

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Mark 12:28-37

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, May 25, 2014

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, May 25, 2014**, is from **Leviticus 19:17-18, Deuteronomy 6:1-9** (some churches will only study Deuteronomy 6:4-9), **Mark 12:28-37**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, a study guide for teachers, discusses the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the [*International Bible Lessons Commentary*](#) website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is usually posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught.

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Mark 12:28-37

(Mark 12:28) One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?”

The scribes and Pharisees tested Jesus to learn whether or not He conformed to their traditions. In one of their discussions with Jesus, He showed them an example of where they misinterpreted the Scriptures in order to create traditions to their financial benefit. In this situation, a scribe who discovered Jesus answered questions well sincerely asked Him about the Scriptures and God’s commandments. This scribe may have eventually become a follower of Jesus.

(Mark 12:29) Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;

Jesus quoted the Law of Moses beginning with Deuteronomy 6:4. Unlike their neighbors, the Israelites had one Lord, one God, named Yahweh or Jehovah. The name of the God of the Israelites is LORD (with all capital or upper case letters: LORD) in the English translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, because the Israelites considered the YHWH (Yahweh) name of God too sacred to pronounce. God commanded the Israelites not to worship a multitude of idols as their neighbors did. The true God is the LORD.

(Mark 12:30) you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’

God requires us to love Him, and by His many blessings upon His people as recorded in Genesis through Deuteronomy, God gave the Israelites many reasons to love Him. Today, the whole Bible gives many reasons for people to love God. God wants our undivided devotion, a love from the depth of our being, a love that includes the whole of our personality along with a commitment and desire to use all of our thoughts and physical strength in the service of God as He commands and leads us daily.

(Mark 12:31) The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

In Jesus’ *Sermon on the Mount*, He said He had not come to abolish the law: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). The second commandment also included the command to love. To love your neighbor as yourself, you must treat your neighbor as you would like to be treated by your neighbor. Whether others treat you fairly or not, if you love them you will treat them fairly because you would prefer that they treat you fairly and this is God’s will for everyone. Again, in His *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus taught, “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12). These two commandments sum up the whole law of God, the moral law, so there can be no greater commandment.

(Mark 12:32) Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’;

Unlike many of the scribes and Pharisees, who were offended by Jesus’ truthful answers, this scribe commended Jesus for His answer and recognized Jesus as a Teacher from God, a position many of the other scribes and Pharisees would not recognize. As “Teacher,” the scribe said Jesus had spoken “right” and “truly;” therefore, we have good reason to think that the scribe became one of Jesus’ many unnamed disciples. In essence, the scribe repeated what Jesus said and affirmed that he understood Jesus and was in agreement with Jesus.

(Mark 12:33) and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,’--this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

By his reply to Jesus, the scribe proved that he had studied both the law and the prophets; furthermore, his question showed his concern regarded the proper interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures and not the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. The scribe’s words showed he agreed with Hosea who wrote these words of God: “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6). Ritual worship and sacrifices cannot serve as a substitute for love and mercy, truth and the knowledge of God.

(Mark 12:34) When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Jesus commended the scribe, who may have begun to follow Jesus from that moment forward in order to learn more about the kingdom of God. To be mentally and spiritually near Jesus the Messiah, the King of the universe, to want to share in His love and understand His purposes, is to be near the kingdom of God. Jesus told the scribe that he was not far from the kingdom of God. To follow Jesus and believe His teachings would draw a person closer to God and His kingdom. To actually enter the Kingdom of God, a person would need to bow before the King, Jesus the Messiah, repent of his sins, and declare his unswerving allegiance to Jesus as his Lord, Savior, and King.

(Mark 12:35) While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David?”

After Jesus answered all questions wisely, Jesus asked a question that would reveal a deeper truth about His divine and human nature. The scribes and Pharisees taught that the Messiah would be the son of David; the Messiah had to be one of David’s descendants. Given the fact that the leaders and people expected this to be true, Jesus drew their attention to the Scriptures and what David himself said about the Messiah.

(Mark 12:36) David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared, “The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.””

Notice: Jesus affirmed that the Holy Spirit inspired David’s words and made certain that what David heard, saw, and reported was accurate. Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1. David personally called the Messiah who was yet to come in his day, “my Lord.” David actually heard Yahweh, the LORD, speak to the Messiah, David’s Lord, the divine King that David obeyed. King David heard Yahweh speak to the Messiah and promise the Messiah that He would put His enemies under His feet. David heard Yahweh say to the Messiah, “Sit at my right hand.” David heard a holy discussion between God the Father and God the Son, and the Holy Spirit helped him report these words of God. Jesus’ question might be stated this way: “Since King David heard Yahweh, the LORD, speak to the Messiah, the One David recognized as his Lord, how can the Messiah also be one of David’s descendants yet to be born?”

(Mark 12:37) David himself calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?” And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

The scribes and Pharisees could not answer this question. Jesus’ question demanded an answer that included the Messiah being more than the son of David. Jesus’ question demanded an answer that included the Messiah existing before David’s descendant as Messiah would be born. Jesus’ question demanded an answer that only Jesus was qualified to give, that Jesus the Messiah in his divine and human nature was both Son of God and son of David. The Bible reveals that Jesus was conceived as the son of David and Son of God when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and conceived the baby Jesus.

The Son of God had existed before He was conceived in the virgin Mary' womb, and He had a conversation with God His Father about what they would do when He came and after He had completed His work on earth. Jesus' apostles came to learn these facts, the complete answer to Jesus' question, and they reported these truths in various ways throughout the New Testament.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

Because this *International Bible Lesson* includes three different Scripture texts, only three questions will be asked below.

1. In what ways did Jesus show that obeying the Law of God was important?
2. What reasons can you give for thinking the scribe who asked about the greatest commandment might have become a sincere follower of Jesus?
3. Why do you think Jesus answered the scribe directly instead of in a parable?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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