:10)

*In other words, you don't go wrong loving God?
People like Jesus loves you.*

Mark 12:34— ... "You are not far from the kingdom of God."


Notice that Jesus didn't say, "You are in the kingdom of God."

He said: "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

Big difference.

In other words, "you're beginning to see the truth."

Notice that this compliment is also a warning.

I'm not a big fan of sports analogies but let me give you a few... 

This ^{Scribe} man is 4th down and inches away from the touchdown.

This man shot the three-pointer as the buzzer goes off and hits the rim.

This man missed a bull's eye buy a hair.

He rimmed the hole for a hole in one.

Dear friends, it is entirely possible to be within an inch of Heaven and still go to hell.

No matter how hard you may work to please God, the reality is that you have never loved God with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind, and all of your strength.

You certainly don't love your neighbor as yourself.

Why? Because, apart from the grace of God through the Holy Spirit, you don't have the capacity to love with an agapaō love.

Though the Scribe was close, he still made the conscious and willful decision to be separated from the Kingdom.

According to rabbinic teaching, to recite the Sh'ma is to submit to the yoke of the Kingdom of God.

Tragically, we don't see this man submit.

He doesn't bow his knee and worship Jesus as the God of the Sh'ma.

Lastly...

Mark 12:34— And no one dared to question ^{Jews} him any longer.

If we don't focus on this last statement—we're going to miss something significant.

The sense ^{here} is that no one had the courage to ask Jesus another question.

Why? Two reasons:

1. Because nothing is more serious than ^{your} their entry into the Kingdom of Heaven. — Eternal life
2. Look who's speaking.

Jesus, the Lamb of God who came from Heaven to pay your sin debt with His own blood. — that's who speaking

The propitiation is about to be made.

In other words, the appeasing of God's wrath is about to be satisfied. — for your sin

This is Jesus' final answer.

He's done being tested.

He's had enough of these silly little religious riddles.

He's done playing defense, and next week we Jesus go on the offense.

PREACH:

Let me ask you this... "What is, in your opinion, the most ^{heinous} detestable sin that you could ever commit?"

Murder? Adultery? Idolatry?

Or is it the failure of not loving God from out of your entire being and the failure of not loving your neighbor as yourself?

Does that scare you?

That Jesus tells us that these are the only two things that matter.

That we all fail in doing the ^{only} two things that matter in this life?

It scares me, because I haven't kept either one of those commands for a microsecond.

And yet, our Love for God and our neighbor is the foundation of the Christian life.

So how do we love as Jesus commands us to love?

KEYPOINT 3:

We love not perfectly, but increasingly.

Jesus told the scribe that he's not far from the Kingdom

Question—Do you ever wonder how far away from the kingdom you are?

Do you ever have a bad day and wonder if you're truly a Christian?

Do you think that if you don't keep doing what you've always done, that you might lose your salvation?

Dear friends, it is entirely possible to grow up in a Beaver Cleaver family and attend Church every Sunday and know how to explain the Gospel, but yet never get it.

It's entirely possible to have studied, gone to Bible College and seminary, and not be saved.

I'll never forget Dr. John Lake teaching in a theology class—a master's level course in Seminary—giving the Gospel presentation to us as his students before our last final. *He goes see Billy Graham on US,*

Why did he do that? Because he knew this to be true.

He didn't want anyone passing his class and yet still going to hell.

So yes, dear friend, you can come within an inch of the Kingdom of God, and yet it means nothing. *- Because you didn't believe - Believing is the work of SALVATION*

~~Because truth be told, it might as well be another universe away.~~

~~The Word of God teaches that you don't come to God on your own terms.~~

~~He first draws you by His grace.~~

~~One of the most comforting things Jesus ever said was this...~~

~~**John 6:44**— No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.~~

Dear friends, God chose you as a child, and He doesn't leave his children on Earth as orphans.

But, as we talked about earlier— if you don't respond to His grace, your heart will be hardened over time and your conscience seared.

You won't learn to love God. You'll instead choose to hate him.

There is a deadline on the invitation.

KEYPOINT 4:

You don't fall into love; you choose to love.

~~The world thinks that you simply just trip and fall into the arms of another.~~

~~But God says you choose to love.~~

We are to love when we don't want to.

We are to love when we want to scream and yell and accuse and fight.

Practical How do you know if you love God? How do you know you're in the Kingdom?

Very simple—You do what the Bible says. ~~There~~ there is a growing love for people ^{God is} and a growing hatred for sin.

You put this command into practice. — You love God and people the way the Bible tells you to love them.

Knowing what the Bible says is not enough.

What'cha you going to do with it? How are you going to apply these two things in your life?

Because we all know It's easier to read about love than to do it.

The world loves the idea of love.

The world loves its own version of love.

They think it's subjective. *It means something to one person
? Another to someone else.*

God, on the other hand, commands that we love in a particular way.

If you call River Bible Church home, your assignment is the same each week. *in the kingdom of God*

Your mission is to take one of these blue invitation cards and give it to one person.

Dear friends, That's SO invites a week

That's ~~your~~ *our* duty—that's how ~~you~~ *we as the church* fulfill the Great Commission.

Are you praying for divine appointments this week?

Are you looking for God Intersections?

Ya, what to know a little secret?

I'm praying for your divine appointments this week!

I'm praying for you to grow in your courage to learn to love people as much as you love yourself.

And that you will join God in what He's doing in the Verde Valley.

*How fun is it to be used by God to help someone score
An eternal touchdown?*

PRAYER ROOM:

- to sink a divine 3 point shot
- or to get a holy hole in one?

PRAYER:

*How fun to watch Jesus build
His church - And for us to
be A small part of it!*

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