

## Mark 12

This chapter records events which took place on Tuesday of the week Jesus was crucified, if not on Wednesday (if 11:27 denotes a separate day). Jesus gives a parable directed at the religious leaders (12:1-12), who then begin a series of confrontations with Jesus. First are the Pharisees and Herodians (12:13-17), then the Sadducees (12:18-27) then one of the scribes (12:28-34). At that point, the religious leaders quit asking Jesus questions and He puts one to them which they cannot answer: 12:35-37. Subsequently, Jesus rebukes the hypocrisy of the scribes (12:38-40) and then blesses a widow whose heart contrasts with the heart of the religious leaders (12:41-44).

### TRANSLATION - 12:1-12:

**1** And He began in parables to speak, "A vineyard a man planted and placed around [it] a hedge and He dug a trough and built a tower and leased it to tenants and went on a journey.

**2** And he sent to the tenants at the proper time a slave in order from the tenants he might receive from the fruit of the vineyard. **3** And after taking, they beat him and sent [him] away empty[-handed]. **4** And again he sent to them another slave; and him they struck on the head and dishonored. **5** And another he sent; and that one they killed, and many others, some beating, and some killing. **6** Yet one he was having a beloved son; he sent him last to them, saying that "They will respect my son."

**7** And those tenants to each other said that "This one is the heir. Come let us kill him and ours will be the inheritance." **8** And after taking him they killed and cast him outside of the vineyard. **9** What [therefore] will the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and will destroy those tenants and He will give the vineyard to others. **10** Neither this Scripture have you read: "A stone which the builders rejected, this has become for a head of the corner. **11** From the Lord this has happened and it is marvelous in our eyes." **12** And they were seeking Him to arrest, and they feared the crowd, for they knew that against them the parable He said. And leaving Him they departed.

### GREEK WORDS:

"Parables" (ver. 1) is used 50 times in the NT; it was used first in Mark, at 3:23. "Vineyard" is used in Mark only in this context: 12:1-2, 8-9; it is used in the NT 23 times. "To plant" is used 11 times, only here in Mark. "To place around" is used 8 times in the NT, in Mark at 12:1; 15:17, 36. "Hedge" in the form of a "fence" is used four times: Matt. 21:33; Mark 12:1; Luke 14:23; Eph. 2:14. "To dig" is used three times: Matt. 21:33; 25:18; Mark 12:1. This is the only place "trough" is used in the NT; it denotes a trough for pressing grapes to make juice. "To build" is used 40 times in the NT, four times in Mark: 12:1, 10; 14:58; 15:29. "Tower" is used four times: Matt. 21:33; Mark 12:1; Luke 13:4; 14:28. "To lease" is used four times: Matt. 21:33; 21:41; Mark 12:1; Luke 20:9. "Tenants" or "tenant farmers" is used 19 times in the NT, only here in Mark (12:1-2, 7, 9). "To go on a journey" is used six times, only here in Mark.

"To send" (ver. 2) is used 132 times in the NT, twenty times in Mark, beginning at 1:2. "Slave" is used 126 times, five times in Mark: 10:44; 12:2, 4; 13:34; 14:47. "Fruit" is used 66 times, five times in Mark: 4:7-8, 29; 11:14; 12:2. "To beat" (ver. 3) is used 15 times, three times in Mark: 12:3, 5; 13:9. "Empty" ("empty-handed") is used 18 times; it can mean "in vain"; it is used in Mark only here. This is the only use of the verb "to strike on the head" (ver. 4) in the NT. "To dishonor" is used 7 times: Mark 12:4; Luke 20:11; John 8:49; Acts 5:41; Rom. 1:24; 2:23; James 2:6. "To kill" (ver. 5) is used 74 times in the NT; it was used first in Mark at 3:4. "Beloved" (ver. 6) is used 61 times, first in Mark at 1:11; 9:7. This is its last use. "To respect" is used 9 times, only here in Mark. "Heir" (ver. 7) is used 15 times, only here in Mark; it is related to the word "inheritance," which is used 14 times, only here in Mark.

"Lord" (ver. 9) is used 717 times in the NT; it is used 18 times in Mark, beginning at 1:3. "Scripture" (ver. 10) literally means "writing," but usually refers to inspired writings or "Scripture." The word is used 50 times in the NT, three times in Mark: 12:10, 24; 14:49. "To

read” is used 32 times, four times in Mark: 2:25; 12:10, 26; 13:14. “Stone” is used 59 times, 7 times in Mark: 5:5; 12:10; 13:1-2; 15:46; 16:3-4. “To reject” is used 9 times, first in Mark at Mark 8:31. “The builders” is used 40 times, four times in Mark: 12:1, 10; 14:58; 15:29. “Head” is used 75 times, first in Mark at 6:24-25. “Corner” is used only here in Mark, out of 9 uses. “Marvelous” (ver. 11) is used six times: Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:11; John 9:30; 1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 15:1, 3. “Eye” was first used at 7:22. “They were seeking” (ver. 12) is used earlier at 1:37. “To arrest” or “to seize” is used earlier at 1:31. “To fear” is used earlier at 4:41.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

“Were seeking” (ver. 12) translates a verb in the imperfect tense in Greek, showing that this was an action continually happening in the past tense. They “kept seeking” or “they continued to seek.”

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

For passages from the OT which portray Israel as a “vineyard,” see: Psalm 80:8-18; Isa. 1:8; 27:2-6; Jer. 2:21; 12:10; 26:20-23; Ezekiel 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1. The most famous use of the vineyard as a metaphor for Israel is Isaiah 5:1-7. For examples of Israel’s abuse of God’s prophets, see: 2 Chronicles 24:20-22 as well as Matthew 23:34, 37.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

Scholars do not know which stone is behind the reference to a “head of the corner” (12:10). Some suggest it is the stone at the corner of the building from which the two walls are built. Some believe it refers to the final stone put into the archway which holds the others in place. Either way, it is the most important stone of the structure.

#### PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

See Matthew 21:33-46 and Luke 20:9-19 for parallels to this parable.

#### COMMENTS:

The “them” to whom Jesus speaks this parable are the chief priests, scribes, and elders mentioned at 11:27. These groups, along with the Sadducees (12:18) comprise the Sanhedrin, the highest rule-making body of 71 men in the Jewish society. The vineyard was a metaphor for the nation of Israel frequently used in the OT (see above under “OT references”), and the leaders would surely draw the conclusion that Jesus is speaking of the Jewish nation.

The owner would symbolize Jehovah God (ver. 1). The vineyard would denote the nature of having a relationship with God; in other words, denoting God’s people. The hedge or wall and tower are simply aspects of the parable which reflect the earthly nature of the story. They do not have a spiritual fulfillment. The “tenants” would be the religious leaders but also any Jew who intended to preserve his relationship with God. The fruit that was expected by the OT prophets who used the metaphor of the vineyard was obedience, justice, righteousness, and faithfulness.

The owner sent a slave at an unexpected time to collect the fruit he was expecting (ver. 2). The tenants did not want to give to the owner what he expected, so they beat that slave and sent him back empty-handed (ver. 3). The owner sent another slave whom they beat in the head and dishonored (ver. 4). The owner, with a perseverance that borders on insanity, continued sending slaves whom the tenants systematically beat or killed (ver. 5).

The owner decided then to send his beloved son (ver. 6). He reasoned that the tenants would respect his son. However, in a desperate act that also defies reason, the tenants convinced themselves that if they were to kill the son, the heir, then the vineyard (inheritance) would be theirs (ver. 7). Therefore, they took the son, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard, apparently without giving him a burial, which would be extremely disrespectful (ver. 8). Jesus asked the rhetorical question in verse 9: What will the owner do?” Then He answers His own question: He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

Then Jesus challenged the religious leaders by quoting from the Psalm which the crowd had just sung (11:9-10): Psalm 118:26. He does the same thing in 2:25 and 12:26. Jesus quotes verses 22-23: "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the head of the corner. This happened from the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes." The religious leaders understood that Jesus spoke the parable against them, which means that they understood they were the tenants who were abusing the owners' slaves and son. This stirred up their anger and they began seeking how they might seize and arrest Jesus but fear still held them back. Judas will provide an opportunity for them at 14:10-11. This is the third time Mark has noted the animosity of the Jews toward Jesus: 3:6; 11:18; see also 14:1-2.

#### APPLICATION:

Through this parable, Jesus shows that the religious leaders, and their followers, were not being faithful in their relationship with God. They were not "tending the vineyard" as they should. They were not giving God the faithfulness, obedience, justice, and righteousness which was demanded by the relationship which they had with Jehovah God. They abused His servants and ultimately killed His Son. At this point, Jesus has predicted His death for the fourth time: 8:31-32; 9:31-32; 10:32-34. Jesus uses Psalm 118:22 to show that His rejection by the Jewish leaders was prophesied by the OT; He is the "stone" which the builders rejected. Yet, He also intimates the coming resurrection for He is the "head" of the corner, that is, the most important stone in the entire building (see Acts 4:11-12; see also 1 Peter 2:4, 7; Romans 9:32-33; Ephesians 2:20).

But Jesus has also now predicted the destruction of the Jewish nation, more specifically in the next chapter, and the temple of Israel in Jerusalem (chapter 13). They have polluted it for the last time (11:15-18). This disrespect for the house of God also has a history which reaches back into the times of the OT.

Jesus also now predicts the broadening of the kingdom to "tenants" who will produce the fruit which the owner ("God") expects. The new tenants will be the Gentiles (and Jews) who obey Jesus Christ and His gospel and enter into the new relationship with Him. This entire process, proven by Jesus' quotation of Psalm 118:23, is under the direction of Jehovah God and it is a "marvelous" thing in the eyes of all those who love and respect God. We see this "redirection" being worked out in the book of Acts. Paul invariably entered the synagogue where he visited, to convince the Jews of the Messiahship of Jesus Christ. When they refused, he would then turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46).

#### TRANSLATION - 12:13-17:

**13** And they send to Him some of the Pharisees and of the Herodians in order that Him they might snare by a word. **14** And after coming, they say to Him, "Teacher, we know that true you are and it does not concern you concerning no one; for you do not look into the face of men, but in truth the way of God you teach. Is it authorized to give the poll tax to Caesar or not? Should we give or should we not give?" **15** But He, having known their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius in order that I might see [it]."

**16** And they brought [one]. And He says to them, "Whose [is] this image and the inscription?" And they said to Him, "Caesar." **17** And Jesus said to them, "The things of Caesar, pay to Caesar and the things of God, to God." And they were utterly amazed at Him.

#### GREEK WORDS:

The "Pharisees" (ver. 13) were first mentioned at 2:16. The "Herodians" were first mentioned at 3:6. They are only mentioned there, here, and Matthew 22:16. "To snare" is only found here in the NT. Jesus is called "Teacher" (ver. 14) a dozen times in Mark, first at 4:38. "True" is found only here in Mark; it is used 26 times in the NT. "To be a concern" is used 10 times in the NT, first in Mark at 4:38. "Face" is used earlier at 1:2. "Truth" is used 109 times in the NT, earlier at Mark 5:33. "Way" is used 101 times in the NT, 16 times in Mark. It was used earlier at 1:2 as a metaphor. Most of the time, it refers to the "road" or "path" which Jesus and

His apostles were traveling. "To teach" was used earlier at 1:21. "It is authorized" was used earlier at 2:24, 26. "Poll tax" ("census" is a loan word from the Latin) is used at Matthew 17:25; 22:17, 19; Mark 12:14. "Caesar" is mentioned 29 times in the NT, only in this context in Mark: 12:14, 16-17. This caesar would be Tiberius Caesar.

"Hypocrisy" (ver. 15) is used six times in the NT: Matt. 23:28; Mark 12:15; Luke 12:1; Gal. 2:13; 1 Tim. 4:2; 1 Peter 2:1. "To test" was used earlier at 1:13. See also: 8:11; 10:2. "To bring" was used earlier at 1:32. "Denarius" is used 16 times in the NT, earlier in Mark at 6:37. "Image" (ver. 16) is used only here in Mark; it is used 23 times in the NT. "Inscription" is found five times: Matt. 22:20; Mark 12:16; 15:26; Luke 20:24; 23:38. "To pay" (ver. 17) is used 48 times, only here in Mark. This is the only use of "to be utterly amazed" in the NT.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

"Send" in verse 13 and "says" in verses 14 and 16 are present tense verbs, called the "historical present." The action clearly happened in the past but the use of the present tense helps portray the vividness of the action.

"They were utterly amazed" (ver. 17) translates a verb in the imperfect tense in Greek, showing that this was an action continually happening in the past tense.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

The "poll tax" was the immediate impetus behind the revolt of the Jews that led to the rebellion instigated by Judas of Galilee in 6 AD. It will also be a major impetus behind the revolt of 66 AD which will culminate in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. This tax was paid by all men between 14 and 65 years old and women between 12 and 65. This was only one tax paid by the Jews to the Romans.

The inscription on the denarius would have read: "Son of the divine Augustus." On the other side, it would have identified him as "high priest of the Roman nation." Both the engraved image and the inscription was offensive to many Jews.

#### PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

See the parallels in Matthew 22:15-22 and Luke 20:20-26.

#### COMMENTS:

Having been angered by Jesus' parable (12:1-12), the leaders send some Pharisees and Herodians to test Jesus. The Herodians, based on their name, would have been supporters of King Herod and, by extension, the Roman government. They would have been supportive of the poll-tax. The Pharisees would have been against paying the poll-tax, more for religious reasons than economic reasons. It bore an image, which the Pharisees believed violated the Law of Moses, and it identified Caesar as divine. The two groups, together, believed they could trap Jesus by this question and either cause Him to lose favor with the people (by siding with the Herodians) or be arrested by Rome as a revolutionary (by siding with the Pharisees).

They identify Jesus as a teacher (ver. 14) and then give a series of statements which were true, but which they did not accept:

He was "true." That is, He was truthful. He is also so identified in John 7:18.

He did not concern Himself about anyone. That is, He did not change what He taught based on who was before Him.

He was not partial to anyone. That is, He did not "look into the face" of His audience. He was not going to change His doctrine based on how it was received.

He taught the "way" of God in truth.

Then they ask Jesus the question: "Should we pay the poll-tax to Caesar or should we not" (ver. 15)? Jesus knew peoples' thoughts (2:8; 5:30) and He knew their hypocrisy (ver. 15). He challenges them: "Why are you testing Me?" Then He called for a denarius to be presented. This was a coin given to the average laborer for one day's work. With the denarius in His hand, He asked the question (ver. 16): "Whose image is on the coin? Whose inscription is on the coin?" They answered correctly: "Caesar's."

Then Jesus made them look foolish by giving such a simple answer: “Pay to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s” (ver. 17). Caesar, symbolizing the Roman government which provided for the upkeep of society, was a benefactor for them. Therefore, the Jews owed him taxes. But, God is the greater benefactor and mankind owes Him even more. In this way, Jesus shows that His followers live in two worlds: the earthly or physical world which is ruled by man and the heavenly or spiritual world which is ruled by God.

Due to His answer, the people were greatly amazed (ver. 17)!

#### APPLICATION:

For the point that God does not want Christians showing “partiality,” see: Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; James 2:1, 9.

For more NT doctrine on the relationship between the Christian and the state government, see: Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-6; 1 Peter 2:13-17. If man’s laws ever conflict with God’s laws, the divine rule is that we must “obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29).

#### TRANSLATION - 12:18-27:

**18** And Sadducees come to Him, who say a resurrection there is not, and they were asking Him saying, **19** “Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if any brother might die and might leave behind a wife and might not leave children, that his brother might take the wife and raise up seed for his brother. **20** There were seven brothers. And the first took a wife and died; he did not leave seed. **21** And the second took her and died, not leaving behind seed; and the third likewise. **22** And the seven did not leave seed. Last of all also the wife died. **23** In the resurrection [whenever they are raised] whose of them will be the wife? For these seven had her as a wife.”

**24** Jesus was saying to them, “Why are you deceived, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God? **25** For whenever they are raised from the dead, neither they marry nor are they married, but they are like angels in the heavens. **26** And concerning the dead that they are raised, have you not read in the book of Moses at the bush how God said to him, saying, “I [am] the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? **27** He is not the God of the dead but of the living; you are greatly deceived.”

#### GREEK WORDS:

This is the only place where “Sadducee” (ver. 18) is mentioned in Mark, out of 14 occasions. “Resurrection” is found 42 times, only in this context in Mark: 12:18, 23. See verse 14 on the title “Teacher” (ver. 19). “Moses” is mentioned at 1:44. “To die” was used earlier at 5:35. “To leave behind” was used earlier at 10:7. “Wife” was used earlier at 5:25. “To raise up,” a verb related to “resurrection,” is used three times: Mark 12:19; Luke 20:28; Acts 15:5. “Seed” was used earlier at 4:31. It is used otherwise only in this context, to denote children: 12:19-22.

“To be deceived” (ver. 24) is used 39 times in the NT, in Mark at: 12:24, 27; 13:5-6. See verse 10 for “Scriptures.” “Power,” usually referring to the miracles of God, is found earlier at 5:30. “Dead” (ver. 25) was used earlier at 6:14. “To be raised” was used earlier at 1:35. “To marry” was used earlier at 6:17. “To be married” is used only here in Mark, out of 7 uses. “Angel” means “messenger;” it was used earlier at 1:2. “To read” (ver. 26) was used earlier at 2:25. “Book” is found only here in Mark; it is the first word in the NT (Matt. 1:1). “Bush” is used only here in Mark, out of six uses. “Abraham” is found 73 times in the NT, only here in Mark. “Isaac” is found only here in Mark, out of 20 times. “Jacob” is found 27 times in the NT, only here in Mark.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

Once again, we have a historical present in verse 18. The Sadducees “come” to Jesus, showing the action as it happened in reality.

“Were asking” (ver. 18) translates a verb in the imperfect tense in Greek, showing that this was an action continually happening in the past tense. “Was saying” (ver. 24) is also an imperfect verb in the Greek.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

The law requiring a man to marry his deceased brother’s widow and raise children for her is found in Deuteronomy 25:5-6. An event is recorded in Genesis 38 which precedes the law, but shows that it was a common expectation even during the days of the patriarchs. The story of Ruth is based on this specific law.

There are suggestions in the OT that there is life after death. The expression “gathered to his people” found in the Pentateuch surely refers to life after death (Gen. 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33; Num. 20:24, 26; Deut. 32:50). Enoch did not die (Gen. 5:22-24) nor did Elijah (2 Kings 2:11-12). See also: Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37; Daniel 12:2; Psalm 73:23. There were also resurrections in the OT: 1 Kings 17:22; 2 Kings 4:35. See also 1 Samuel 28:12-19 and 2 Samuel 12:15-23; Job 19:25-26; Psalm 23:4; 16:10.

The passage about the “bush” which Jesus will cite comes from Exodus 3:6.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

The Sadducees left no writings which were distinctively theirs. In Josephus’ writings, we learn that the Sadducees apparently took their name from the priest named Zadok who served during the time of King David. By Jesus’ time, they tended to be urban, wealthy, and sophisticated. They are mentioned 14 times in the NT (in contrast to the Pharisees who are mentioned over 100 times). They accepted only the first five books of Moses as inspired and authoritative (Genesis through Deuteronomy) and they did not believe in angels or, notably, the resurrection (Acts 23:8). The priests were often associated with the Sadducee sect, which explains why the Sadducees disappeared from history once the temple was destroyed in 70 AD.

There was a literary work from around 200 BC named Tobit which involved a woman who had seven husbands but no children. Scholars wonder if this story motivated the Sadducees’ question.

#### PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

See also Matthew 22:23-33 and Luke 20:27-40.

#### COMMENTS:

Life beyond death is presupposed during Jesus’ ministry: Luke 14:14; 16:19-31; 23:43. Of course, Jesus predicted His own resurrection, which pointed to life beyond death (8:31; 9:9, 31; 10:34). The Sadducees did not believe in life after death nor, according to Acts 23:8, in “angels.” Since they accepted the Pentateuch as being from God, it is remarkable that they did not accept the existence of “angels” as they appear frequently in the Law of Moses. However, there are many religious people, even so-called Christians, who do not accept the plain teaching of Scripture, such as the purpose that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). If we are blinded by our traditions and teachings received from our parents, we often ignore the plain teaching of God’s word.

Here, the Sadducees ask Jesus a question which they believe shows the futility of believing in life after death, based on the law of a brother-in-law marrying his brother’s widow (ver. 18-19). Their scenario presents seven brothers who each marry the same wife after the previous brother marries her, and dies, without leaving any children (ver. 20-22). When the wife dies, the question is: “Whose wife shall she be” (ver. 23)? They thought they had pushed Jesus into the corner of absurdity.

Jesus responded, with divine wisdom (ver. 24), pointing out that they are deceived for two reasons: 1) they do not know the Scriptures; 2) they do not know the power of God. Relative to the “power of God” (ver. 25), Jesus states that God will alter human nature such that humans will be like angels after the resurrection in such a way that humans will not need to

reproduce nor will they have sexual needs. They will neither “marry” (the men) or “be married” (the women). This does not mean that we lose our identity; we will keep our identity. Moses and Elijah kept their (male) identities in Mark 9:4. But we will not have the desires and urges which life in the flesh imposes on us.

Relative to ignorance of the Scriptures (ver. 26), Jesus directs them to the Pentateuch, which they supposedly accepted as God’s word. Notice that Jesus expected: 1) that the Jews would read the Bible; 2) the Jews could understand the Bible; 3) the Jews would interpret the Bible accurately. He directs them to the “bush” passage of Scripture since their Old Testament was not divided into chapters and verses as ours is. We know the text as Exodus 3 where God appeared to Moses to send him to Egypt to bring out God’s people. As God spoke to Moses, He identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These patriarchs, in the flesh, had long been dead for hundreds of years. But God was still their God, which implies clearly that they were still alive, in the world of spirits (“sheol” in the Hebrew; “hades” in the Greek).

Jesus summarized His point in verse 27: God is not the God of dead people; He is the God of living people. Is there life after death? Yes, indeed. He says to the Sadducees: “You are greatly deceived.”

#### APPLICATION:

We need to constantly read the Scriptures and seek to understand the Scriptures. Jesus clearly teaches here that we can understand the Scriptures and He expects us to do that. Jesus does not teach that humans become angels when they die. Humans and angels are two different types of created beings. Humans, rather, become “like” angels in the sense that they do not need to reproduce, once they are raised from the dead.

We also note that we have questions about life after death that could be answered if we simply trust in the power of God. If we are cremated, can God put us back together? Yes, trust the power of God. If a loved one does not get to heaven, will we be sad forever? No, trust the power of God. We need to know what the Scriptures teach and then we need to trust the power of God.

#### TRANSLATION - 12:28-34:

**28** And after approaching one of the scribes, after hearing them disputing, seeing that well He answered them, he asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?” **29** Jesus answered that: “This is the first, “Hear, Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, **30** and you will love the Lord your God from all your heart and from all your soul and from all your mind and from all your strength. **31** This [is] the second, You will love your neighbor as yourself. There is not a commandment greater than these.”

**32** And the scribe said to Him, “Well, Teacher, from truth you spoke that He is one and there is not another than Him. **33** And to love Him from all the heart and from all the understanding and from all the strength and to love the neighbor as himself is greater than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

**34** And Jesus, seeing [him] that wisely he answered, He said to him, “Not far you are from the kingdom of God.” And no one no longer was daring Him to question.

#### GREEK WORDS:

“Scribe” (ver. 28) was used first at 1:22. “Disputing” or “arguing” was used earlier at 1:27. “Commandment” was used earlier at 7:8-9. “To love” is used 143 times in the NT, first in Mark at 10:21. “Heart” was used earlier at 2:6, 8. “Soul” is used earlier at 3:4, out of 103 uses. “Mind” is used 12 times in the NT, only here in Mark. “Strength” is used 10 times in the NT, in Mark at 12:30, 33. “Neighbor” (ver. 31) is used 17 times in the NT, in Mark only in this context: 12:31, 33. “Understanding” (ver. 33) is used 7 times: Mark 12:33; Luke 2:47; 1 Cor. 1:19; Eph. 3:4; Col. 1:9; 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:7. “Whole burnt offerings” is used three times in the NT: Mark 12:33; Heb. 10:6, 8. The expression “burnt offering” is found 193 times in the Bible. This word for “sacrifices” is found 28 times in the NT, only here in Mark. “Wisely” (ver. 34) is used only here in

the NT. "Kingdom" is used in Mark 20 times; it was first used in 1:15. "To dare" is used 16 times, in Mark only twice: 12:34; 15:43.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

"Was daring" (ver. 34) translates a verb in the imperfect tense in Greek, showing that this was an action continually happening in the past tense.

#### PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

See also Matthew 22:34-40 and Luke 10:25-37.

#### COMMENTS:

This scribe (ver. 28) does not appear to be insincere in questioning Jesus. He heard Jesus disputing with the Pharisees (ver. 13) and Sadducees (ver. 18) so he decides to ask Jesus a question which had consumed the minds of rabbis for centuries. They had counted the laws in the Law of Moses and numbered 613 laws. Out of those laws, which one was the most important? The first?

In contrast to the Jehovah's Witness sect which would likely say that the third commandment (Exo. 20:7 - "do not take the name of the Lord in vain") is the "first" and in contrast to the Seventh Day Adventist sect which would surely say that the fourth commandment (Exo. 20:8) is the "first," Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Verse 4 (Mark 12:29) calls on Israel to "hear," that is to "grasp" the fundamental faith of God's religion for Israel: There is only one God (in contrast with the Jehovah's Witnesses who teach that Jesus is "a god," mistranslating John 1:1). The Old Testament is strongly, pervasively, and persistently monotheistic (see also Deuteronomy 4:35; Isaiah 45:6, 21; 47:8, 10; Psa. 86:8).

The God who created the heavens and the earth, the God of the Bible, the only true and living God is the only God who exists. And He deserves our utmost confidence and devotion. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 (Mark 12:30): Man is to love God with his entire being: his heart, his soul, his mind, and his strength. There is overlap between "heart" and "soul" and "understanding" (12:33). Notice that Jesus uses the word "all" four times, before each entity. Man is to love God with all his affections, his intellect, his essence, his strength.

Jesus then adds from Leviticus 19:18 the second commandment "of all:" you should love your neighbor as yourself (ver. 31). Man is to love and serve his neighbor. All the other "611" laws rest on these two commandments.

The scribe appreciated Jesus' response (ver. 32). He had heard other rabbis debate the topic and had perhaps debated the question himself. But no one could surpass Jesus' answer! The scribe agrees with Jesus' quotation and use of Deuteronomy 6:4 (Mark 12:32) and of Deuteronomy 6:5 except the scribe replaces "soul" with "understanding." And, the scribe agrees with the emphasis Jesus places on Leviticus 19:18: love your neighbor as yourself (ver. 33). Then the scribe adds that these two commandments are, in fact, greater than burnt offerings and sacrifices! The prophets had rebuked Israel for their sacrifices because they were not, in fact, loving God supremely and serving their fellow man sacrificially.

To the scribe's wise response, Jesus adds a further comment (ver. 34). The scribe was not very far from obeying the gospel of Christ and entering into the kingdom of God! When one loves and respects the word of God, when he is presented with further truth, he will accept it, live it, and teach it. This scribe was moving toward salvation.

At this point, the crowd stops asking Jesus questions. They realize that He has a wise answer to any question proposed!

#### APPLICATION:

"Love" is taught throughout the NT as the "fulfillment" of the Law of Moses: Romans 13:10; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8. Consider Jesus' answer to the question "Who is my neighbor" in a similar discussion, at Luke 10:29-39. John writes that we cannot love God,



whom we have not seen, if we do not love our brother whom we have seen (1 John 4:11, 19-20).

While some today might say that “love” is the greatest commandment, he needs to define “love” the way Jesus defined it. To love God supremely means to put God first in our lives and our thinking and our schedule. It means to worship God publicly with Christ’s church and privately. It means to pray, which is talking to God. It means to sing praises to honor God. It means to give God our resources - time, money, talent, skills, energy - in service to His cause and His church. It means to study His word and listen to what He has to say.

To “love” our fellow man means to love as Jesus defines love. It means to serve our fellow man when they need to be served. It means to give as they need to receive. It means to pray for our enemies. It means to teach them the gospel of Christ so they can enjoy eternity in heaven. It means to invite them to worship with us the God of heaven. It means to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. We cannot love God if we do not love and serve those who need our love and service: 1 John 3:17-18.

Loving our neighbor “as ourselves” does not encourage us to selfishness. There is far too much of this type of “self-love” in the world! In fact, Jesus condemns “lovers of self” (2 Tim. 3:2). But, humans have a basic sense of self-interest which they need to broaden to include those around them: Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-36.

In words similar to the scribe’s from verse 33, Samuel tells King Saul that obedience is more important than sacrifices: 1 Samuel 15:22. See also: Psalm 40:6; 51:16-17; Isaiah 1:11; Jer. 6:20; 7:21-23; Hosea 6:6.

#### TRANSLATION - 12:35-37:

**35** And after answering Jesus was saying, teaching in the temple, “How do the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? **36** This David said by the Holy Spirit, ‘Jehovah said to my lord, ‘Sit on My right, until I set Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’ **37** This David says Him [to be] lord, and how is He his Son?” And the large crowd were hearing Him gladly.

#### GREEK WORDS:

“Temple” (ver. 35) was used earlier at 11:11. This is the temple complex, not the holy building in which only the priests entered. “Christ” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Messiah;” both are related to the verb “to anoint.” The designation is found 529 times in the NT; Mark, however, only uses it seven times: 1:1; 8:29; 9:41; 12:35; 13:21; 14:61; 15:32. “David” is mentioned 59 times in the NT, first in Mark at 2:25. “Son of David” is found 16 times in the NT. “Spirit” is used 379 times in the NT, first in Mark at 1:8. “Holy Spirit” is found 93 times in the Bible, four times in Mark: 1:8; 3:29; 12:36; 13:11. “Enemy” (ver. 36) is used only here in Mark. “Footstool” is used 11 times in the NT, earlier in Mark at 6:11. “Gladly” is used five times: Mark 6:20; 12:37; 2 Cor. 11:19; 12:9; 12:15.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

“Was saying” (ver. 35) translates a verb in the imperfect tense in Greek, showing that this was an action continually happening in the past tense. “Were hearing” (ver. 37) is also an imperfect verb in the Greek.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

We return once again to the question of the identity of the “Son of David” (see Mark 10:47-48). God promised King David that He would cause one of David’s sons to sit on his throne forever (2 Sam. 7:11-16), a promise which the prophets reiterated which led to the identification of the “Son of David” with the Messiah: Isaiah 9:2-7; 11:1-9; Jer. 23:5-6; 30:9; 33:15, 17, 22; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11. The passage Jesus cites here is Psalm 110:1.

#### PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

See also Matthew 22:41-46; Luke 20:41-44.

#### COMMENTS:

The Jews believed that the Messiah would be the “Son of David” (Matt. 22:43; John 7:41-42). See also: Psalm 89:20-29; Isaiah 9:7; 11:1; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-18; Ezekiel 34:23-24. While Jesus is in the temple, anticipating His crucifixion, He challenges the religious leaders (in the presence of the public) to answer a question about the identity of the “son of David.” The Christ (the “Messiah” in the Hebrew) was the “Son of David.” Yet in Psalm 110:1, a psalm written by David, he calls the Messiah “lord” or “master.” We should note that the first word “Lord” in the Hebrew text of Psalm 110:1 is “Jehovah.” The second word “lord” is the word for “master.” How, then, can he be both David’s son and his lord?

It is important to acknowledge that Psalm 110 is, as Jesus states, written by David. Modern scholars usually reject the inscriptions of the psalms, noting that they are not historical. However, Jesus’ argument hinges on the fact that David is the author of this psalm. We will take our stand with Jesus rather than modern “scholars.”

Jesus had asked whom His disciples believed Him to be (8:27). Now, He will ask the religious leaders who the “Son of David” is. Jesus will quote again from Psalm 110:1 while He is on trial when He states that He will sit at the right hand of God: Mark 14:61-62. The obvious implication of the question is that David’s son had to be greater than David in order to also be his “lord.” The point is that the Messiah was divine; He was greater than David because He is also the Son of God.

The common people listened to Jesus gladly because He explained the Scriptures with both force and logic and graciously (see Luke 4:22).

#### APPLICATION:

On the point that David was speaking “by the Spirit,” see also: 2 Samuel 23:2; Acts 1:16; 28:25; Hebrews 3:7; 10:15; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

The NT clearly teaches that Jesus is the “Son of David,” the promised Messiah: Luke 1:32-33, 69; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8. He reigns over His kingdom (Mark 9:1), which is the “house of God, the church of the living God” (1 Timothy 3:15).

#### TRANSLATION - 12:38-42:

**38** And in His teaching, He was saying, “Beware of the scribes, those desiring long robes to walk and greetings in the market **39** and best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at the banquets, **40** those devouring the houses of widows and for show, praying long; these will receive greater judgment.”

**41** And after sitting opposite the collection box, He was observing how the crowd are casting coins into the collection box. And many rich were casting a lot. **42** And after coming, one poor widow cast two leptas, which is a quadrans. **43** And after calling His disciples, He said to them, “Truly I say to you that this poor woman more than all she cast of those casting into the collection boxes. **44** For all out of their abundance they cast, but she, out of her poverty all which she was having she cast all of her life.”

#### GREEK WORDS:

“Teaching” (ver. 38) was used earlier at 1:22. “Beware” was used earlier at 4:12. “Long” and “flowing robes” is used 9 times, twice in Mark: 12:38; 16:5. “Greetings” is found only here in Mark, out of 10 uses. “Market” is used earlier at 6:56. “Best seats” (ver. 39) is used four times: Matt. 23:6; Mark 12:39; Luke 11:43; 20:46. “Synagogue” was used earlier at 1:21. “Places of honor” is found five times: Matt. 23:6; Mark 12:39; Luke 14:7-8; 20:46. “Banquets” is used 16 times, earlier at Mark 6:21. “To devour” (ver. 40) was used earlier at 4:4. “Widows” is found only in this context in Mark: 12:40, 42-43, out of 26 uses. “For show” is used six times: Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47; John 15:22; Acts 27:30; Philippians 1:18; 1 Thessalonians 2:5. “To pray” was used earlier at 1:35. “Judgment” is used 27 times in the NT, only here in Mark.

“Collection box” (ver. 41) is used five times: Mark 12:41, 43; Luke 21:1; John 8:20. “To observe” was used earlier at 3:11. “Coins” were made of bronze or copper; the word is used five times: Matt. 10:9; Mark 6:8; 12:41; 1 Cor. 13:1; Rev. 18:12. “Rich” is found earlier at 10:25. “Poor” was used earlier at 10:21. “To call” (ver. 43) was used earlier at 3:13, 23. “Disciple” was used earlier at 2:15. “Abundance” (ver. 44) is only used here in Mark, out of 39 occasions. “Poverty” is used only here and Philippians 4:11. “Life” is used only here in Mark, out of 10 uses.

#### GREEK GRAMMAR:

“Are casting” (ver. 41) is a present tense verb, denoting the action as Jesus was observing it in reality.

“Was saying” (ver. 38), “was observing,” and “were casting” are all imperfect tense verbs. This shows that these were actions continually happening in the past tense.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

God required Israel to respect and not abuse widows and orphans: Exo. 22:22; Deut. 10:18; 24:17; 27:19. To abuse these was a serious sin in the eyes of God: Isa. 10:1-4; Jer. 7:6-7; Ezekiel 22:7; Zechariah 7:10-14; Malachi 3:5.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

The “best” seats in the synagogue were benches along the walls of the synagogues, facing the congregation, which would be seated on the floor.

The scribes might “devour” widows’ houses and property in various ways. They could charge excessive fees for providing advice and guidance; they could mismanage the homes if they were given rights over the home; they might take the house as a pledge for a loan; they might entice widows to give up their property as a matter of “gifts” to God which were, in reality, used by the scribes. They could also have simply exploited the hospitality and trust of the widows.

The Mishnah, written about 150 years after Jesus returned to heaven, says there were thirteen treasure chests in the court of the temple, shaped like trumpets by which they were called “*shofar*” (“trumpets” in Hebrew). We do not know if these trumpets were in use at the point Jesus is in the temple on this occasion.

The “lepton” (ver. 42; used three times: Mark 12:42; Luke 12:59; 21:2) is the only Jewish coin mentioned in the NT. It was 1/64 of a denarius (a day’s wage; Matt. 20:2, 9). This means that the *lepton* was equivalent to about eight minutes worth of work. It was very small, .43” (11 mm) in diameter and weighed about .03 ounces (0,9 g). Mark identifies the *lepton* as worth two *quadrans* (used here and Matthew 5:26), the smallest of the Roman coins. Four *quadrans* is equal to an *assarion* which is worth 1/16 of a denarius. The fact that Mark identifies the Jewish coinage in terms of Roman coins shows that his audience are Romans.

#### PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

For parallels to verses 38-40, see Matthew 23:1-36; Luke 20:45-47. See also Luke 11:37-12:1. A parallel to the offering by the widow is found in Luke 21:1-4.

#### COMMENTS:

A scribe, apparently honestly and sincerely, has come to Jesus with a serious question in 12:28. But the scribes, in general, were arrogant, prideful, and disrespectful of people who were socially below them, such as widows. Subsequently, Jesus rebukes them for their attitude. They love to walk in long, flowing robes which attract the attention of others to their “spirituality” (ver. 38). These men also liked to be greeted with respect and honor by others. Perhaps they would not respond if they were not addressed by their respective “titles.”

The scribes also loved the “best seats” in the synagogues (ver. 39) where they would get much attention. They loved to sit in the places of honor at the dinner banquets. Jesus will

tell a parable in Luke 14:7-11 in which He will encourage His followers to humble themselves first so that they will be exalted. These scribes also found various ways in which they enriched themselves at the expense of widows (ver. 40). See under "Archaeology" above for various ways in which scribes could take advantage of widows in the first century. These scribes also loved long prayers, because they would draw attention to themselves, a practice which Jesus condemned early in His ministry in the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 6:7-8.

The mention of widows leads Jesus to draw the attention of His disciples to a specific widow who stands in stark contrast to the scribes whose spirituality is actually shallow. Jesus has been in the temple teaching (ver. 35) and He now sits down where He can observe those who are giving into the collection boxes. He notes that many rich people were giving large amounts of money (ver. 41). But then a poor widow comes to give to God and she could only give two small coins, two *lepta* (see above under "Archaeology"). Mark notes for his readers that these two coins equal the sum of a *quadrens*. In other words, she was very poor.

Jesus takes the opportunity to teach His disciples a lesson in giving generously (ver. 43). He tells them that this poor widow gave more than all those who were giving that day. The amount is not what's important. It's the generosity which shows one's trust and dependence on God that is what is important. The rich people gave out of their abundance (ver. 44) but this poor widow gave out of her poverty. She put in all that she had, all of her "life," all which she had to live with. In contrast with the scribes who wanted attention drawn to them (ver. 38-40), this widow wanted to honor God by showing her trust in Him.

#### APPLICATION:

Jesus had critiqued the pomposity of the religious leaders in Matthew 23:7-9. Jesus would not be pleased with so-called "pastors" who dress distinctly from other Christians. Jesus condemns the use of religious titles: Matthew 23:8-9.

Jesus does not require Christians to give all that they have. But He does call on us to show our trust in Him by giving generously to His cause which is to share the gospel with those who need to hear it and obey it. Paul writes extensively about giving in 2 Corinthians 8-9.