

**Mark 12:18-44**  
**February 18, 2024**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: What subject or topic is guaranteed to spark a debate in your home or workplace? Sports? Politics? Religion? Other?

**Transition:** The topics that would spark a debate in your home is tame compared to the topics that Jesus had to handle! Imagine shadowing Jesus as His disciples did, and the controversial topics included: Whether being resurrected is possible; Or debate what is the greatest commandment to follow; Or debate what it means to give out of abundance vs poverty; Or debate the riddle of David's son, who is David's Lord! Thanksgiving dinner conversations could take a bad turn over topics like these! So let's listen in and see how Jesus handles each of these hot topics and see what we can learn from them. Let's begin.

**BOOK:**

**Marriage at the Resurrection**

<sup>18</sup> Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. <sup>19</sup> "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. <sup>20</sup> Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. <sup>21</sup> The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. <sup>22</sup> In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. <sup>23</sup> At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

<sup>24</sup> Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? <sup>25</sup> When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. <sup>26</sup> Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' (Ex 3:6)? <sup>27</sup> He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!"

*The Greatest Commandment*

<sup>28</sup> One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

<sup>29</sup> "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one (The Lord our God is one.)' <sup>30</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' (Deut. 6:4-5)

<sup>31</sup> The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' (Lev. 19:18) There is no commandment greater than these."

<sup>32</sup> "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. <sup>33</sup> To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all

your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

<sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

### *Whose Son Is the Christ?*

<sup>35</sup> While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, “How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ (Messiah) is the son of David? <sup>36</sup> David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared:

“ ‘The Lord said to my Lord:  
“Sit at my right hand  
until I put your enemies  
under your feet.” ’ (Psalm 110:1)

<sup>37</sup> David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?”

The large crowd listened to him with delight.

<sup>38</sup> As he taught, Jesus said, “Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, <sup>39</sup> and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. <sup>40</sup> They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.”

### *The Widow’s Offering*

<sup>41</sup> Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. <sup>42</sup> But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

<sup>43</sup> Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. <sup>44</sup> They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

If a person is “important” only because of the uniform he wears, the title he bears, or the office he holds, then his “importance” is artificial. It is *character* that makes a person valuable, and nobody can give you character: you must develop it yourself as you walk with God. Pride of living and pride of giving are sins we must avoid at all costs. How tragic that the leaders

depended on a religious system that shortly would pass off the scene. How wonderful that the common people gladly listened to Jesus and obeyed His Word. In which group are you?

### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

***Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 152-154). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.***

*A question about eternity (vv. 18–27).* This is the only place in Mark where the Sadducees are mentioned. This group accepted only the Law of Moses as their religious authority; so, if a doctrine could not be defended from the first five books of the Old Testament, they would not accept it. They did not believe in the existence of the soul, life after death, resurrection, final judgment, angels, or demons (see Acts 23:8). Most of the Sadducees were priests and were wealthy. They considered themselves the “religious aristocrats” of Judaism and tended to look down on everybody else.

They brought a hypothetical question to Jesus, based on the law of marriage given in Deuteronomy 25:7–10. This woman had a series of seven husbands during her lifetime, all brothers, and all of whom had died. “If there is such a thing as a future resurrection,” they argued, “then she must spend eternity with seven husbands!” It seemed a perfect argument, as most arguments are that are based on hypothetical situations.

The Sadducees thought that they were smart, but Jesus soon revealed their ignorance of two things: the power of God and the truth of Scripture. Resurrection is not the restoration of life as

we know it; it is the entrance into a new life that is different. The same God who created the angels and gave them their nature is able to give us the new bodies we will need for new life in heaven (1 Cor. 15:38ff). Jesus did not say that we would become angels or be like the angels in everything, for God's children are higher than the angels (John 17:22–24; 1 John 3:1–2). He said that in our resurrection bodies, we would be sexless like the angels; and therefore marriage would no longer exist. In the eternal state, where our new bodies are perfect and there is no death, there will be no need for marriage, procreation, and the continuance of the race.

The Sadducees were also ignorant of the Scriptures. They claimed to accept the authority of Moses, but they failed to notice that Moses taught the continuation of life after death. Once again, our Lord went back to Scripture (note Mark 2:25; 10:19; 12:10), in this case to the passage about the burning bush (Ex. 3). God did not tell Moses that He *was* (past tense) the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The patriarchs were *alive* when God spoke those words to Moses; therefore, Moses does teach that there is life after death.

**A question of priority (vv. 28–34).** The next challenger was a scribe who was also a Pharisee (see Matt. 22:34–35). The scribes had determined that the Jews were obligated to obey 613 precepts in the Law, 365 negative precepts and 248 positive. One of their favorite exercises was discussing which of these divine commandments was the greatest.

The Lord quoted Deuteronomy 6:4–5, the great confession of faith that even today pious Jews recite each morning and evening. It is called "The Shema" from the first word of the confession which means "hear." Then He quoted Leviticus 19:18 which emphasizes love for one's neighbor. Jesus made love the most important thing in life, because "love is the fulfilling of the Law" (Rom. 13:8–10). If we love God, we will experience His love within and will express that love to others. We do not live by rules but by relationships, a loving relationship to God that enables us to have a loving relationship with others.

When he started this conversation, the scribe was only the tool of the Pharisees who were trying to get evidence against Jesus (note Matt. 22:35). But after he heard our Lord's answer, the scribe stood and dared to commend the Lord for His reply. The Word had spoken to the man's heart and he was beginning to get a deeper spiritual understanding of the faith he thought he understood. Even the Old Testament Scriptures taught that there was more to the Jewish religion than offering sacrifices and keeping laws (see 1 Sam. 15:22; Pss. 51:16–17; 141:1–2; Jer. 7:22–23; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6–8).

What does it mean when a person is "not far from the kingdom of God"? It means he or she is facing truth honestly and is not interested in defending a "party line" or even personal prejudices. It means the person is testing his or her faith by what the Word of God says and not by what some religious group demands. People close to the kingdom have the courage to stand up for what is true even if they lose some friends and make some new enemies.

**A question of identity (vv. 35–37).** Now it was our Lord's turn to ask the questions, and He focused on the most important question of all: Who is the Messiah? "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" (Matt. 22:42) This is a far more important question than the ones His enemies had asked Him, for if we are wrong about Jesus Christ, we are wrong about salvation. This means we end up condemning our own souls (John 3:16–21; 8:24; 1 John 2:18–23).

Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1 and asked them to explain how David's son could also be David's Lord. The Jews believed that the Messiah would be David's son (John 7:41–42), but the only way David's son could also be David's Lord would be if Messiah were *God come in human*

*flesh*. The answer, of course, is our Lord's miraculous conception and virgin birth (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38).

This section closes with two warnings from the Lord: a warning against the pride of the scribes (Mark 12:38–40) and against the pride of the rich (Mark 12:41–44). If a person is “important” only because of the uniform he wears, the title he bears, or the office he holds, then his “importance” is artificial. It is *character* that makes a person valuable, and nobody can give you character: you must develop it yourself as you walk with God.

There were thirteen trumpet-shaped chests around the walls of the court of the women, and here the people dropped in their offerings. The rich made a big production out of their giving (see Matt. 6:1–4), but Jesus rejected them and their gifts. It is not the *portion* but the *proportion* that is important: the rich gave out of their abundance, but the poor widow gave all that she had. For the rich, their gifts were a small contribution, but for the widow, her gift was true consecration of her whole life.

Pride of living and pride of giving are sins we must avoid at all costs. How tragic that the leaders depended on a religious system that shortly would pass off the scene. How wonderful that the common people gladly listened to Jesus and obeyed His Word.

In which group are you?

**Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *Mark*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 162-166) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

### 3. THE QUESTION CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION (12:18–27) (Matt. 22:23–33; Luke 20:27–40).

12:18. **The Sadducees ... came to Jesus with a question** in another attempt to discredit Him (cf. 11:27; 12:13). It is generally believed that they were the Jewish aristocratic party whose members came largely from the priesthood and the upper classes. Though less numerous and popular than the Pharisees, they occupied influential positions on the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court and generally cooperated with the Roman authorities. They denied the truths of the **resurrection**, future judgment, and the existence of angels and spirits (cf. Acts 23:6–8). They accepted only the Books of Moses (the Pentateuch) as authoritative and rejected the oral traditions observed as binding by the Pharisees. This is Mark's only reference to the Sadducees.

12:19–23. After formally addressing Jesus as **Teacher** (cf. v. 14), they gave a free rendering of the Mosaic regulation concerning levirate (from Latin, *levir*, “husband's brother”) marriage (cf. Deut. 25:5–10). If a husband died without leaving a male heir his (unmarried) **brother** (or, if none, his nearest male relative) was to **marry his widow**. The first son of that union was given the name of the dead **brother** and was considered **his** child. This was to prevent extinction of a family line and thereby kept the family inheritance intact.

The Sadducees made up a story about **seven brothers** who successively fulfilled the duty of levirate marriage to their first brother's wife but all seven **died** childless. Then **the woman died** also. They asked Jesus, **At the resurrection whose wife will she be?** Clearly they were ridiculing belief in the resurrection.

12:24. Using a two-pronged counterquestion expecting a positive answer in Greek, **Jesus** cited two reasons why they were **in error** (*planasthe*, “you are deceiving yourselves”; cf. v. 27): (a) they did **not know the Scriptures**—their true meaning, not merely their contents; and (b)

they did not know **the power of God**—His power to overcome death and give life. Then Jesus amplified each reason starting with the second (v. 25) and then the first (vv. 26–27).

12:25. The Sadducees wrongly assumed that marriages would be resumed after the resurrection. In resurrection-life people **will neither marry** (contract a marriage) **nor be given in marriage** (have a marriage arranged by parents). Rather, **like the angels in heaven** they will be immortal beings in God's presence.

Marriage is necessary and suitable for the present world order, in which death prevails, in order to continue the human race. But angels, whose existence the Sadducees denied (cf. Acts 23:8), are deathless and live in a different order of existence where they have no need for marital relations or reproduction of offspring. Their lives center totally around fellowship with God. So it will be in the afterlife for human beings rightly related to God.

The Sadducees did not grasp that God will establish a whole new order of life after death and resolve all apparent difficulties connected with it. In short, their question was irrelevant.

12:26–27. The Sadducees wrongly alleged that the idea of a resurrection was absent from the Pentateuch. But Jesus, using a question expecting a positive answer, appealed to **the Book of Moses**, the Pentateuch, and spoke of **the burning bush** (Ex. 3:1–6).

In this passage God identified Himself to Moses, affirming, **I am the God of Abraham ... Isaac, and ... Jacob** (Ex. 3:6). God implied that the patriarchs were still alive and that He had a continuing relationship with them as their covenant-keeping God, even though they had died long before. This demonstrates, Jesus concluded, that **He is not the God of the dead**, in the Sadducean understanding of death as extinction, **but of the living**. He is still the patriarchs' God which would not be true had they ceased to exist at death, that is, if death ends it all. And His covenant faithfulness implicitly guarantees their bodily resurrection.

Jesus' answer clearly affirmed the fact of life after death. Apparently, He assumed that this was enough to prove that the resurrection of the body will occur as well. In Hebrew thought people are regarded as a unity of the material (body) and immaterial (soul/spirit). One is incomplete without the other (cf. 2 Cor. 5:1–8). Thus authentic human existence in the eternal order of life demands the union of soul/spirit with the body (cf. Phil. 3:21). Both bodily resurrection and life after death depend on the faithfulness of "the God of the living."

Jesus' final remark, recorded only by Mark, emphasized how seriously **mistaken** (*planasthe*, "you are deceiving yourselves"; cf. Mark 12:24) they were to deny the resurrection and life after death.

#### 4. THE QUESTION CONCERNING THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT (12:28–34) (Matt. 22:34–40).

12:28. **One of the Law teachers** (cf. 1:22), had **heard** Jesus' discussion with the Sadducees (12:18–27) and was impressed with His **good answer to them**. This suggested he was probably a Pharisee.

He came with no apparent hostile or hidden motive to appraise Jesus' skill in answering a much-debated subject in scribal circles. Traditionally the scribes spoke of 613 individual commandments of the Mosaic Law—365 negative ones and 248 positive ones. While they believed all were binding, they assumed a distinction between weightier and lighter statutes and often attempted to sum up the whole Law in a single unifying command.

In light of this debate, this **Law teacher asked** Jesus, **Which** (*poia*, "what kind of") commandment **is the most important** (*prōtē*, "first") of them all?

12:29–31. Jesus’ reply went beyond the debated lighter/weightier classifications to a statement of **the most important** command and its inseparable companion, which together summarize the whole Law.

He began with the opening words of the *Shema* (from Heb., “Hear!” [*šema* ], the first word of Deut. 6:4). This creed (Num. 15:37–41; Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21) was recited twice daily—morning and evening—by devout Jews. It asserted the basis of Jewish faith: **The Lord** (Heb., *Yahweh*), namely, **our God**, Israel’s covenant-keeping God, **the Lord is One**, that is, unique (cf. Mark 12:32).

The command, **Love** (lit., “you shall love”) **the Lord your God** (Deut. 6:5), calls for a volitional commitment to God that is personal, comprehensive, and wholehearted. This is emphasized by the repeated words **with** (*ex*, “out of,” denoting source), **all** (*holēs*, “the whole of”), **your** (singular) and the various terms relating to the human personality—**heart** (control center; cf. Mark 7:19), **soul** (self-conscious life; cf. 8:35–36), **mind** (thought capacity), and **strength** (bodily powers). The Hebrew text does not mention “mind”; the Septuagint omits “heart”; but Jesus included both terms, stressing the comprehensive nature of the command (cf. 12:33; Matt. 22:37; Luke 10:27).

Jesus then spoke of a similar commitment to one’s neighbor by quoting a **second** inseparable (cf. 1 John 4:19–21) and complementary command. **Love** (lit., “you shall love”) **your neighbor** (*plēsion*, “one who is nearby,” a generic term for fellowman) **as**, in the same way as, **yourself** (Lev. 19:18). The love a person has naturally for himself is not to focus solely on himself—a constant tendency—but should be directed equally toward others.

**No** (Gr., “no other”) **commandment is greater than these** two because wholehearted love to God and one’s neighbor is the sum and substance of the Law and the Prophets (cf. Matt. 22:40). To fulfill these commands is to fulfill all others.

12:32–34a. These verses are unique to Mark. Apparently they instructed his readers who struggled with the relationship between spiritual reality and ceremonial ritual (cf. comments on 7:19).

The scribe (cf. 12:28) recognized the accuracy of Jesus’ answer and voiced his approval, viewing Him as an excellent **Teacher** (cf. vv. 14, 19). He restated Jesus’ answer, carefully avoiding mention of **God** (not in the Gr. text but supplied in the NIV) in keeping with the typical Jewish practice of avoiding unnecessary use of the divine name out of great respect for it. The words, **There is no other but Him**, come from Deuteronomy 4:35. He also substituted the word **understanding** for “soul” and “mind” (cf. Mark 12:30).

He made the bold statement that the double command of love **is much more important than all burnt offerings** (fully consumed sacrifices) **and sacrifices** (those partly consumed and partly eaten by worshipers; cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Prov. 21:3; Jer. 7:21–23; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6–8).

**He had** responded **wisely**, and **Jesus** probably stimulated further thought by declaring, **You are not far** (“not far” is emphatic in Gr.) **from the kingdom of God** (cf. Mark 1:15; 4:11; 10:15, 23). This man had the kind of spiritual understanding (cf. 10:15) and openness to Jesus that brought him near to embracing God’s kingdom, His spiritual rule over those related to Him by faith. Whether he entered this relationship is not known.

12:34b. Jesus had effectively thwarted all attempts to discredit Him and had exposed the hostile motives and errors of His opponents so skillfully that nobody else **dared ask Him any more questions**.

5. JESUS' QUESTION CONCERNING MESSIAH'S SONSHIP (12:35–37) (Matt. 22:41–46; Luke 20:41–44).

12:35. Later while **teaching in the temple courts** (*tō hierō*; cf. 11:11), **Jesus** asked what the Law **teachers** meant when they said **that the Christ**, the expected Messiah, **is** (“simply” is implied) **the Son** (Descendant) **of David**, who would be the triumphant Deliverer (cf. 10:47). The Davidic sonship of the Messiah was a standard Jewish belief (cf. John 7:41–42) firmly based on the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. 2 Sam. 7:8–16; Ps. 89:3–4; Isa. 9:2–7; 11:1–9; Jer. 23:5–6; 30:9; 33:15–17, 22; Ezek. 34:23–24; 37:24; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11). Jesus added that it is equally true that the Messiah is David’s Lord. The Law teachers’ view was correct but incomplete (cf. similarly, Mark 9:11–13). The scriptural view held far more than just their narrow nationalistic hopes.

12:36–37a. To prove that the Messiah is David’s Lord, Jesus quoted what **David himself speaking by** (under the controlling influence of) **the Holy Spirit declared** in Psalm 110:1. This clearly argues for both the Davidic authorship and the divine inspiration of this psalm. He said: **The Lord** (Heb., *Yahweh*, God the Father; cf. Mark 12:29) **said to my** (David’s) **Lord** (Heb., *’Ādōnāy*, the Messiah): **Sit at My** (the Father’s) **right hand**, the place of highest honor and authority, **until** (or “while”; cf. 9:1; 14:32) **I** (the Father) **put Your** (the Messiah’s) **enemies under Your** (the Messiah’s) **feet**, bringing about their subjugation (cf. Josh. 10:24; Heb. 10:12–14).

The unassailable fact was that **David** called the Messiah **Lord**. This raised a problem: **How then**, or in what sense, **can** (*estin*, “is”) **He** (the Messiah, David’s Lord) **be his** (David’s) **Son**? Jesus’ rhetorical question pointed His listeners to the only valid answer: the Messiah is David’s Son *and* David’s Lord at the same time. This strongly implies that the Messiah is both God (David’s Lord) and man (David’s Son; cf. Rom. 1:3–4; 2 Tim. 2:8). He will restore the future Davidic kingdom on earth (2 Sam. 7:16; Amos 9:11–12; Matt. 19:28; Luke 1:31–33).

No doubt Jesus deliberately raised this issue so that His listeners might relate it to Him. It carried a bold yet veiled reference to His true identity which the Jewish leaders probably caught but did not accept (cf. comments on Mark 12:12; 14:61–62). (Interestingly the NT has more references and allusions to Ps. 110 than to any other single OT passage [cf., e.g., Acts 2:29–35; Heb. 1:5–13; 5:6; 7:17, 21].)

12:37b. In contrast with the Jewish leaders who had been trying to trap Jesus with subtle questions (cf. v. 13), **the large** Passover **crowd** was listening all along to His teaching **with delight**, though not necessarily with comprehension.

6. CONCLUSION: JESUS' CONDEMNATION OF HYPOCRISY AND COMMENDATION OF TRUE COMMITMENT (12:38–44)

Jesus’ denunciation of the Law teachers’ conduct (vv. 38–40) concludes Mark’s account of His public ministry and signals Jesus’ final break with the Jewish religious authorities. This contrasts sharply with His recognition of a widow’s genuine devotion to God (vv. 41–44) which resumes His teaching to His disciples (cf. v. 43) and forms a transition to His prophetic discourse (chap. 13).

a. *Jesus’ condemnation of hypocrisy (12:38–40) (Matt. 23:1–39; Luke 20:45–47).*



12:38–39. **Jesus** kept warning people to **Watch out** (cf. 8:15) **for** those (implied in the Gr. construction) Law **teachers** who sought praise from men and abused their privileges. Many but not all Law teachers acted this way (cf. 12:28–34).

**They liked to** (a) **go around in flowing robes**, long white linen garments with fringes worn by priests, Law teachers, and Levites; (b) **be greeted in the marketplaces** with formal titles—Rabbi (teacher), master, father (cf. Matt. 23:7; Luke 20:46)—by the common people who respected them highly; (c) **have the most important synagogue seats**, those reserved for dignitaries, situated in front of the chest containing the sacred scrolls of Scripture and facing the whole congregation; **and** (d) **have the places of honor at banquets**, special evening meals at which they were seated next to the host and received preferential treatment.

12:40. Since first-century Law teachers got no pay for their services (Mishnah *Aboth* 1. 13; *Bekhoroth* 4. 6) they depended on the hospitality extended to them by many devout Jews. Unfortunately there were abuses. The charge, **they devour widows' houses**, was a vivid figure of speech for exploiting the generosity of people of limited means, especially widows. They unethically appropriated people's property. In addition, they made **lengthy prayers** in order to impress people with their piety and gain their confidence.

Jesus condemned their ostentatious conduct, greed, and hypocrisy. Instead of pointing people's attention to God they claimed it for themselves under the pretense of piety. Teachers such as these **will be punished most severely** (lit., “will receive greater condemnation”; James 3:1) at God's final judgment.

*b. Jesus' commendation of a widow's commitment to God (12:41–44) (Luke 21:1–4).*

12:41–42. From the court of the Gentiles (cf. 11:15) where He conducted His public teaching, **Jesus** entered the court of the women. Against the wall of this court were 13 trumpet-shaped collection receptacles for receiving worshipers' freewill **offerings** and contributions (Mishnah *Shekalim* 6. 5).

From a vantage point **opposite** (*katenanti*; cf. comments on 11:2) one of these receptacles Jesus was observing how (*pōs*, “in what way”) the Passover **crowd** was **putting their money into the temple treasury** (lit., “the receptacle”).

In contrast with **many** wealthy **people** who gave **large amounts** (lit., “many coins” of all kinds—gold, silver, copper, and bronze), one unnamed **poor widow** gave **two lepta** (Gr.). A *lepton* was the smallest bronze Jewish coin in circulation in Palestine. Two *lepta* were worth 1/64 of a Roman denarius, a day's wage for a laborer (cf. 6:37). For his Roman readers Mark stated their value in terms of Roman coinage, namely, **a fraction of a penny**.

12:43–44. With solemn introductory words (**I tell you the truth**; cf. 3:28) **Jesus said** that she had given **more ... than all the others**. The reason was (*gar*, “for, because”) the others **gave out of their material wealth** at little cost to them, **but** the widow **out of her poverty gave everything**. Proportionally she had given the most—**all she had to live on**. In giving to God sacrificially she completely entrusted herself to Him to provide her needs.

She could have kept back one coin for herself. A Rabbinic rule stating that an offering of less than two *lepta* was not acceptable related to charitable gifts and does not apply here. Jesus used her example to teach His disciples the value God places on wholehearted commitment. Their own commitment to Jesus would soon be severely tested (cf. 14:27–31). This incident also illustrates Jesus' total self-giving in death.

***Church, C.L. (1998). Mark In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 440-441). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.***

### **PRIORITY OF LOVE (12:18–44)**

The Sadducees illustrate that one can know something of Scripture (the law of brother-in-law marriage, Deut. 25:5–6) and still miss its central message of God’s redemptive love. Resurrection relationships are transformed relationships. Indeed, Jesus’ disciples already experience transformed relationships as God’s children (3:34–35; 10:29–30; 13:12–13). God is the God of the living not because humans are by nature immortal but because God in His love does not abandon us to death.

Not all Jewish leaders opposed Jesus. One authority in Jewish law asked Jesus which commandment takes priority. When Jesus replied that love of God and neighbor were the priorities of the law, the leader concurred that these obligations were more important than all the sacrificial system (see 11:15–17). Jesus answered that this scribe was near allowing God to rule in his life; all he lacked was to follow Jesus as a disciple (10:21).

In Mark 12:35–37 Jesus took the offensive in asking the religious leaders a question (see 8:27). The riddle of David’s son who is David’s Lord expresses the mystery of the incarnate Lord, “who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, ... and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection” (Rom. 1:3–4).

Jesus warned the scribes who used religion to get ahead and to take advantage of others. A widow evidenced characteristics of true discipleship. She showed devotion to God first, freedom from materialism (10:21), and total trust in the good God who would care for her (10:18).

***Leavell, L.P. (1972). Mark. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher’s Bible Commentary (pp. 628-629). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.***

### **Opposed by Leaders (Mark 12:18–12:44)**

*The passage*—The Sadducees returned for the next skirmish with Jesus. In this dialogue we find rich insights into the resurrection. They thought their hypothetical illustration of the man with seven brothers would stump him. The answer was that things pertaining to this life do not hold in the life beyond. We get beyond human family relations in heaven to become members of God’s family. The clinching argument is found in 12:26 when Jesus stated that both God and these patriarchs are living. If the Sadducees had known the Pentateuch, which was the only Scripture they accepted, they would have known that God is Lord of the living.

Out of the crowd came a fairminded scribe who knew that Jesus had answered every question honestly and with greatest insight. In his openness to the truth of God, Jesus said this man was not far from the Kingdom. This did not mean he was saved, but that his openness could lead to saving faith.

The opponents of Jesus realized they had been bested. In 12:34 we read there were no further questions. They did not give up, but were aware of the fact that they had been completely defeated.

After handling all their questions without a flaw, Jesus put a question to them. In 12:35–40 he attacked one of the popular misconceptions of that day. The Jews were looking for the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom and for a son of David to reign. Jesus rejected their idea, for he was not David’s son, he was David’s Lord. He did not come to restore David’s earthly

kingdom, for the one he established had little in common with David's. The rebuke of the scribes was doubtless based on their perpetuation of the erroneous ideas regarding the restoration of David's earthly kingdom.

There is a sudden change in the tone and attitude of Jesus in 12:41–44. Whereas he had been in combat in the ring with his opponents, he now views the devotion of a poor widow. Jesus knew both the precise amount of the gift and the spirit of the one making it. Though infinitesimal by comparison to the gifts of the wealthy, Jesus indicated this poor widow gave more than anyone. It was not the biggest gift in terms of total value. It was the best and highest gift measured in terms of love and sacrifice. The rich made no sacrifice in their contributions. This devoted lady probably went without supper that night in order to make her gift.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). Mark 12:18-44. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**

© 2024 Lee Ann Penick