

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## MARK 11-12

Four times in the first ten chapters of Mark Jesus performs miracles; then tells the recipients of those miracles, *“mums the word, don’t talk about it.”* In **1:44** when He cleanses a leper... In **5:43** to parents of the girl He raised from the dead... In **7:36** to a deaf and dumb man who was gloriously, yet strangely healed... And in **8:26** to a blind man who’s sight He restored...

Apparently, *miracles created a mob.* And Jesus knew the will of the masses wasn’t God’s priority. So to keep the crowd at bay, He tried to avoid needless publicity.

**Until we get to Mark 11!** For here Mark records the only public demonstration Jesus ever orchestrated. He plays to the crowd, and for a very specific reason...

Verse 1, **“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives...”**

Bethany is two miles east of Jerusalem - Bethphage a little closer... For nine months Jesus and His men have zigzagged their way from Galilee to Jerusalem. There were 35 different stops on their journey south.

At the end of Chapter 10 they leave Jericho - which is 846 feet below sea level - and climb 3320 feet into the Judean mountains, and to the city of Jerusalem.

And Jesus times His arrival in Jerusalem perfectly. He enters the city on the Sunday before Passover...

On Thursday of Passover week, the Day of Passover, Jewish families sacrificed a lamb for their sins. The Sunday prior, *was selection Sunday*, when every family picked out their own lamb. And the plight of their sacrificial lamb paralleled the plight of Jesus...

On Thursday of the coming week, Jesus will endure a Roman scourging - then a crucifixion. In the high priest's own words, "**Jesus would die for the nation.**" The Messiah, King of Israel, will become the sacrifice.

Yet four days earlier, *on selection Sunday*, Jesus was chosen by the people. The Jews gathered on the Mount of Olives to hail Jesus as their Messiah. They thought they were choosing Him to be their Savior, in reality they were selecting Him as their Passover lamb.

Jesus had three friends who lived in Bethany - Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. I would imagine He stayed at their house that Saturday night - *but early Sunday...*

**"(Jesus) sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it."** These disciples are to retrieve an untamed donkey... It's interesting both the **timing** of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem - and His **transportation** - were prophesied years in advance.

Zechariah 9:9 foretold that Messiah would present Himself to the nation of Israel *"riding on a donkey..."*

When Gentile kings entered a city they road on the back of a stallion. But a donkey was *a beast of burden, a pack*

*animal, a servant.* And in choosing a donkey Jesus was stressing His humility. Jesus came to serve.

Jesus tells His disciples to fetch the donkey, “**And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here.**” Notice this phrase, “***The Lord has need of it...***”

Here’s an oxymoron. Like, “**pretty ugly**” or “**tight slacks**” or “**government organization.**” On the surface the statement sounds contradictory... Jesus is Lord of heaven. He’s all-sufficient. Jesus could’ve ridden on the back of an angel, or flown through the air down the Mount of Olives - yet, Jesus “***has need of***” a donkey.

Here is the mystery of the incarnation - *the unlimited God limited Himself.* The God who holds the heavens in His hands, was held in a young mother’s arms. The God who has no needs... *had need of a donkey...*

At Jesus’ birth He was laid in a *borrowed manger...* On the shores of Galilee He preached from a *borrowed boat...* In Jerusalem He’ll later be buried in a *borrowed tomb...* Here, He rides on a *borrowed donkey...*

Jesus didn’t own a *bassinet*, or *boat*, or *burial plot*, or *burro*. **He borrowed one from us...** And today, *Jesus doesn’t own a car to pick up a friend and bring Him to church... He doesn’t own a home where you can invite neighbors over and share with them the Gospel... He doesn’t own a pan that He can use to make a dinner for someone in need...* Today, our Lord Jesus is still borrowing stuff from us to accomplish His purposes.

I hope if Jesus wants to borrow your car, or money, or lawnmower, or instrument, or house, or voice - you'll let Him? I hope none of us would be stingy with Jesus.

*Is there something in your life, today, that the Holy Spirit has earmarked. He whispers, "The Lord has need of it..." Will you "loose it and bring it" to Jesus?*

*"So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go."*

Notice, they followed Jesus' instructions, and He was faithful to work out the details and open the doors.

*That's a good lesson for us.*

**When a woman** discovers she's pregnant her next thought is to calculate the due date. Yet statistics say only 30% of babies are actually born on the predicted day. Due-date setting is not an exact science. In fact, doctors give themselves a two week margin of error.

Yet when it came to His Son, God was very precise in predicting the due date. In the OT He pinpointed the exact day Messiah would appear to the nation Israel.

Understand, Israel was pregnant with promise. The OT predicted the coming of a king - *but not just any king - a king who would rule the world forever and ever.*

The coronation of every Hebrew king was done by the anointing of oil. A ram's horn of olive oil was poured over his

head. This is why the promised deliverer was called "*the anointed one*," or in Hebrew, "Messiah."

God repeated this promise to Jacob, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel - but to Daniel, God pinpointed the due date. Five hundred years before Jesus was born God told the Prophet Daniel of a period of 483 years.

Daniel 9:25 defines its parameters, "From the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince" - there would be a period of 483 years, or 173,880 days. History tells us that a Persian king, Artaxerxes, issued the decree to rebuild Jerusalem on **March 14, 445 BC...** Calculate 173,880 days later, and you come to the date of **April 6, 32 AD.** This was the day we're reading about in Mark 11...

The gestation period for humans is nine months - *but those of you who are moms, tell me if I'm wrong*, for a pregnant lady those nine months seem like a lifetime!

Just be glad you're not *a rhinoceros*. An expectant rhino stays pregnant 15 months. Or *an elephant*? If you were an Asian elephant you'd carry your baby two years. You wouldn't just need a baby book to collect your memories and mementos - you'd need *a trunk!*

But Israel was pregnant with promise for 483 years. And God determined the due date to the very day.

There's a road that leads from the top of the Mount of Olives - down its steep slope - it crosses the Valley - and goes through the gates onto the Temple Mount.

On that Sunday before Passover this road was lined with throngs of people. From all over Israel, the masses had flocked to Jerusalem for the Passover.

One historian estimates that the city's population swelled to 2½ million during the feast. And there is no doubt that many of those people came to greet Jesus.

For months, Jesus had been the talk of the town. People had seen His miracles. Especially, the recent resurrection of Lazarus. He'd been dead four days. Riga-mortis had set in - yet He was alive. The crowds lined the road that day to cheer Jesus as the Messiah.

Verse 7, **“Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it (a makeshift saddle), and (Jesus) sat on it.”** Notice the burro's compliance. Mules are known for their stubbornness, not submissiveness.

But this unbroken, untamed donkey melts under the Master. He completely yields... I know people who are more like a donkey than this donkey. Jesus wants to climb aboard our lives, yet we buck, and kick, and resist. **Be like *this* donkey, and let the Lord lead!**

**“And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road.”** Here's a Jewish equivalent of rolling out the red carpet. It's a royal welcome.

In ancient times, when a victorious general returned from battle, people lined the streets to welcome and honor him. He would lead a procession of his defeated foes, and victorious soldiers. *Now here comes Jesus...*

*And guess who's with Him... Bartimaeus, Lazarus, a man born lame now walking, a forgiven prostitute...*

All trophies of His grace! What a colossal moment!

The road that started in heaven, and ran through Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Capernaum, Samaria tops the hill and enters the stretch run to Jerusalem.

“Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” The word “*Hosanna*” means “*save now.*” It’s from Psalm 118.

Their cry for salvation continues in verse 10, “Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

Jesus was the King the Jews were promised! And He will deliver them from all their enemies - *including Rome*. But what they didn’t understand was His timing.

They wanted *political deliverance* now - *save now!* But that wasn’t His intention. Jesus came the first time to save them spiritually, from their sin. He’ll come again to deliver them politically, and save them from Rome.

But this is also our problem. When difficulties arise and trouble strikes, we want Jesus **to save us right now...** *despite the fact there may be a reason for the situation we want to escape. Perhaps there’s a lesson to be learned, or some endurance to be gained.* Jesus will save us, but He doesn’t always rush in *right now*.

It’s tragic, but by week’s end, the crowd will be so disappointed Jesus doesn’t share their time table and political

aspirations, the voices who yelled “*Hosanna*” on Sunday, will shout, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.”

Verse 11, “And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.” What Jesus saw in the Temple angered Him. He plans to return to the Temple the next day, and do a little spring cleaning...

“Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry.” Jesus had skipped breakfast that morning, and His stomach was rumbling...

“And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it.”

Remember, between Bethany and Jerusalem was a village called “*Bethphage*” which means “house of figs.” *And it lived up to its name...* The hillside was full of fig trees. Fig trees in Israel can grow 25 feet high. They produce broad leaves and delicious fruit. The fig was a staple in the Jewish diet. The average Jew had four major fruit groups - *bread, grapes, fish, and figs.*

Figs were picked and eaten fresh - or they were dried out and eaten - or they were processed with sugar and turned into little cakes called *Fig Newtons.*

The story continues in verse 13, “And when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, “Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.” And His disciples heard it.” Most fruit trees sprout leaves first - then fruit.



But a fig tree is opposite. Fruit appears before the leaves. When Jesus saw this tree had leaves but no figs He knew it was unhealthy. He cursed its future.

Understand, in Jewish literature the fig tree was a symbol for Israel. What Jesus does here with the fig tree was a metaphor for the nation. He saw Israel as a fruitless fig tree. It was full of foliage - the Jews were uber-religious - but there was no real spiritual fruit.

This parable helps us understand the last 2000 years of Jewish history. Jesus came to Israel looking for fruit and all He found was religious leaves. As a result, spiritually speaking Israel was withered and barren.

After the fig tree incident, then “they came to Jerusalem. And Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple.”

Understand, the priests turned Temple worship into a revenue stream. When you brought a sacrifice to the Temple it had to be inspected. If the priest found a blemish you were without a sacrifice, and had to buy a dove from the Temple stock - *at an exorbitant price.*

Or your Temple tax, couldn't be paid with Roman coins, since they carried the Emperor's image. They had to be exchanged for kosher coins - but at a hefty exchange rate. *It was a scam to make a buck off God.*

Early in His ministry Jesus took a whip and drove out the moneychangers. Here He uses His bare knuckles.

Imagine, *tables tumbling, money flying, merchandise is ruined, merchants are running for cover...* Jesus is a one man wrecking crew! Realize Jesus was no wimp!

He got angry for the right reasons. He was zealous for God. Jesus ran off folks who misrepresented Him.

I'm sure there're greedy ministries today, where if Jesus visited, the first thing He'd do is clean house.

Verse 17, **“Then (Jesus) taught, saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”** Jesus was so infuriated not just by what the priests were doing, *but where they were doing it.* They probably were set up in the court of the Gentiles.

This was the one place in the Temple where non-Jews could go to learn about God. And instead of God being glorified, He was being horribly misrepresented.

This is why Jesus calls the Temple, **“a house prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of thieves.”**

And notice, Jesus referred to the Jewish Temple as **“My house.”** I'm sure that statement made the hair stand up on the backs of Jewish necks. Jesus walks into God's house and calls it *His* house! Jesus was claiming to be God. That's how His enemies reacted...

**“And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the**

people were astonished at His teaching.” In the NT *the church* is called *the Temple*.

This is why we want our gatherings to be “a house of prayer.” We always want the agenda to be spiritual.

“When evening had come, (Jesus) went out of the city.” He left Jerusalem and returned to Bethany...

“Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.” When a tree ceases bearing *fruit* the issue is at the *root*. The roots are no longer getting the proper water and nutrients.

And this is why a Christian dries up and stops producing fruit. He is no longer sinking their roots in God - drawing refreshment and nutrients from Him.

In the next few verses Jesus gives us four steps to prevent spiritual withering... First, **put your faith in God**. Second, **verbalize your faith**. Third, **communicate to God through prayer**. And fourth, **forgive your brother**.

Verse 22, “**So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God.”** Don’t put faith in your own skill and ability, or in good works, or in religious deeds, or even faith in your faith. Put your faith in God and His grace.

“**For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says.**” Note, it’s not, whoever *thinks* about this mountain - or *wishes* that it’s removed... it’s

whoever **says** to this mountain. Faith should be spoken. It's not enough to have faith - we need to verbalize our faith.

When you speak your faith you go on record.

At times we don't verbalize our faith because we're hedging our bets. If I don't say I'm trusting God then if He doesn't come through I'm off the hook. But when you verbalize your faith you put yourself on the line. You're invested. Now your faith is a committed faith.

**"Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."** Real faith prays, and stays in touch.

**"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."** Faith in God always forgives others. There's no such thing as an unforgiving faith.

It reminds me of the lady who didn't get invited to the picnic. When the planner realized her mistake she extended a belated invitation. The lady replied, **"O, I forgive you, but I certainly can't come to your picnic. I've already asked the Lord for it to rain that day."** A vindictive faith isn't faith in God. Faith always forgives.

Verse 27, **"Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. And they said to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?"**

A few days earlier, Jesus had cleansed the Temple. He called it *“My house.”* He’d shown great authority.

But their question here is a trap, and He knows it, *“I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things:”* Answer my question; then I’ll answer yours. *“The baptism of John - was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.”*

*“And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 'But if we say, 'From men'"* - they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. *“So they answered and said to Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”* What a skillful reply! If you had a debate team you’d want Jesus to occupy first chair.

If they admit John’s authority was from God; Jesus will say, *“Then why didn’t you believe what John said about Me?”* If they say it came from men, they’ll upset the masses who considered John a prophet from God.

This exchange begins Jesus’ final showdown with the priestly establishment. Round one goes to Jesus!

In Chapter 12 the confrontation continues with a story, *“Then He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.”*

This was a common business practice in Israel. A landowner built a vineyard, leased it to others to work, then the landowner and workers would split the profits.

“Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some.” This is one of those moments you had to have been there... A few feet away stood the doors of the Temple. They were 100 feet tall, overlaid with gold, and carved into them were giant grapevines.

The vine was a symbol of Israel. Even more than the fig tree, the grapevine represented the Hebrew nation.

Like a vineyard, God planted Israel. He protected her with walls, and assigned priests to grow spiritual fruit.

But rather than serve the landowner, the Jewish leaders were out only for themselves. And when God sent prophets to warn them of their sin, they beat them, and stoned them, and shamefully treated them, and even killed God’s messengers. *But Jesus continues...*

“Therefore still having one son, his beloved, (the landowner) also sent him to them last, saying, 'They will respect my son.' “But those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'

"So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard."

This was prophetic. Jesus claimed to be God's only Son - and He knew what the Jews were about to do. He had already predicted His rejection and execution.

Verse 9, "Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others."

History tells us this happened. In 70 AD the Romans besieged Jerusalem, toppled the temple, and in doing so dismantled the institutions of Judaism. Hebrew culture crashed as the Christian Church began to grow.

*God gave the vineyard to a new group of workers!*

Jesus continues, "Have you not read this Scripture:" He quotes Psalm 118, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

Jesus appeals not only to a Psalm, but to a well-known Jewish tradition. When Herod's Temple was constructed the stones were quarried some distance from the Temple, and were hauled in for placement.

When the first stone arrived it didn't seem to fit, so the builders rolled it off the cliff. After all the stones had shipped, and the Temple was nearing completion the builders realized they were one stone short - the cornerstone was missing. They'd made a horrible mistake. That capstone was the One they had rejected.

Now the analogy and Scriptures were coming true.

The chief priests and builders of Judaism were rejecting *Jesus - the cornerstone of the OT*. Yet though Israel had cast Jesus aside, others would receive Him. Jesus would become the foundation of the Church.

He was the cornerstone of a new, glorious Temple, made of living stones, His people. God transferred the care of His vineyard from Israel to the Church.

And did Jesus' parable make the Jewish priests happy? Verse 12, "And they sought to lay hands on (Jesus) (this was not for prayer, but execution), but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away."

"Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians..." Both ends of the political spectrum.

The Herodians were a political party that sided with King Herod. They were seen as Roman collaborators. In contrast, the Pharisees were the Jewish loyalists.

These two groups normally hated each other. They were the day's left-wingers and right-wingers - but their mutual hatred of Jesus created strange bedfellows.

We're told they came together "to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth." This was just flattery. They didn't honor Jesus. Like a piece of bread, they were buttering-Him-up before they stuck in the knife.



Verse 14, “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?” Again, this was a carefully crafted trick question. If He said, “Pay taxes” they would accuse Him of sympathizing with Rome.

They might even call Him an idolater... Since Rome viewed their emperor as a god, paying taxes to him could be viewed as tantamount to emperor worship.

But if Jesus said, “Don’t pay the taxes” they could take Him to the Romans for treason. The Roman governor would have little choice but to punish Jesus.

Either way, *the Jews thought they had Him trapped!*

“But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, “Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.”

A denarius was a small Roman coin - size of a dime.

“So they brought it. And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” And they said to Him, “Caesar’s.” On one side of the coin was the bust of the Caesar, with the words, “Tiberias Caesar, son of the divine Augustus.” On the other side were the words, “Pontifex Maximus” - which is Latin for “High Priest”.

This coin was dedicated to the Roman emperor.

Verse 17, “Jesus answered and said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. And they marveled at Him.” In antiquity, coins were the property of the One who’s image they bore. Jesus is saying, “If this coin belongs to Caesar, give it back to him. But give to God what belongs to God.” *And what bears God’s image?*

The answer is **you and me!** Genesis tells us God made mankind *“in His image and likeness.”* Jesus is saying, *Give your coins to Caesar, but your life to God.*

I love what Kent Hughes writes about verse 17, *“The statement of our Lord was not only astounding the instant it was uttered, but it is even today universally acclaimed to be the single most influential political statement every made in the history of the world!”*

With amazing brevity and conciseness Jesus affirms both *the validity yet limits of human government.* God is supreme, but the government has a place. It can issue a tax if needed, but God expects our very lives.

Verse 18, *“Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him;”* The Pharisees were the conservatives. The Sadducees were the liberals.

Sadducees denied the inspiration of Scripture, apart from the five books of Moses. They denied angels - the afterlife - the resurrection of the dead... *that's why they were sad-you-see.* They were anti-supernaturalists.

*“And they asked (Jesus), saying: “Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.”*

This was from Deuteronomy 25. In ancient Israel a widow's prospects for remarriage were slim. Without a son she had no one to take care of her in her old age. Thus, it was the brother-in-law's duty to take her in...

Here's the Sadducees question, "Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring." This is a wild story - it sounds like an episode of Jerry Springer.

It reminds me of the gal who thought she could have 16 husbands. She told her friend, "Well, the preacher said, '*Four better, four worse, four richer, four poorer.*'"

Hear about the woman who had a dream in which the angel told her, "Prepare yourself for widowhood. Your husband is about to die a violent death." She replied, "*I have just one question - will I be acquitted?*"

*Well, here's a woman who buried seven husbands.*

Jesus ends the story, "Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife."

"Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?" Realize, all heresies rise out of a *denial of God's power, or an ignorance of the Bible...* People deny the creation - or parting of the Red Sea - or the virgin birth - or the resurrection - or the Second Coming - *because they deny God's power.*

They refute the Trinity - or the blood atonement - or salvation by grace through faith - *because they're ignorant of Scripture.* All heresies spring from *the denial of God's power or the ignorance of God's Word.*

In verse 25 Jesus sheds a light on what happens in the afterlife, “For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.” Apparently, marriage is a temporary arrangement. If you have a “good marriage” this might be bad news for you. If you have a “not-so-good marriage,” you can jump for joy. But one thing is certain, even if your marriage is “a marriage made in heaven” - it’s still intended only for earth.

Earthly marriages exist for two primary reasons. **First**, marriage is an illustration of our relationship with Christ. And **second**, it’s a means of procreation. In heaven we’ll won’t need the illustration, we’ll have the real thing. And there won’t be a need for procreation.

But what about closeness and intimacy in heaven? I’m certain we’ll be close to people in heaven. In fact, the most casual friendship in heaven, will probably be more heartfelt than the deepest marriage on earth.

But the only marriage in heaven will be to the Master. Our love relationship with Jesus will be the dominant love story. It’ll make human marriages unnecessary.

Jesus continues answering the Sadducees, “But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.”

“You are therefore greatly mistaken.”

Remember the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead - and the inspiration of all the OT, except the first five

books of Moses. Jesus could've gone to anywhere in the OT to prove our resurrection, but He went to "*the burning bush*" - Exodus 3 and Moses...

Long after their bodies had decomposed God said He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - and since He is only the God of living people obviously they must be alive. *There is life after death.* Jesus solved the riddle, and riddled them with truth of resurrection!

Verse 28, "Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" This was the hot theological question of the day. The scribes had broken down the Law into 613 different commandments. There were 248 *positive injunctions, or "dos"* - and 365 "*don'ts,*" *one prohibition for every day of the year.* The question though, was which of the 613 was most important?

"Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment." No Jew would debate this answer.

Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5. Every synagogue service began with the reading of this passage.

The most important commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. **Love Him with all you've got!** *With all your heart* - make Him your supreme desire. *With all your soul* - make Him the object of your

affections. *With all your mind* - revolve your thoughts around Him. And *with all your strength* - make the Lord your greatest pursuit and passion.

No Jew would debate that this was the greatest commandment, but what was so provocative is what Jesus says next... He quotes Leviticus 19:18... “And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.” Prior to this occasion, no rabbi had ever connected *loving God* with *loving your brother*.

This must've stung the conscience of the listening Jews. They all claimed to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength - but they were void of love for their brother. And Jesus is saying you don't have one without the other. *Love for God* and *love for your brother* go arm in arm. 1 John 4:20 puts it, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"

“So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

“Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God.

But after that no one dared question Him.” Jesus had silenced His inquisitors. The Jews matched wits with the Son

of God and ended up the dimwit. Never debate *the written Word of God* with *the living Word of God*.

Now Jesus takes the offensive. Verse 35, “Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, “How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” Jesus quotes Psalm 110 - a Messianic psalm. “Therefore David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; how is He then his Son?”

Unlike the Jews’ trick questions, Jesus’ question cut to the heart of their objection that He was the Messiah.

The OT predicted the Messiah would be David’s son or heir, but in Psalm 110 he refers to Messiah as “*my Lord*”... “*The LORD*” or Yahweh says to “*my Lord...*”

*How can this possibly be?* David was king, and the only person ranking higher than the king is God. How can Messiah be *God and man - human and divine?*

The Jews thought of Messiah in strictly human terms. They didn’t realize the Messiah was also God.

The Jews had stopped questioning Jesus, but now He tries to get them to question their own assumptions. Later they’ll reject Jesus because He claims to be God, but here He’s trying to get them to see that their own Scriptures require Messiah to be both man and God.

Verse 37, “And the common people heard Him gladly.” With no bias they could recognize His wisdom. But the Pharisees were blinded by their own prejudice.

“Then He said to them in His teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers.” These will receive greater condemnation.”

For four years Jesus preached mercy. Now in the face of Judaism’s rejection of Messiah, He pronounces judgment on the hypocritical Jewish leaders. They dress in religious garb, and spout religious lingo. They exalt themselves, while stealing from poor widows.

It always amazes me, Jesus reserved His harshest words - not for the prostitutes and thieves, but for the religious leaders. Jesus had nothing but kindness and mercy for the sinner, but He condemns the hypocrite.

Jesus was still in the temple, when He makes one other observation. Verse 41, “Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much.”

In the Temple there were thirteen offering boxes shaped like inverted megaphones. Each of the boxes accumulated money that went for different purposes.

Before the rich man dropped in his offering he made a pompous show of it. It reminds me of the fellow who stood up in church and told the crowd, “I want to be the first person to give a \$1000 anonymous contribution.”



The rich and their sizable offerings were all about self-promotion, not the glory of God. Their giving was done in such a way to catch the eye of the bystander...

*But Jesus' focus was elsewhere, "Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans." The "mite" was a Jewish "lepta." The word means "to peel." It referred to "something very thin."*

This poor widow gave two paper thin coins that were worth a fraction of a penny. Two tiny lepta were *all this woman had*, but *what she had* she gave it to God.

Verse 43, "So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood." Most people tip God from their surplus. But this woman was one of the few people who know the joy of truly giving to God.

We measure a gift by *the amount that's given*, but Jesus appraises a gift by *the amount that's leftover*.

We look at the *portion...* Jesus the *proportion...*

This widow gave just two mites, but God turned them into *mighty mites*. Her giving lives on as our example.