



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Mark 12:28-37 New Revised Standard Version March 6, 2022

The [International Bible Study Commentary and Lesson](#) for **Sunday, March 6, 2022**, is from **Mark 12:28-37** (the parallel passage is Matthew 22:34-40). **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Study Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(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?"

Initially, the scribes and Pharisees tested Jesus theologically to learn if He believed in and conformed to their interpretations of the Bible, their traditions, and their laws. When they discovered that Jesus did not agree with their ideas and practices, they tested Jesus' theology so they could judge and condemn Jesus. Eventually they plotted to kill Jesus. Even today, too many use their theological thoughts, philosophical beliefs, systems, and study of the Bible to find ways to judge and condemn those who do not think and believe as they do. Jesus went through this trial too. If they loved God and others, they would study the Bible and think to learn the truth for themselves so they could help others as well as themselves come to a true knowledge of the Bible, God, and faith in Jesus Christ. In the situation described in these verses, a truly seeking scribe discovered that Jesus

answered questions well, so he sincerely asked Jesus about the Scriptures and God's commandments to learn the truth and obey God. He did not come to Jesus to try to trick Jesus or examine Jesus to try to find something wrong with Jesus and His teachings as many of the other religious leaders did (and some still do). This scribe may have eventually become a follower of Jesus because Jesus told him that he was not far from the kingdom of God (Mark 12:34). [The kingdom of God includes wherever King Jesus reigns and resides. This scribe was talking to the King of the universe, so physically and spiritually he was not far from the kingdom of God.] If he trusted in Jesus as His Lord and Savior, then King Jesus would come to live in his heart and reign in his life. Jesus knew his heart and answered him with love and compassion to draw him closer to the kingdom of God and to faith in Him as the true Son of God and Savior of sinners.

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

Jesus began His answer by quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures and by beginning with God. Jesus quoted the Law that the LORD gave to Moses beginning with Deuteronomy 6:4. Unlike their neighbors, the Hebrews had one Lord, one God, named Yahweh or Jehovah. In most English translations of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament), the name of the God of the Hebrews (called Jews in Jesus' day) is LORD (with all capital or uppercase letters: LORD). The Jews considered these four consonants YHWH (Yahweh: the name of God, the LORD) too sacred to pronounce aloud. God commanded the Hebrews not to worship a multitude of idols as their neighbors did. They were to worship the LORD, who revealed His true nature and character to them in their history and in their Scriptures (the Bible). Depending on the context, in the English translation of the Greek New Testament, the title “Lord” can refer to the LORD (YHWH, as in Mark 12:29), to Jesus Christ, or to a person worthy of respect (as in “Sir”).

By quoting Deuteronomy 6:4, Jesus showed that the modern idea “All You Need is Love” is incorrect. People need the true God, not simply love. They need the true God, who is True Love. Not all that people call “love” is consistent with the divine and holy love of the true God. True believers in God begin with a true knowledge of the true God and they place their trust

in the true God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; then, they love the true God more and more as they grow in wisdom by practicing what the Bible teaches. In 1 John 4:9-11, the Bible teaches us about true love: “God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.” Our God is one, and Jesus taught (especially in the Gospel of John) that the One True God is Three Persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit, who love one another, the holy angels, and us.

(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.'

Jesus reaffirmed what God revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures about love and the two primary or most important commandments of God. God requires us to love the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and They love us. God loves in special ways those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. In 1 John 4:16, we read, “So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. **God is love**, and *those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.*” God gave the Hebrews many reasons to love God. Jesus has given us many reasons to love God. Today, the whole Bible gives many reasons for everyone 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 our thoughts and physical strength in the service of God and others as He commands and leads us daily according to the Bible in the power and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus demonstrated this type of love and obedience to His Father by His every word and work. Jesus demonstrated infinite love for us when He died on the cross and rose again for us while we were still sinners in rebellion against God. In Romans 5:8, we learn, “*But God proves his love* for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” When we learn from the Bible and from our experience how much God loves us, then we begin loving God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength.

(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 (or these commandments to love): “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). Jesus fulfilled the law when he perfectly loved and obeyed the Law of Love every moment of His life and especially when gave His life for the salvation of sinners as Paul described in Romans 5:8, “But *God proves his love* for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” The second commandment included the command for us to love others. In order to love others, you must love yourself. You can love yourself when you remember that God loves you and God proved His love for you when Jesus died on the cross for you. You may not yet be all you want to be, but God is making you into the loving person that He wants you to become. In order 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. 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, the Ten Commandments, so there can be no greater commandment than these two. Jesus showed His disciples (and us) how important these commandments are and one other commandment is when He said to them in John 13:34-35, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. *Just as I have loved you*, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Paul described the perfect love of Jesus Christ and how God expects us to love our neighbors and our families when he told husbands how to love their wives (their closest neighbor), writing in Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, *just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*”

(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 the Teacher from God, a position many of the other scribes and Pharisees refused to recognize. As the "Teacher," the scribe said Jesus had spoken "rightly" and "truly;" therefore, we have good reasons to think that the scribe became one of Jesus' many unnamed disciples. In essence, the scribe repeated accurately what Jesus said. He affirmed that he understood Jesus, the Scriptures, the law, and the prophets. He affirmed that he agreed with Jesus and He had spoken truly. His statement of faith in Jesus was the beginning of a complete statement of faith, and it showed how he disagreed with those who came to accuse and try to entrap 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 and answer 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). He knew that ritual worship and sacrifices cannot serve as a substitute for love, mercy, truth, and the knowledge of God. With his words, he took the side of Jesus and declared to everyone that he intended to obey God, the Scriptures, and these commandments—so Jesus encouraged him.

(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 God and the kingdom of God. To be near the kingdom of God is to be mentally and spiritually near Jesus the Messiah, the King of the universe. To be near the kingdom of God is to seek to share in His love and understand His purposes, to want to obey

God in everything, to want God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, and to try to help others find God as God is revealed in the Bible. Jesus told the scribe that he was not far from the kingdom of God. To follow Jesus and believe His teachings will draw a person closer to God and His kingdom. To enter the Kingdom of God, a person needs to bow before the King, Jesus the Messiah, to repent of their sins, and to declare their unswerving allegiance to Jesus as their Lord, Savior, and King. Then, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will bring the kingdom of God into the believer's heart and soul where They will live with and within them forever. God intended for our bodies to be the temple of God. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul wrote to those who believed in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?"

(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?"

No one dared ask Jesus any more questions, since asking Him questions only proved before others that He was wiser and more loving than His accusers. After Jesus answered all their questions wisely, Jesus asked a question that would reveal deeper truths about His divine and human nature. Perhaps Jesus asked this question at this time because He wanted His hearers to have this question in mind as they began to learn the true meaning of Jesus' words in Mark 12:29, "The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Eventually, Jesus would teach His disciples and they would teach others that the one true God is three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The scribes and Pharisees rightly taught that the Messiah would be the son of David; therefore, the Messiah had to be one of David's descendants, a person born after David was born. Given the fact that the leaders and people believed this truth, Jesus drew their attention to the specific verses in the Hebrew Scriptures and what David 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 the Holy Spirit made certain that what David heard, saw, and reported was

accurate. The one true God included the Holy Spirit. Later, the Apostle Paul wrote about the Hebrew Scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.” Though the writers and scribes of the Hebrew Scriptures did not always understand what they recorded or wrote under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, the Holy Spirit made certain that they wrote what God wanted written. In asking His question, Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1. David personally called the Messiah (who had not come in David’s day) “my Lord.” Perhaps in a heavenly vision, David heard Yahweh (the LORD) speak to the Messiah (the Son of God), who David called his Lord (his divine King), who was the One that King David directly obeyed. David heard Yahweh speak to the Messiah who would come. He promised the Messiah that He would put His enemies under His feet. David heard Yahweh say to the Messiah, “Sit at my right hand.” Before his descendant (Jesus) came, David heard a holy discussion between God the Father and God the Son, and the Holy Spirit helped David report these words of God.

(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.

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?” The scribes and Pharisees could not answer this question. Jesus’ question demanded an answer that would include the Messiah being a person greater than David, a person who existed before he came into the world as a human being. 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 them (and would eventually give to His disciples): Jesus the Messiah in His divine and human nature is both Son of God and son of David. The Bible reveals that Jesus was conceived as the son of David and He is Son of God because the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and she conceived the baby Jesus. Remember what the angel said to Mary in Luke 1:35, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be

born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.”

In Summary: The Son of God existed before He was conceived in the virgin Mary’s womb. He talked with God His Father about what They would do when He came and after He completed His work on earth. Jesus’ apostles learned 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

1. In what way did Jesus show that obeying the Law of God was important?
2. Do you think obeying the Law of God is still important for those who say they follow Jesus?
3. What reason can you give for thinking the scribe who asked about the greatest commandment might have become a sincere follower of Jesus?
4. Why do you think Jesus answered the scribe directly instead of in a parable?
5. Why do you think Jesus did not give the scribes and Pharisees the answer to His question?

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