

Exegetical Notes, Mark 12:28-34
“The Last and Greatest Question”
Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Cornerstone Fellowship
101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320
610-384-1375
charleshjensen@aol.com

Mark 12:28-34

Verse 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?”

- A teacher of the law was listening to the Sadducees’ discussion with Jesus. See Mark 12:18-27. He noted that Jesus answered them very well. Therefore, he asked Jesus a question. This man was not trying to trap Jesus as were the others. His was an honest question.
- The question was not new in rabbinical discussion. The teachers of the law argued that there were 613 individual statutes that composed the law. Some of these they called “heavy” or important. Others they called “light,” meaning that these statutes had lesser importance. They were constantly seeking to determine which of the heavy laws were the heaviest or most important.
- This teacher honestly wanted to know what Jesus thought about this important topic.

Verse 29-31

“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

- Jesus answered the man’s sincere inquiry sincerely. He quoted Deuteronomy 6:4, the great Jewish confession of faith. Jesus then said that the greatest commandment was to love God above everything, and without restraint. Jesus said that the second commandment was to love neighbor as self.

Verse 32-33

“Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 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.”

- The teacher of the law showed Jesus great respect by calling him teacher. He also indicated that he agreed with Jesus’ answer.

Verse 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.

- Jesus told the teacher of the law that he was very close to the kingdom of God. Jesus meant that he was thinking correctly about the things of God and the Scripture. However, because the man did not yet know Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior, he was not yet OF the kingdom of God.
- Jesus’ wise answers to the questions put to him proved to those who wanted to trap him in this way that they were unlikely to succeed. This simply meant that he was more dangerous than they had assumed at first. They had not given up. They still wanted to disgrace him and kill him, but they now knew it would require different tactics.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Last and Greatest Question*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen*. They are used here by permission.)