



[Show Slide 1] In Mark 12, Jesus answered three questions. The first two of these questions posed by the Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, and Scribes, were meant to be traps, verbal ambushes that they thought would either position Jesus as an insurrectionist who the Romans would arrest or would force Him to discredit Himself in front of His Jewish audience. Either way, they thought they had found a way to end His influence.

[Show Slide 2] Instead, His answers were brilliant, leaving no room for accusation from either group. Not only that, He asserted His authority over theirs, saying, *“Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God.”* (Mark 12:24, NLT)

[Show Slide 3] In fact, Jesus’ words leading into our passage today were, *“You have made a serious error.”* (Mark 12:27b, NLT)

Hearing this would not have gone over well with these leaders. It was Passover week; a time when Jewish people made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate. The city was popping, and in front of everyone, Jesus had called them ignorant of Scripture, told them they didn’t know God’s power, and accused them of making a serious error. Is it any surprise they shifted gears from trying to discredit Him to trying to have Him killed?

Which makes what happens next really fascinating to me:

[Show Slide 4] *Mark 12:28 (NLT) One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”*

Do you see the change in tone? The majority of these religious leaders were infuriated with Jesus; the previous questions were verbal chess games that were meant to destroy Jesus. But even in the midst of that, not every religious leader doubled down on their anger. This leader seems to have been impressed, or even moved, and unlike his peers, he seemed to have asked a genuine question.<sup>1</sup> This teacher saw wisdom in Jesus’ previous answers and wanted to hear His opinion on the commandments.

[Show Slide 5] A bit of context; we tend to think of just the ten commandments when we hear the word commandment. Charlton Heston standing over the nation, slamming down those tablets; which had to be awkward when he went back to God to ask for another copy. There are actually 613 commandments in the Hebrew Scriptures, and a big topic of debate was which one was the most important; so that the key commandment could be used in part to interpret the rest, but also to guide decisions should you face a scenario where you had to choose between two commandments to follow.<sup>ii</sup> Knowing their ranking would guide that decision.

So, unlike the traps asked before, this question was a very real question that people debated and wanted to know the answer to.

[Show Slide 6] *Mark 12:29-31 (NLT) <sup>29</sup> Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. <sup>30</sup> And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."*

[Show Slide 7] Jesus quoted two passages here; the first is **Deuteronomy 6:4-5** [Show Slide with this portion highlighted]; it was the closest thing to a Jewish confession of faith.<sup>iii</sup> This Old Testament passage about loving the Lord with all your heart, soul, and strength, called "the Shema," was something they would pray each morning. It contains the core of Jewish faith; that there is only one God, and we are called to love God with all that we are.

[Show Slide 8] Warren Carter writes in his commentary that, "**The command requires a person's whole existence be oriented to knowing and doing God's purposes.**"

[Show Slide 9] It makes sense that Jesus would point to this command as the most important. But then, He combined it with another command from Leviticus 19:18, "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*" As far as can be found in Scripture and evidence outside of Scripture, Jesus is the only one to pair these two commands, let alone pair them as the most important.<sup>iv</sup>

This preview includes a select number of pages from this resource.

If you like what you see, download the entire resource today!

**[downloadyouthministry.com](http://downloadyouthministry.com)**