

**Mark Study**  
**Week Eighteen**  
**Mark 12:28 – 13:8**

**Day One**

28 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?" 29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

v. 28 – Finally, one of the leaders approached Jesus and asked an honest question. This man had a chance to talk to God and he used the time wisely. **What are you asking God? How do you spend your time with Him? Do you ask Him for insight, for answers to big problems, for special needs that only God can touch and meet?** I have often said that when you pray, don't pray now-I-lay-me-down-to-sleep prayers as a child would do, but pray thoughtful prayers that can make a difference in your life and the lives of others.

v. 29 – Notice how Jesus knew this man's heart and intent, for He answered the man openly and honestly, not like He had just answered those who were trying to trap Him. You can come to God and be honest, for He already knows what's on your heart.

O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord (Psalm 139:1-4).

v. 30 – Jesus quoted Deuteronomy in response to the man's question about the greatest commandment. Do you realize how important this is, for Jesus' response is God's answer to the question of the greatest commandment? This requires that you and I determine where we stand in relation to this stated priority.

You are to love the Lord your God with all your being, faculties, intellect, emotions, physical strength and anything else you have to offer. Doing this does not insure God's favor, it is simply your reasonable act of worship. You can never earn God's favor in your own strength or through your own abilities, and neither can I. So stop trying to do so and enjoy God's love and grace. But in response that great love and grace, you must then devote all that you have and are to His service and purpose.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is ? his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1-2).

v. 31 – The next most important commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. Of course this assumes and precludes that you *do* love yourself. If you don't, then you will treat your neighbor badly, not because you hate them, but because you hate yourself. So your ability to fulfill and obey God's greatest commandments assume a healthy love for who you are and who God made you to be. Remember what the psalmist wrote:

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well (Psalm 139:14).

### Day Two

32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 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." 34 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.

v. 32 – The man who asked the question began to encourage Jesus! He endorsed what Jesus was saying and went on to add his own insights and comments. Yet Jesus didn't actually say that God is one, but the context of Deuteronomy that He quoted states that God is one. This showed that the man understood Scripture and the context of the commandments that Jesus had quoted. Because God is one, undivided and whole, and has "no shadow of turning" as the hymn states, then He is worthy of our absolute devotion. Our God is so consistent and trustworthy, not like any manmade God who is whimsical and fickle.

### **You can count on God but can He count on you?**

v. 33 – Wow! The man went on to state that the love of God was a higher priority than the sacrificial system of the Temple. That was quite a statement for a Jew to make, for the Temple was the focal point and pinnacle of Jewish worship. Yet Jesus had stated the same truth when He went into the Temple in the last chapter and turned over the tables and chased away the money-changers. There and then He communicated that prayer was a higher priority for God than commerce and the systems of sacrifices that the Jews had developed.

It's important to understand that God has priorities and it's critical that you establish them as your priorities. The love of God is to be your top priority and your love and service to others is to be based on the love of God and not just your love for others. Even your love for others is to be prioritized, as Paul wrote to the Galatians:

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Galatians 6:10).

**Do you put your love for your brothers and sisters in Christ ahead of your love for those outside the church? Do you have a practical expression for this love? In other words, are you involved in your church in such a way that you can show this love for God's people? If not, why not? If so, how can you improve or maximize your effort?**

v. 34 – Jesus was hard on the religious leaders who were crafty and devious in their approach to Him. Here Jesus encouraged the man who questioned Him because of the man's response. God knows the heart and Jesus knew this man's heart was right, and that he sought answers with integrity.

Jesus' did not say the man was close to the church, but close to the kingdom—God's government on earth.

Yet, when Jesus was finished, no one else dared ask Him anything else. That makes no sense! Jesus and the man had an excellent exchange, yet the people were afraid to ask anything else. **Are you afraid to seek the Lord? Why? If not, then what answers are you seeking right now from Him?** You have access to God; don't waste it on trivial matters and don't *not* take advantage of this access to the Divine Being.

### Day Three

35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, "How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? 36 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." '37 David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?" The large crowd listened to him with delight.

v. 35 - I enjoy these next few verses. Jesus came out of His positive encounter with the man who questioned but fully understood what Jesus said, responding to Jesus intelligently. I think at this point Jesus was "pumped," if I may use a colloquial expression. No one asked Jesus any more questions, but He didn't stop teaching. In fact, He posed a biblical riddle to the people and they loved it! It's almost as if Jesus was on a roll and He was feeling, a bit frisky!

Why do I write this? To point out that Jesus was and is human. He responded to positive feedback, spoke out of enthusiasm and was probably having fun! Does this in any way diminish His divinity? Absolutely not! I have met many who are afraid of or who work to avoid their emotions and passions. As long as they aren't sinful, go for it! Follow your heart, just like Jesus did here. Do what you enjoy and trust that God put those energies in you to follow them, not fight them. Does this make sense?

Jesus chose a lesson about the Messiah or the Christ, the Anointed One. After several tried to trick Jesus where the Word was concerned, He was now ready to stump them with a tough question. I never want to try and match wits with God. I am no match for Him! So the Master posed a question for the students and it was a tough question. The teachers of the law taught that the Anointed One would be the son of David. That was well established, since everyone expected the Messiah to restore and sit on the throne of David.

v. 36 – Notice that Jesus acknowledged that the Holy Spirit was behind what David had said. This indicates that the Spirit did indeed inspire the Scriptures! Jesus obviously wanted us to know that what David said and the Scripture recorded was Holy Spirit inspired, and Jesus cannot lie. Peter also told us about this characteristic of Scripture:

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21).

By the way, Jesus was referring to Psalm 110:1 when He asked this question.

v. 37 – If David's son was to come after David, how could David refer to Him as one who is living already? Also how could David refer to Him as Lord? Of course, we understand this now that Jesus was indeed David's Son, but also was David's Lord because He existed as the second person of the Trinity from eternity.

The people had no answer for this riddle yet, but they listened to Jesus with delight! I "noticed" this verse years ago and made it my prayer: *Lord, if you ever release me to speak, let me be a good speaker. Let me have content – insight from and into Your word. Then let me have a speaking style that will help people to listen and learn.*

**If you have any chances to speak, are you a good speaker? Do you entertain while keeping the focus on your lesson? Do you have insight that is helpful to others?** I have known speakers who entertain but who lack content or insight. Then I have known some who have insight, but who are boring to sit under. Jesus was both entertaining and insightful and the people loved to listen to Him. I think we are to be the same.

Speaking is a skill that can be learned and improved. There will always be some who are more gifted than others, but all of us who speak should strive to be the best we can be.

#### **Day Four**

38 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, 39 and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 40 They devour

widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."

v. 38 – Jesus then took the opportunity to contrast His style with those who were then teaching the people. Those so-called teachers were interested in notoriety and fame. They dressed nicely to set themselves apart from the common people and even from the other leaders. I know some Christian speakers today who spend tens of thousands of dollars on clothes every time they shop. Many are on television and spend thousands of dollars on special sets, not to mention their own “cosmetic” appearances, including plastic surgery and hairpieces. **I wonder what Jesus would say about them today?**

v. 39 – These leaders also have and require places of honor when they go somewhere. I was recently at a conference where a well-known bishop was speaking. He did not appear in the church until after the singing and worship were completed. He then entered with an entourage and sat in the front row. He got up to speak and spent quite a bit of time flattering the pastor who invited him, along with that pastor’s wife. He made sure he took a special offering before he finished speaking, and then he exited before he had contact with any of the people.

While this is accepted in church culture as the norm, it is the opposite of how Jesus taught.

v. 40 – Now we get to the crux of the matter. Those teachers whom Jesus was referring to were after money, and they targeted older women whose husbands were dead, who had money or wealth. I have always heard that the typical donor toward Christian television is a woman in her late 50s (or older). At that point in their lives, I suppose they have control over some financial resources. I guess it was the same in Jesus’ day.

Those so-called teachers were interested in making an impression. They weren’t in love with themselves, but rather in the image that they portrayed. Thus they needed the clothes, the public honor, the front-row seats, and the public prayers to establish their image with the people. This is why those teachers needed to eliminate Jesus. Jesus was authentic and they were not, so they could not have Jesus around to reveal their shallowness.

Jesus promised that those teachers would be punished most severely. We must assume that they will still be punished today, if they exhibit the same tendencies and rip off God’s people in the process. What Jesus said here is in line with what the Lord had spoken through Jeremiah. If you are a teacher or leader, you would be wise to take these warnings to heart:

"Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" declares the Lord. Therefore this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: "Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done," declares the Lord. "I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of

all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing," declares the Lord (Jeremiah 23:1-4).

### **Day Five**

41 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. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. 43 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. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

v. 41 – Jesus sat down to observe the people bringing their offerings to the Temple. The context of this watching is clear: Jesus was contrasting what was acceptable to people and what was acceptable to God in the previous verses and stories. He had already pointed out the immoral nature of the teachers, had exposed the duplicity of the Pharisees and the biblical ignorance of the Sadducees. Then He turned His attention to those who gave money at the Temple.

It is interesting that the people “threw” their offerings into some container for the upkeep of the Temple and the priests. Since there were no checking accounts then, large sums were obvious because they were probably in large bags or containers.

v. 42 – Jesus had already condemned some of the activity in the Temple when He chased the money changers. Yet He did not condemn those who were giving to its upkeep. He was observing the people in this case, and did not use the opportunity to criticize the leaders or the rich who were giving.

**How did Jesus see that the poor woman only gave two small coins?** If she had those coins in the palm of her hand and got close to the container to drop them in, no one could possibly have known what she had given. **Was there someone there to receive the offerings and to count what was given? Did Jesus have a “word of knowledge,” knowing what she gave by supernatural insight?**

One must be alert and paying attention to see an insignificant widow give two small coins. Then again, Jesus was always in tune with the people around Him. **Are you? Are you missing small signals of someone’s distress or unhappiness? Do you notice what people are doing, using what you see as a source of meditation and teaching?** That is what Jesus did and it was and is highly effective. *Lord, help me to pay attention and see what I need to see so I can do what You want me to do.*

vs. 43&44 – Jesus had to assure His disciples that what He was about to say was the truth, because it was going to sound ridiculous. Jesus declared that the poor woman who

gave the two coins actually gave more than any of the rich who put in larger amounts of money. How could this be?

That woman put it all she had to live on. How did Jesus know this? He had to know her heart, so I would say that insight was by supernatural revelation. She gave out of her poverty, while everyone else gave out of their wealth. What does this tell us?

1. God often evaluates your offering not on what you gave but on what you have left over once you give! This woman gave it all and God noticed.
2. You never have to be embarrassed by an offering that is small. God can be pleased with any amount
3. God watches the poor and has a tender heart for them.
4. The rich do not have a special standing with God.
5. God pays attention when you give.

**Can you think of any other lessons from this story?**

### **Day Six**

1 As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"<sup>2</sup> "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."<sup>3</sup> As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, <sup>4</sup> "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"

v. 1 – This was a time in Jerusalem when many visitors were present. These “tourists” did not live in Jerusalem, so they were impressed by the size of the buildings, especially the Temple. One of the disciples enthusiastically pointed out to Jesus just how great the Temple was! I was in Rome last year and was impressed and overwhelmed by the size of the churches and non-church structures. They were magnificent, so I can identify with how this disciple felt. Jesus, of course, could and did take any opportunity to teach and train His followers, and His response to the disciple must have been a shock.

v. 2 – Obviously, God wasn’t as impressed by the size of the buildings as the disciple was. Jesus predicted the eventual destruction of Jerusalem, which would take place about 35 years later at the hands of the Roman government. This must have sounded preposterous to those who heard Jesus make this prediction. First of all, the buildings were so impressive that their destruction would have been hard to imagine. Then the fact that God would allow such a thing to His holy Temple would have been equally as hard to fathom.

This was the exact situation with the first Temple. Jeremiah tried to warn the people that an invader would come to pull down the Temple, but they mocked Jeremiah and refused to accept the fact that God would allow that to happen. They put their faith in the fact that God needed the Temple, so He would overlook their sins in order to preserve the

religious system of the day. They were sadly mistaken, however, and the nation was invaded and the Temple destroyed.

The same scenario would repeat itself in 70 AD. Many thought God would never allow the destruction to happen and they fought to the end, trusting in God's intervention, which never came.

v. 3 – With the Temple as a backdrop, four of Jesus' disciples came to inquire about the details of what He had predicted. Notice that they believed what Jesus had said, unlike the unbelieving Jews who felt that God needed them and what they were doing, making the destruction highly unlikely in their mind.

It is important that you stay open to God and His ways. There are some people who think, "God would never do that." I try to stay away from that thinking for I don't know all that God would and would not do. When you think like that, you can be offended and scandalized when God does or permits something you think He would not. I think that God is God and He can do whatever He wants, whenever He wants.

**This may sound strange, but are you offended by something God did or allowed to happen?** If so, I would urge you to "hit it head on" by facing it and working through it. The only one who suffers when this happens is you, for you then erect a wall between you and God. That affects your prayers and overall relationship with Him.

### Day Seven

5 Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. 6 Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. 7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 8 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

v. 5 – Many have interpreted Jesus' response as a message concerning His ultimate return to earth, known as the Second Coming. This is erroneous. Jesus answered the disciples' question here as to when the Temple would be destroyed, not when He would return in glory.

Jesus' first warning was that the disciples not be deceived. There would be some who would come and claim that they were Messiahs, or that they had prophetic insight into what was happening at the moment.

v. 6 – If you aren't rooted deeply in God and His word, you are open to deception. There would actually be those who would come in Jesus' name, claiming that He sent them with a message. Jesus warned that not just a few would come, but many would come!

This is why it is critical that you not accept everything that anyone says in the name of the Lord, even me! You must judge what is being said, not in an arrogant way, but for

your own protection. That is why Paul advised that all prophecy be judged and evaluated. I have watched people receive a word from someone who has a reputation as a prophet, and they don't even bother to evaluate or judge the word. They just receive it. This is wrong.

v. 7 – Jesus warned that there would be a lot of rumors and news of upheaval, armed rebellion and bloodshed. He told the disciples not to be alarmed when they heard those things. I am amazed how often I have been shaken when I heard something that may be true or that *could* happen. I lost my peace over something that often did not even occur. That was because I lacked faith and lost focus, choosing to listen to those around me instead of standing on what God said.

**Are you nervous or anxious right now over something that may happen, something that someone told you may occur?** If so, get your peace back! Stop listening to the negative report and listen to God's positive report. He is in charge and He is telling you today *not* to be alarmed.

v. 8 – Jesus was using what is known as apocalyptic language to make his point that this time in Jerusalem and Israel would be traumatic. This language is highly figurative and exaggerates a point to make a point. Jesus was warning them that the siege of Jerusalem would be nasty but that God's purpose would be initiated by these unusual events.

In other words, Jesus was assuring them that God was in control, even though things would seem to be out of control. If Jesus could predict these things 30 years in advance, it was indeed assurance that those things would take place with God's foreknowledge and approval. There was no need to panic, but it was to be a sobering series of events.

**Do you hold the view that God is in control, even when things seem to be out of control in your life?** I hope you do, for it's the truth! You can remain calm because God is in charge of the events in and around your life, as the psalmist also wrote to remind us:

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging (Psalm 46:1-3).