



Sunday School Lesson
Mark 12:28-34
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What Matters the Most



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Quick Links to the Study

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In this study, the focus of the scripture text is upon priorities of commitment and what matters the most with God -- and thus what should matter with those desiring to serve Him. Since this passage is a triple tradition passage, we will also study the parallel texts of Matt. 22:34-40 and Luke 10:25-28. The larger theme of love as central to Christian commitment will come into the picture as well.

A major issue under consideration is the connection of Christian teaching to the Old Testament laws, as reflected in Jesus' ministry. The relation of the New Testament to the Old Testament has been a continual topic for discussion since early Christianity. This passage provides opportunity to explore some of that discussion.

Also of significance with this passage is the matter of priorities and the structuring of those. This in regard to individuals and to churches as well. If one sought to reduce Christianity down to a bottom line core, what would it be? This passage provides one answer to that question from the New Testament. Conversely, the question can be asked: How does a system of Christian faith build itself off this foundational belief?

I. Context

With Mark's text as the central scripture passage, the historical and literary setting of this gospel will be explored.

Some attention should be given to how the other two gospels connect up to the second gospel. With over 90% of Mark's gospel reproduced either verbatim or almost verbatim in both Matthew and Luke, some literary connection between the three gospels is undeniable. This, especially with the enormously

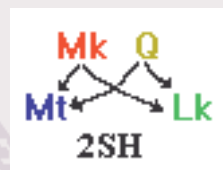
greater range of writing styles possible in ancient Greek than is possible in modern English.

Exploration of the possibilities of that connection are known as the Synoptic Problem. Currently in biblical scholarship, two views dominate the scene in this matter, which flies under the technical label of Source Criticism. One view, known as the Two Gospel view, contends that Matthew's gospel was written first, with Luke's gospel coming afterwards and making use of Matthew's text. Mark is the last and has access to both Luke and Matthew. This view was first articulated by a German scholar, Johan Jakob Griesbach, beginning in 1774. His views gained some following, but never achieved dominance in New Testament studies. In the middle 1900s, a professor at Southern Methodist University in Dallas -- William Farmer -- began to update and advocate this view again. Out of that beginning a large number of New Testament scholars on both sides of the Atlantic now hold to this viewpoint.



The other, and much more dominating view, is known as the Two Source view.

This understanding was popularized in the 1860s by another German scholar, Heinrich Julius Holtzmann. Since then and until today this view has remained the dominate understanding in New Testament scholarship internationally. In this approach the view is that Mark was the first gospel to be written. A collection of mostly sayings -- things Jesus said -- was made in written form as well. It is labeled Q after the German word Quelle meaning source. Matthew and Luke



both had access to these two sources in the independent writing of their gospel stories. Thus the Q material surfaces in those sections of Matthew and Luke that are in common with each other, but not found anywhere in Mark. The most recent debate in this camp is whether or not such a Q document ever existed, since no trace of such a document has ever surfaced. In British scholarship since the 1950s, a [distinct group](#) of scholars, beginning with Austin Farrer, has advocated that Luke had access to Matthew and thus drew the common material from Matthew. Therefore no need for postulating a Q document is necessary. This view remains a small group but is finding increasing numbers of adherents, largely through the work of Profs. Mark Goodacre and Michael Goulder.

Sometimes the question is raised: Why bother with such matters? The answer is clear. How a writer uses his sources is a critical part of interpreting what ideas the writer is trying to set forth. Ignoring this matter leaves the interpreter ignorant of major aspects of the viewpoint of each gospel writer.

My viewpoint for many years has been largely around the Two Source Hypothesis in its more classical formulation. This is the starting point for interpreting the Markan passage in our Bible study. The parallels in Matthew and Luke will be brought into the discussion under this assumption.

a. Historical

The **external history**, i.e., compositional history, of Mark's gospel begins with the traditional understanding first developed among the Church Fathers of the second through fifth centuries. In that perspective Mark is the [John Mark](#) who is mentioned some eight times in the New Testament. His mother owned a large home in Jerusalem with the disciples gathered for prayer (Acts 12:12). He traveled with Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey until they left Cyprus and for some unknown reason abandoned the missionaries to return home. With the planning for the second missionary journey (Acts 15) Barnabas wanted to take his nephew Mark but Paul was determined that Mark shouldn't come. Consequently, Paul and Barnabas split company and Paul chose Silas to go with him. By Paul's writing of Colossians and Philemon in the late 50s to early 60s Mark and Paul have reconciled and Mark is viewed as a valuable servant of God (Col. 4:10; Philm 24). 2 Tim. 4:11 just before Paul's death also views him very positively.

This is the extent of the biblical record about Mark. Unprovable tradition extends the story to place Mark in Rome in the 60s and the one to whom Peter recounts his memories of Christ's ministry. Thus the gospel of Mark is seen as a reflection of Peter's understanding of the gospel, and largely on this basis the gospel found its way into the canon of the New Testament.

Modern scholarship has looked carefully at this church tradition about Mark and the second gospel. Since so much of that early tradition cannot be verified by objective evidence, considerable questions about its accuracy exists. Instead, most biblical scholars today simply accept the view that no one can say for certain who composed this gospel.

The few items that can be gleaned from examining the contents of the gospel itself suggest that it was most likely written prior to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70, based on Mark 13. Literary analysis suggests that the gospel was written either from northern Palestine in Galilee or somewhat further north of there. The language and writing style of the Greek text strongly suggests that the gospel was written somewhat in the pattern of the ancient Greek and Latin bios, i.e., lives of famous people. This suggests that the gospel was composed for a Gentile readership without much understanding of the Jewish background of Jesus and early Christianity. Very little about the sources used by Mark can be gleaned with certainty from the gospel itself.

The **internal history** of our passage provides more details that can be understood. In not only Mark's gospel but also in Matthew, this episode stands as a part of the "controversial Tuesday" of the final week of Jesus' life before crucifixion on Friday (See the chart on the next page, taken from [Cranfordville.com](#).) This final week is traditionally labeled the *Passio Christi*, i.e., [the Passion of Christ](#). In more liturgical Christian traditions, this is celebrated annually as the climax of the period of Lent leading up to Good Friday before Easter Sunday. Mel Gibson has drawn renewed attention to this with his popular movie, [The Passion of Christ](#). The last hours on Thursday and Friday are especially prominent in this material as the heart of the passion of Christ.

Mark lists the following sequence of events on that Tuesday:

- 64. Lessons from the fig tree 11:19-25
- 65. Objections raised by Sanhedrin 11:27-28
- 66. Dilemma of John's authority 11:29-33
- 67. Parable of the wicked tenants 12:1-12

	Matthew:	Mark:	Luke:	John:
V. Final Week and Crucifixion				
	21:1-27:66 (34%)	11:1-15:47 (34%)	19:29-23:56 (20%)	11:55-19:42 (33%)
A. Friday, arrival at Bethany	—	—	—	11:55-12:1
B. Saturday, prophetic anointing	26:6-13	14:3-9	—	12:2-11
C. Sunday, Messianic Manifestation	21:1-11	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:12-19
D. Monday, Messianic Authority	21:12-19	11:12-18	19:45-48	12:20-50
E. Tuesday, Controversy and Teaching	21:20-26:16	11:19-14:11	20:1-22:6	-
F. Wednesday, rest (no record)				
G. Thursday, farewells	26:17-46	14:12-42	22:7-46	13:1-18:1
H. Friday, Redemptive Accomplishment	26:47-27:61	14:43-15:47	22:47-23:56	18:2-19:42
I. Saturday, Guard posted at the Tomb	27:62-66	-	-	-

68. Paying taxes to Caesar 12:13-17
69. Question about the resurrection 12:18-27
70. The greatest commandment 12:28-34
71. David's son 12:35-37
72. Denouncing the scribes 12:38-40
73. The widow's offering 12:41-44
74. Temple destruction predicted 13:1-2
75. Signs of the times 13:3-27
76. Lesson of the fig tree 13:28-31
77. The unknown day and hour 13:32-37
78. Plot of the Sanhedrin 14:1-2

80. Betrayal agreement 14:10-11

Matthew (22) follows Mark sequentially very closely on the events of Tuesday. Luke has most of those contained in Mark. But the issue of the greatest commandment is not in Luke 20:1-22:6 which describes this day. Rather it is somewhat found in Luke 10:25-28, which places it chronologically during the previous period of ministry for Jesus, stage one of the Later Judean-Perean Ministry. Additionally, it stands as the introduction to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37, which is found only in Luke's gospel. Thus, Luke has either recast this episode as a part of a larger unit of teaching by Jesus that took place during the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, or else a different situation is in mind.

This final Tuesday is described with greater detail than any of the other seven days by the synoptic gospel writers. The fourth gospel, however, makes no mention of anything happening on this Tuesday,

which is the one day left out, apart from the Wednesday where none of the gospels recount any events. In the synoptic gospels the events of Tuesday are mostly a series of confrontations with Jesus by various elements of the religious opposition to Him. The intent is to find a way to publicly embarrass Him before the crowds and thus diminish his popularity. This would then pave the way to arresting him without the danger of a public riot. The day would end with Jesus predicting the judgment of God on the Jewish people and their leaders through the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

b. Literary

The **external literary** aspects focus on the literary setting of Mark 12:28-34. The Passion narrative of Mark's gospel occupies 34% of the entire gospel content. Thus Mark takes almost as much space to describe the final seven days (34%) as he does the previous two plus years of ministry in Galilee (53%). This kind of heavy emphasis upon these seven days is matched by Matthew (34%), Luke (20%), and John (33%). Also, of all the sections of the story of Jesus life and ministry, this part has by far the greatest amount of common material among all four gospels.

From this at least a couple of conclusions can be confidently drawn. 1) These seven days occupy a much higher level of importance than any other single period of Jesus' life. The crucifixion on Friday

stands as the climax of these seven days. The gospel writers carefully prepare us as readers for this by detailing the events that lead up to and prompt Jesus' death. From the preaching of the apostles, as recorded in [the summaries of their sermons](#) (both missionary and defense speeches) in the book of Acts, it becomes clear that the crucifixion of Christ is a pivotal moment in Jesus' life and central to the understanding of the salvation that comes out of Jesus' atoning death on the cross.

2) The closeness of the details describing these seven days among the four gospels also suggests that this material was the very first part of the story of Jesus to come together orally as a unit of material to be memorized and passed on during the three or so decades after his resurrection. Toward the end of this period of oral transmission, these materials tended to take written form in the 60s through the 80s. This would help explain why Matthew and Luke are so much like Mark in this section -- much more than at any other point in the story of Jesus. It would suggest also why this part of John's gospel is closer to the synoptics than any other part of the story of Jesus.

The **literary genre** of this material is usually called the Passion Narrative materials. This label is helpful for several reasons. The above characteristics are a part of the reason. Beyond this, however, some similarity, in general terms, will exist in the stories of the death of famous people in the ancient

world. Just as such people were generally considered to have an extraordinary birth and beginning, often the really great people were thought to have had some kind of spectacular ending to their life. This was further confirmation of their extraordinary greatness. Comparing the ending of the life of such people to that contained in the four gospels about how Christ ended his life helps put the uniqueness of his life in better perspective.

More precisely, this narrative passage is a dialogue between Jesus and a scribal lawyer. Thus the text goes back and forth between statements of both individuals. And, as is always the case in such narratives in the synoptic gospels, Jesus has the last word, which most of the time brings the narrative to a climatic point. Such is pretty much the case with our passage in Mark.

II. Message

The **literary structure** of Mk. 12:28-34 is relatively easy to determine. The dialogical nature of the text signals a search for how many people are talking to one another and how often they speak to one another, along with what they say.

In our text only Jesus and the scribal lawyer do the talking. The sequence of the passage is 1) lawyer speaks, 2) Jesus responds; 3) lawyer speaks, 4) Jesus responds. Thus two sets of exchanges take place with the second set building upon the first set. This will be the basis of our study.

a Lawyer's question with Jesus' response, vv. 28-31

Greek NT

<12:28> Καὶ προσελθὼν εἰς τῶν γραμματέων ἀκούσας αὐτῶν συζητούντων, ἰδὼν ὅτι καλῶς ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτόν, Ποία ἐστὶν ἐντολὴ πρώτη πάντων; <12:29> ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι Πρώτη ἐστίν, Ἄκουε, Ἰσραήλ, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστίν, <12:30> καὶ ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ

NASB

28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 30 AND 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.' 31

NRSV

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?" 29 Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.' 31 The

NLT

28 One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the discussion. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" 29 Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. 30 And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul,

ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου. <12:31> δευτέρα αὕτη, Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν. μείζων τούτων ἄλλη ἐντολὴ οὐκ ἔστιν.

"The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOUR-SELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

all your mind, and all your strength.' 31 The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."

Notes:

Verse 28 is made up of a rather long sentence with a number of secondary statements to the core part of the sentence: "...he asked him,..." Such introductory sentences at the beginning of gospel narratives are typical and provide the writer a way to setting up the scene with the secondary statements. To see how this appears in the Greek text, see the [Block Diagram](#) of the Greek text in the larger internet version of this study. In the [Semantic Diagram](#) one can see the thought flow leading up to the climatic declaration of Mark in v. 34b:: "After that no one dared to ask him any question." This analysis in turn leads to an outlining of the passage as reflected in the [Expositional Outline](#) based upon the schematizing of the Greek text.

The scene setting statements in Mark include the following: "One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well,..." Mark thus connects this passage to the preceding one in [vv. 18-27](#) where the Sadducees attempted to trap Jesus with a question about marriage and the resurrection. The scribe then comes up to this group, hears what is taking place, and then poses his question to Jesus with the same motive to trap Jesus, hoping to be more successful than the Sadducees who had failed in their attempt.

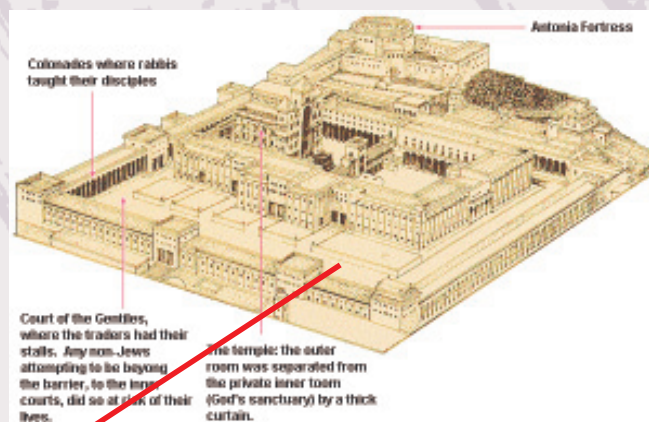
A couple of background issues need to be treated before exploring the implications of this part of the text. First, where did this conversation take place? Second, who was the scribe? Particularly in relation to the Sadducees and also to the Pharisees?

The where question is relatively easy to answer. Jesus was in the outer court of the [temple in Jerusalem](#), as Mk. 11:27 sets up: "Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking to the temple..." Many scribes used the sheltered porches in the inside of

the outer walls as places to do teaching of their disciples as well as of interested passersby. Jesus was following a long tradition in using this location as a teaching spot. But on this Tuesday it was more the issue of his opponents publicly challenging him on a variety of issues with the motive of embarrassing him before the people. The chief priests were the first (Mk. 11:27-12:12); then the Pharisees (Mk. 12:13-17); the Sadducees followed (Mk. 12:18-27); then a Pharisaical scribe was next (Mk. 12:28-34). Jesus then took the initiative which led to a denunciation of the scribes (Mk. 12:35-40). The day ended on a positive note with His commendation of the widow (12:41-44) before He left the temple in the late afternoon to go to the Mount of Olives.

The second question of who were these people confronting him is somewhat more involved. The detailed answer to the identity of the [chief priests](#) and the [Sadducees](#) will be left up to following the internet hyperlinks linked to the above names. The terms [scribe](#) and [Pharisee](#) need to be explored with more detail since they have a more direct bearing on our passage.

The term translated as "scribe" or "lawyer," γραμματεὺς in the Greek (*grammateus*), confronts the Bible translator with a dilemma. The work of a Jewish *grammateus* was considerably different than that of a Greek or Roman *grammateus*. In the Greco-Roman culture this person was similar to a modern lawyer, in that his primary role was to understand and interpret the Roman law in behalf of his client -- usually his master since most lawyers were slaves -- in the court room. But in Jewish tradition there existed a long multifaceted tradition. At the end of the Old Testament era with Ezra and Nehemiah, the scribe emerges as both a copier of the sacred



texts and consequently as an interpreter of them because of being so familiar with their contents. In a [concordance search](#) of the word “scribe” in the Bible one notices this pattern. They also emerged as teachers of the Law for the same reason. These roles crystallize during the 400 years between the Old and New Testaments. By Jesus’ day these duties are embedded deeply in the term “scribe.” The political and religious perspective of a scribe depended upon his association with one of the dominating religious groups among the Jews of the beginning Christian century. Although some were Sadducees, the majority were aligned with the Pharisees and reflected this viewpoint in their interpretation of Jewish religious life.

The scribe mentioned by Mark is understood to be a Pharisee by Matthew to the extent that Matthew ([22:34-35](#)) introduces the scene with the question arising from the Pharisees: “When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.” Interestingly, Matthew doesn’t use the same term, *grammateus*, that Mark did about this person. Instead, he uses the Greek term νομικός (*nomikos*), which is usually translated as “lawyer” in most ancient Greco-Roman literature. Luke also uses the term *nomikos*. G. Bambauch (“γραμματεὺς, -εως, ὁ, *grammateus*, secretary, scribe,” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Logos Systems) calls attention to the variety of terms that are sometimes used interchangeably for scribe in the New Testament:

Of the 62 occurrences [of γραμματεὺς] in the NT, 57 are in the Synoptic Gospels, 4 in Acts, and 1 in the Epistles. With the exception of Matt 13:52 (and possibly 23:34), where Christian scribes are in view, and Acts 19:35, where γραμματεὺς is used in the sense of *secretary* (= higher [Gentile] official), as well as 1 Cor 1:20, where Isa 33:18 LXX is cited, all other texts refer to Jewish *scribes* (= teachers of the law). Thus νομικός can stand in place of γραμματεὺς 9 times (of which 7 are in the Synoptic Gospels and 2, in a more general sense, in Titus 3:9, 13) and νομοδιδάσκαλος can appear 3 times (of which 2 are in the Lukan literature and a more general usage in 1 Tim 1:7).

Thus Matthew is using *nomikos* for Mark’s *grammateus*, but with the same meaning. Prof. Bambauch also calls attention to a number of incidences where scribal Pharisees debated with Jesus:

“The individual scribal teachers who debated with Jesus (cf. Mark 2:6, 16; 3:22; 9:11; 12:28, 32, 35) appear as representatives of Pharisaic-rabbinic Juda-

ism opposing Christ (cf. 3:22 with Matt 12:24; Mark 12:28 with Matt 22:34f.; Mark 12:35 with Matt 22:41).”

Thus what we see here in Mark is not atypical. These people had consistently opposed Jesus throughout his public ministry.

That the [Pharisees](#) vigorously opposed Jesus is not surprising. This religious tradition with many variations in the numerous Pharisaical associations of Jesus’ day focused upon interpreting the Law of Moses, especially the non-sacramental part, in strict terms for religious and ethical behavior. Through a complicated system of interpretation they sought to apply every legal regulation to daily living. To do this persuasively and successfully required years of intensive training with a recognized rabbi. Jesus possessed no such training and no sympathy for the approach of the Pharisees, as Matthew recounts in Jesus’ blistering condemnation of them in [Mt. 23](#) with his often repeated “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!....”

The question raised by this Pharisaical scribe in Mk. 12 arises out of a testing of Jesus’ ability to interpret the law accurately. Convinced that he was facing a person with no interpretative skill, the scribe was confident that he could easily embarrass Jesus in the eyes of the public as they listened to this exchange. Add to this the traditional disdain of the Pharisees toward the Sadducees. That Jesus had just put down the Sadducees in their attempt ([12:18-27](#)), this provided the scribe a chance to “score points” for the Pharisees by succeeding where the Sadducees had failed. This is the most natural view of the motivation behind the scribe’s question. Some commentators try to distance the scribe from the preceding hostile questioners on the basis of his agreement with Jesus’ answer to his question. But Matthew certainly doesn’t see the scribe with sincere motives in contrast to the preceding questioners. His “to test him” (πειράζων αὐτόν,) in 22:35b makes it clear how Matthew viewed the scribe’s intentions. I seriously doubt that Mark did either. This is especially the case with Mark’s biting condemnation of scribes in [12:38-40](#) right after our passage: “38 As he taught, he said, ‘Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, 39 and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! 40 They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.’”

The question put to Jesus by the scribe was simple: “Which commandment is the first of all?” (Ποία

ἐστὶν ἐντολὴ πρώτη πάντων;). Matthew (22:36) is a little more specific with his “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” (Διδάσκαλε, ποία ἐντολὴ μεγάλη ἐν τῷ νόμῳ;).

This was a fairly common question among Jewish scribes of that time as Lamar Williamson Jr. (“The Gospel of Mark,” *Interpretation Commentaries*, iPreach) notes:

In the present passage, the scribe puts a kind of question which was often used in Jewish circles as a means of capturing the essential thrust and flavor of a rabbi’s mind and teaching. Hillel the Elder (ca. 40 B.C.-A.D. 10), when challenged by a Gentile to “teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot,” replied, “What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof; go and learn it” (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath 31a). Similarly, Jesus, asked which is the most important of all the commandments, answers by combining Deut. 6:4-5 and Lev. 19:18.

The nature of the question is helpfully summarized by Timothy Geddart (“Mark,” *Believers Church Bible Commentary*, iPreach):

Which commandment is the first of all? (12:28b). The question is not about chronology (which was given first?) and not strictly about priority (which is more important than the others?). It has more to do with centrality. Which commandment is at the heart of the law? Which commandment makes the keeping of all the others both possible and meaningful? Which commandment determines the proper application of all the others?

Jesus’ answer was first drawn from the Jewish *Shema* in [Deut. 6:4-5](#): “4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” This was an accepted answer among Jews, as well as being Jesus’ personal summation. As the *Shema* in Judaism even to this day, these verses serve as a synagogue sabbath service call to worship that declares the exclusive existence of God alone and the call to devote one’s life to the service of that God. Faithful Jews since the second century BCE have also begun and ended each day with the recitation of these verses as a prayer. Through reciting this, one declares the monotheistic existence of God, and pledges commitment to God.

The ripple effect of Jesus’ answer will be seen in the early Christian adoption of Jewish monotheism. But the emerging view of a trinitarian God -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; three in one -- will set up tension and challenge to prevent a trinitarian view from degenerating into polytheism -- something that Chris-

tians have sometimes been accused of doing. The tension here will be what sets Christians apart from both Jews and Muslims who maintain a strict monotheistic view.

The first obligation of all humanity in Jesus’ reply then is to love God with every ounce of our being. No watering down of that devotion is permitted, as Jesus declared in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:24): “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” God must stand as God in order to be God in our lives. This is just as true today, as it was when Jesus first spoke these words in AD 30.

His second answer is taken from [Lev. 19:18](#): “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”

The use of the second part of the Leviticus passage highlights the main thrust. Early Christianity will adopt Jesus’ position and use the same passage repeatedly, as is reflected in Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; Jas. 2:8. Although not always emphasized so prominently as here in ancient Jewish tradition, loving one’s neighbor nonetheless stood as an important part of Jewish teaching. Out of it came the almsgiving tradition. Luke focuses in on one particular aspect of this Jewish interpretation with his somewhat similar depiction of Jesus encounter with a lawyer earlier in Jesus ministry ([10:25-28](#)). After hearing a similar response from Jesus, the Jewish lawyer reflected a common interpretation about the meaning of “neighbor” (10:29): “But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” This prompted Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan as a definition of neighbor. The limited definition of “neighbor” as a fellow Jew is rejected in favor of neighbor as someone in need and with no ethnic or religious boundaries attached.

Jesus then linked these two commandments together with his declaration: “There is no other commandment greater than these.” Again, this was not a new idea. The entire structure of the Legal Code in the Old Testament is built off such a link. It is seen in the structure of the Ten Commandments with the first four (e.g., [Ex. 20:1-11](#)) having to do with loving God and the last six (e.g., [Ex. 20:12-17](#)) as focused on loving one’s neighbor (the so-called vertical/horizontal structure).

Jesus followed Jewish interpretative tradition here, as well as grounded Christian religious orientation in this Jewish tradition. But with different impli-

cations about the meaning of both love for God and love for neighbor. These extensions of meaning will set Christians apart from Jews and others in the years to come. This, like it did Jesus with the growing determination of the Pharisees to rid themselves of this untrained revolutionary from Nazareth.

One should therefore be very cautious about glossing over real differences when similarities appear on the surface. This has been the failure of Christian ecumenism for several decades. Harmony has been sought merely on the basis of superficial

similarities and the real differences underneath have been ignored. To do so is to eventually gut various Christian traditions of their spiritual vitality and life in order to create a lifeless unified front. Meaningful dialogue is both possible and needed among differing religious traditions. But it must be based upon honest, openly expressed recognition of and respect for the deeper differences of those traditions. Then, joint efforts within the framework of common beliefs can be achieved effectively and without snuffing out the life of each tradition.

b. Layer's agreement with Jesus' observation, vv. 32-34

Greek NT

<12:32> καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ γραμματεὺς, Καλῶς, διδάσκαλε, ἐπ' ἀληθείας εἶπες ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος πλὴν αὐτοῦ· <12:33> καὶ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν αὐτὸν ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς συνέσεως καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος καὶ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν τὸν πλησίον ὡς ἑαυτὸν περισσώτερόν ἐστιν πάντων τῶν ὀλοκαυτωμάτων καὶ θυσιῶν. <12:34> καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἰδὼν [αὐτὸν] ὅτι νουνεχῶς ἀπεκρίθη εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Οὐ μακρὰν εἶ ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ. καὶ οὐδεὶς οὐκέτι ἐτόλμα αὐτὸν ἐπερωτῆσαι.

NASB

32 The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that *HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM*; 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 HIMSELF*, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

NRSV

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'; 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." 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.

NLT

32 The teacher of religious law replied, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other. 33 And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbors as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law." 34 Realizing this man's understanding, Jesus said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Notes:

In this second dialogue, the scribe concurs with Jesus' assessment and Jesus then responds to his agreement. This interchange is left out of Matthew's account. This highlights emphasis upon Jesus answer to the scribe in Matthew.

The scribe's response not only repeats the essence of Jesus previous answer but adds "this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." What is reflected here is the eight century, and subsequent, prophetic assessment of the role of personal commitment and the sacrificial system. Timothy Geddert (BCBC) sums it up well:

Mark's scribe agrees with Jeremiah's perspective, and

of course Jesus does as well. In his teaching in Galilee, Jesus has focused on what goes on in the heart and what comes out of it, not on what sticks to the hands or goes into the mouth (7:2, 15, 18-23). Now in Jerusalem, his focus is on the center of the law, on love for God, on love for neighbor, not on all the business of ceremonial religion, animals, coins, doves (11:15-17), burnt offerings, and sacrifices (12:33)—all leaves, no fruit (11:13).

But one must not interpret this to imply that the temple and the sacrificial system had no value in Jesus' view. The book of Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus' sacrifice of himself grew out of the legitimacy of the temple sacrificial system. The point is

that Jesus' death as a sacrifice became a replacement for the temple system and stood as its culmination.

One of the enduring interpretive issues of both the scribe's statement and Jesus' agreement with it is what is the role of corporate public worship in relationship to personal daily devotion? With [George Barna's frequent polling](#) of the American Christian communities and discovering a growing trend among Christians in the US to distance themselves from organized Christianity while contending that they are genuinely committed Christians, this issue is becoming more crucial as time passes.

Does this passage lend credence to the view that one doesn't need to attend church to be a good Christian? Note the results of [Barna's recent survey](#):

Relying upon national research conducted over the past several years, Barna profiles a group of more than 20 million adults throughout the nation labeled "revolutionaries." He noted that although measures of traditional church participation in activities such as worship attendance, Sunday school, prayer, and Bible reading have remained relatively unchanged during the past twenty years, the Revolutionary faith movement is growing rapidly.

"These are people who are less interested in attending church than in being the church," he explained. "We found that there is a significant distinction in the minds of many people between the local church – with a small 'c' – and the universal Church – with a capital 'C'. Revolutionaries tend to be more focused on being the Church, capital C, whether they participate in a congregational church or not."

To be sure, corporate Christianity in organized church life often reflects a weak and questionable Christianity. I suspect many are using the old adage, "There's hypocrites in the church," as an excuse for not attending church and getting involved in its ministries. A few are smart enough about the Bible to perhaps use passages like this one to justify their non-involvement.

But does this passage legitimize such a stance? The answer is a resounding "No." To pit mercy against sacrifice is to miss the point not only here but all the way back to the eighth century prophets like Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah who first made these statements. The problem then and now is when sacrifice (public worship) loses its ability to challenge and transform, and the individual adheres to such empty worship as a substitute for personal commitment. This is the context for what the scribe declared here in Mark. A balance between both public

worship and personal devotion is critical to a healthy Christianity. When distortion of either takes place, nothing spiritually good will result.

Jesus' response to the scribe was simply: "When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'" (καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἰδὼν [αὐτὸν] ὅτι νουνεχῶς ἀπεκρίθη εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Οὐ μακρὰν εἶ ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ.). Any view that understands this as accepting the scribe's religious condition misses the point completely. Timothy Geddart (BCBC) summarizes it well:

Why is the scribe declared not far from the kingdom? How far is not far? Two points are worth considering. First, nowhere in Mark is anyone ever said to fully enter the kingdom. That experience awaits the kingdom's full consummation. Second, Mark may well be saying that one is positioned near God's kingdom when priorities are correctly set. However, life within God's kingdom depends not just on setting right priorities, but on living them out. Jesus is not critiquing this scribe for being not far away (= "still outside"). Instead, Jesus is implicitly inviting him (and all others, then and now) to accept and practice the priorities Jesus teaches, thus participating in God's reign.

We must never forget those haunting words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (7:21-23): 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' 23 Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.'"

The final statement in the Markan text is found in verse 34b: "After that no one dared to ask him any question" (καὶ οὐδεὶς οὐκέτι ἐτόλμα αὐτὸν ἐπερωτῆσαι.). Mark inserted this comment, which is left out of Matthew's account. For Mark, the point was to stress that no one that day wanted to challenge Jesus in an attempt to embarrass him. All those who had so tried had ended up being embarrassed themselves.

The lingering impact of this statement for us is to remind us of the powerful and persuasive ability of Christ to interpret correctly God's will, especially as it is revealed in sacred scripture. When Jesus sets forth a stance, we can count on it being correct and well founded. Our life and hope for eternity can be built on what Jesus has said.

May we then take his words seriously!

Greek NT

〈12:28〉 Καὶ προσελθὼν εἷζτων γραμματέων ἀκούσας αὐτῶν συζητούντων, ἰδὼν ὅτι καλῶς ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτόν, Ποία ἐστὶν ἐντολὴ πρώτη πάντων; 〈12:29〉 ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι Πρώτη ἐστίν, "Ἀκουε, Ἰσραήλ, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστίν, 〈12:30〉 καὶ ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου. 〈12:31〉 δευτέρα αὕτη, Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν. μείζων τούτων ἄλλη ἐντολὴ οὐκ ἔστιν. 〈12:32〉 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ γραμματεὺς, Καλῶς, διδάσκαλε, ἐπ' ἀληθείας εἶπες ὅτι εἷς ἐστίν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος πλὴν αὐτοῦ. 〈12:33〉 καὶ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν αὐτόν ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς συνέσεως καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος καὶ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν τὸν πλησίον ὡς ἑαυτὸν περισσώτερόν ἐστιν πάντων τῶν ὀλοκαυτωμάτων καὶ θυσιῶν. 〈12:34〉 καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἰδὼν [αὐτόν] ὅτι νουνεχῶς ἀπεκρίθη εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Οὐ μακρὰν εἶ ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ. καὶ οὐδεὶς οὐκέτι ἐτόλμα αὐτόν ἐπερωτῆσαι.

NASB

28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The foremost is, *'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 30 AND 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.'* 31 "The second is this, *'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'* There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that *HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; 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 HIMSELF*, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

NRSV

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?" 29 Jesus answered, "The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 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.' 31 The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 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'; 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." 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.

NLT

28 One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the discussion. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" 29 Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. 30 And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' 31 The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these." 32 The teacher of religious law replied, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other. 33 And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbors as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law." 34 Realizing this man's understanding, Jesus said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Matt 22:34-40

Greek NT

〈22:34〉 Οἱ δὲ Φαρισαῖοι ἀκούσαντες ὅτι ἐφίμωσεν τοὺς Σαδδουκαίους συνήχθησαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, 〈22:35〉 καὶ ἐπηρώτησεν εἷς ἐξ αὐτῶν [νομικὸς] πειράζων αὐτόν, 〈22:36〉 Διδάσκαλε, ποία ἐντολὴ μεγάλη ἐν τῷ νόμῳ; 〈22:37〉 ὁ δὲ ἔφη αὐτῷ, Ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ καρδίᾳ σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ ψυχῇ σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ διανοίᾳ σου· 〈22:38〉 αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μεγάλη καὶ πρώτη ἐντολή. 〈22:39〉 δευτέρα δὲ ὁμοία αὐτῇ, Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν. 〈22:40〉 ἐν ταύταις ταῖς δυσὶν ἐντολαῖς ὅλος ὁ νόμος κρέμαται καὶ οἱ προφῆται.

NASB

34 But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. 35 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' 40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

NRSV

34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" 37 He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

NLT

34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they thought up a fresh question of their own to ask him. 35 One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: 36 "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?" 37 Jesus replied, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Greek NT

10:25 Καὶ ἰδοὺ νομικός τις ἀνέστη ἐκπειράζων αὐτὸν λέγων, Διδάσκαλε τί ποιήσας ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω; 10:26 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν, Ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τί γέγραπται; πῶς ἀναγινώσκεις; 10:27 ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν, Ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης [τῆς] καρδίας σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ ψυχῇ σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ ἰσχύϊ σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ διανοίᾳ σου, καὶ τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν. 10:28 εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ, Ὁρθῶς ἀπεκρίθης· τοῦτο ποίει καὶ ζήσῃ.

10:29 ὁ δὲ θέλων δικαιῶσαι ἑαυτὸν εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν, Καὶ τίς ἐστίν μου πλησίον; 10:30 ὑπολαβὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Ἀνθρωπὸς τις κατέβαινεν ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ εἰς Ἱεριχὼ καὶ λησταῖς περιέπεσεν, οἱ καὶ ἐκδύσαντες αὐτὸν καὶ πληγὰς ἐπιθέντες ἀπῆλθον ἀφέντες ἡμιθανῆ. 10:31 κατὰ συγκυρίαν δὲ ἱερεὺς τις κατέβαινεν ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἐκείνῃ καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὸν ἀντιπαρῆλθεν· 10:32 ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Λευίτης [γενόμενος] κατὰ τὸν τόπον ἐλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν ἀντιπαρῆλθεν. 10:33 Σαμαρίτης δὲ τις ὁδεύων ἦλθεν κατ' αὐτὸν καὶ ἰδὼν ἐσπλαγχνίσθη 10:34 καὶ προσελθὼν κατέδησεν τὰ τραύματα αὐτοῦ ἐπιχέων ἔλαιον καὶ οἶνον, ἐπιβιάσας δὲ αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὸ ἴδιον κτῆνος ἤγαγεν αὐτὸν εἰς πανδοχεῖον καὶ ἐπεμελήθη αὐτοῦ. 10:35 καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν αὔριον ἐκβαλὼν ἔδωκεν δύο δηνάρια τῷ πανδοχεῖ καὶ εἶπεν, Ἐπιμελήθητι αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὅ τι ἂν προσδαπανήσης ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ ἑπ'ανέρχεσθαί με ἀποδώσω σοι. 10:36 τίς τούτων τῶν τριῶν πλησίον δοκεῖ σοι γεγονέναι τοῦ ἐμπεσόντος εἰς τοὺς ληστές; 10:37 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν, Ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔλεος μετ' αὐτοῦ. εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Πορεύου καὶ σὺ ποίει ὁμοίως.

NASB

25 And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" 27 And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOUR-SELF." 28 And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE."

29 But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. 31 "And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 "Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, 34 and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 "On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' 36 "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" 37 And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

NRSV

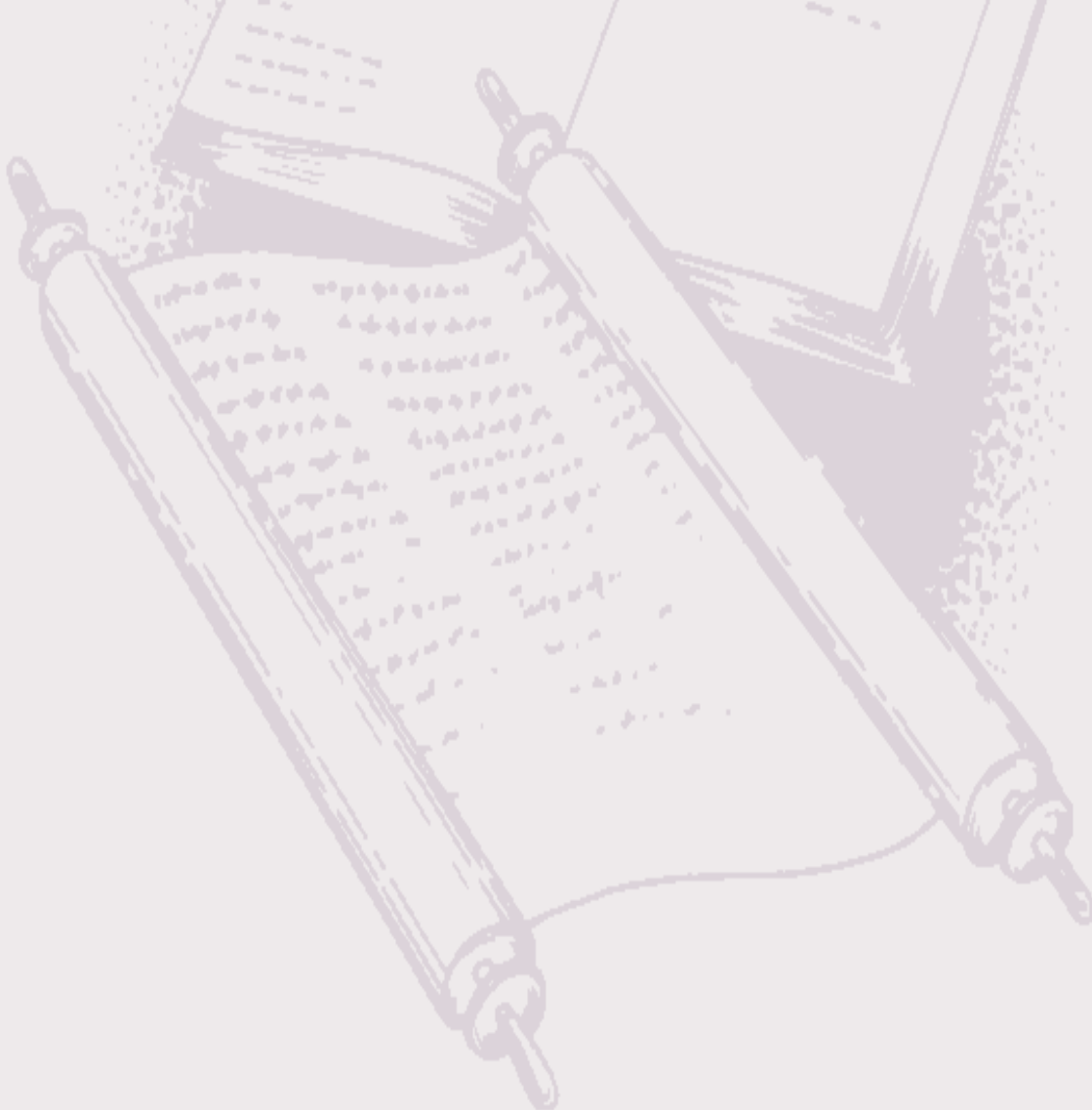
25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 27 He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

NLT

25 One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?" 26 Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" 27 The man answered, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" 28 "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!"

29 The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied with an illustration: "A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes and money, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. 31 "By chance a Jewish priest came along; but when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. 32 A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. 33 "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt deep pity. 34 Kneeling beside him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with medicine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two pieces of silver and told him to take care of the man. 'If his bill runs higher than that,' he said, 'I'll pay the difference the next time I am here.' 36 "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. 37 The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."



Greek NT Diagram

12:28

Καὶ

προσελθὼν
ἀκούσας αὐτῶν
συζητούντων,
ιδὼν

ὅτι καλῶς ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς

1 εἰς τῶν γραμματέων...ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτόν,

Ποία ἐστὶν ἐντολὴ πρώτη πάντων;

2 12:29 ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς

α ὅτι **Πρώτη ἐστίν,**

Ἄκουε,

Ἰσραήλ,

κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστίν,
καὶ

12:30

ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου

ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου

καὶ

ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου

καὶ

ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου

καὶ

ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου.

β 12:31

δευτέρα αὕτη,

Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου

ὡς σεαυτόν.

μείζων τούτων

γ

12:32

καὶ

ἄλλη ἐντολὴ οὐκ ἔστιν.

3 εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ γραμματεὺς,

/-----|

δ

Καλῶς,

διδάσκαλε,

ἐπ' ἀληθείας

ε

εἶπες

ὅτι εἷς ἐστίν

καὶ

οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος πλην αὐτοῦ·

καὶ

τὸ ἀγαπᾶν αὐτόν...

ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας

καὶ

ἐξ ὅλης τῆς συνέσεως

καὶ

ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος

καὶ

τὸ ἀγαπᾶν τὸν πλησίον...

ὡς ἑαυτόν

12:33

...περισσότερόν ἐστιν

πάντων τῶν ὀλοκαυτωμάτων

καὶ

ιδὼν [αὐτὸν]

ὅτι νουνεχῶς ἀπεκρίθη

4 ὁ Ἰησοῦς...εἶπεν αὐτῷ,

Οὐ μακρὰν εἶ ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ.

καὶ

5 οὐδεὶς οὐκέτι ἐτόλμα αὐτὸν ἐπερωτῆσαι.

Semantic Diagram

Καὶ

-----	1	1	Aor	Act	Ind	3	S	εἰς τῶν γραμματέων
-----	2	1	Aor	Dep	Ind	3	S	ὁ Ἰησοῦς
-----	3	2	Aor	Act	Ind	3	S	ὁ γραμματεὺς,
-----	4	2	Aor	Act	Ind	3	S	ὁ Ἰησοῦς
-----	5		Imperf	Act	Ind	3	S	οὐδεὶς

Expositional Outline

- I. (1-4) A lawyer's question led to Jesus affirming the lawyer
 - A. (1-2) The lawyer's question was answered by Jesus
 - 1. (1) The lawyer asked about the greatest commandment
 - 2. (2) Jesus affirmed the two most important commandments dealing with love
 - B. (3-4) The lawyer's agreement prompted Jesus to affirm the lawyer
 - 1. (3) The lawyer agreed with Jesus' answer
 - 2. (4) Jesus affirmed the lawyer
- II. (5) The impact of the conversation left everyone afraid to confront Jesus.