

Introduction

Last week we looked at the first two traps that the religious leaders used on Jesus. The first trap was set by the Pharisees and Herodians. They asked Jesus whether it was okay to pay the poll tax or not. If He had answered yes, they were hoping that He would lose popularity and respect by the Jews, who did not like paying this tax to the Roman government. If Jesus answered no, the Herodians were there to report Him to Herod, who could arrest Him for insurrection and rebellion. In either case, the religious leaders thought they had Jesus trapped. Unfortunately for them, Jesus knew their hypocrisy and their motives. He also knew the way of escape from this trap. He asked them to bring Him a denarius, and then asked whose inscription was on it. They replied that it was Caesar, so Jesus told them to render to Caesar that which is Caesar's and render to God that which is God's. They were amazed that He had successfully avoided their trap. Jesus was the ultimate Kingdom Ninja Warrior.

The second trap was set by the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection. They brought a hypothetical situation where a married man died without any children. His brother took his wife as per Deuteronomy 25:5, but he too died and did not leave any children. There were seven brothers and they all married this woman, and all of them died without leaving any children. The Sadducees asked Jesus whose wife she would be in the resurrection. Again, Jesus was not taken by surprise by their question or their intent. He told them that they were greatly mistaken, which is a hard pill to swallow for a proud heart. Jesus explained to them that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was not the God of the dead, but of the living. He also told them that when people rise from the dead they are like angels and are not given in marriage. Once again, Jesus had successfully navigated their test. Jesus had one final obstacle to tackle in our text, and that was the question presented by a scribe.

The scribe asked Jesus what was the foremost commandment. Jesus quoted the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which says that the Lord God is one God, and that we are to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Then, Jesus gave them the second greatest commandment, which was based on Leviticus 19:18. He said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." The scribe complimented Jesus on His answer, and replied that these commandments were more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. Jesus replied to the scribe, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After Jesus had finished this final trap, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions. Jesus was the ultimate Kingdom Ninja and had successfully beat all the obstacles.

Then, Jesus asked a question about how the Messiah was the son of David, when David called Him, Lord. The crowd was enjoying listening to Jesus, but the religious leaders were being challenged by the questions that He was giving them. Then, Jesus warned the people to beware of the hypocrisy of the scribes, who gave the appearance of being righteous. Jesus ended by saying the scribes will receive greater condemnation.

In our text today, we will look at: 3) the trap of the Scribes, and 4) Jesus' question and warning to the scribes. Then, we will look at some applications for our lives.

Trappings and Testings – Part 2 (Mark 12:28-40)

3. The Trap of the Scribe (Mark 12:28-34) (Part 2)
4. Jesus' Questions and Warning (Mark 12:35-40) (Part 2)

(Mark 12:28-34) “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.”

(Mark 12:35-40) “And Jesus *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, "How *is it that* the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? {36} "David himself said in the Holy Spirit, 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.'" {37} "David himself calls Him 'Lord'; so in what sense is He his son?" And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him. {38} In His teaching He was saying: "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and *like* respectful greetings in the market places, {39} and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, {40} who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation.”

3. The Trap of the Scribe (Mark 12:28-40)

One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that Jesus had answered the Pharisees and Herodians, and the Sadducees well, he asked Jesus a question. It appears that all of this was one continuous sequence of events. However, in Matthew’s account we find out that after Jesus had answered the first two questions, they gathered themselves together. This is the Sanhedrin Council that was made up of seventy Pharisees and Sadducees. This was like halftime at a football game. They went into the locker room and decided what game plan they were going to come out with for the second half. Only in this case, there was only going to be one more question asked of Jesus.

(Mark 12:28) “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?”

(Matt 22:34) “But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together.”

a. The Question

One of the scribes either stepped forward or was appointed by them to ask Jesus the next question. Mark records that he recognized that Jesus had answered the previous questions well, and at the end of their dialogue, Jesus said, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” This scribe might have been secretly searching and considering Jesus as the Messiah, and wanted to ask Jesus this question for himself.

(Mark 12:28) “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?"”

The scribe asked Jesus what commandment is the foremost of all? I think it is a very important and relevant question to ask. When I played professional golf, I focused on the most important aspects of the game. David Pelz, a NASA research scientist who turned his analytical skills into a study of gold, stated that forty-three percent of a golfer’s ability to score was putting. Twenty-five percent of a golfer’s ability to score was his driving. A golfer’s wedge play accounted for another eleven percent. So, nearly eighty percent of a person’s ability to score well was in these three clubs. If a person spent a lot of time practicing long irons, which only account for two percent of a person’s ability to score, he would be wasting his time. It is better to concentrate on the most important things that will be most profitable.

In the business world, it is easy to spend time on things that do not bring in additional income. Good businessmen focus on the most important parts of the business. We call these strategic priorities.

Jesus had spoken of the most important things to focus on. He told the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:23 that they tithed mint and dill and cumin, but had neglected the weightier provisions of the law, like justice and mercy and faithfulness.

(Matt 23:23) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.”

The Apostle Paul had also prioritized some things. In 1 Corinthians 13, he taught about the importance of love. He said that it was more important than the gifts. He ended by saying that faith, hope, and love exist, but the greatest of these is love.

(1 Cor 13:13) “But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

The apostles were faced with a problem in Acts 6. The Greek widows were being overlooked in the serving of food. Rather than do this work themselves, they appointed seven men to do this so that they could spend their time in prayer and the ministry of the word. Those were priorities for them. Our time with the Father in prayer and in the word should be a priority for us. This scribe asked Jesus what was the foremost or most important commandment. I think it was a great question.

(Acts 6:4) “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

b. The Goal

Why did the Sanhedrin Council want the scribe to ask this particular question? This was another trap, so what was the purpose of this trap? For both the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Shema in Deuteronomy 6 was the most important law given. If Jesus did not give this particular answer, He could be discredited by all the Jews. Furthermore, these religious leaders felt that they could then turn Him over to the civil authorities as a new sect leader and threat to Caesar. Their goal was to destroy Jesus. We saw in Mark 11:18 that this was their clear intention.

(Mark 11:18) “The chief priests and the scribes heard *this*, and *began* seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.”

c. Jesus’ Answer

Jesus answered, the “protos” (Strong’s G4413) is... Protos is the Greek word for first or chief. The root word is “pro,” (Strong’s G4253) which means before. The chief commandment, the foremost commandment, the greatest commandment, the commandment that comes before all other commandments is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

(Mark 12:29-30) “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.’”

Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which says, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” There is a slight difference in what Jesus said and the verse in Deuteronomy. Jesus said that we will love the Lord with our heart, soul, mind, and strength. In Deuteronomy, we are told to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and might. The word mind is not given in Deuteronomy. There are those that believe in a dichotomy, meaning that we have a body and a soul or spirit, and that the soul and spirit are used interchangeably. There are those that believe in a trichotomy, meaning that we have a body, soul, and spirit. There are scriptures that would back up both views. I happen to believe in a body, soul, and spirit. I believe that our soul is comprised of our mind, emotion, and will. I believe that our spirit is our ability to connect with God. I believe that when Adam and Eve sinned, they were dead spiritually. They still had a mind and emotion and will, so I don’t think their soul and spirit were the same. This view is strongly supported by Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians, where he prayed, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(Deut 6:4-5) “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! {5} You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

(1 Thess 5:23) “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This doctrine is not an essential doctrine. It is not something to argue about, but a healthy discussion is okay. I have friends in ministry on both sides of this. I do want to make a very important point about this passage. No matter what you believe about a dichotomy or trichotomy, everyone agrees that the main point is that we must love God with our whole being, with everything within us. We must love God with our minds. We must use our minds in our love and worship of God. We must worship with our heart and emotions. We are to love and worship God with our bodies. We bow down in reverence. We lift our hands in praise to Him. We lift our voices in praise and worship. We love and worship God with our entire being. That is the first and foremost commandment.

In 1995, I was praying about my wife's upcoming birthday. I wanted to know if the Lord had a word of encouragement for her. The Lord gave me a word for me instead. He told me that this was the last page of this chapter of my life. I knew what that meant. I had just won the Tallahassee Open that year and we thought we would be playing golf for many more years, and would probably play on the Senior Tour one day. I clearly understood that 1996 would be my last year playing golf. God had something else for me to do. So, I began to ask God to show me what He had in mind, and He did exactly that. He told me to plant a church, and He gave me the vision for the church. The vision for the church was that we were to be a people that loved God with all of our heart and a church that loved our neighbor as ourselves. It was to be a relational church. I made it pretty simple and called it the ABC's of the church. We were to love our Abba (A) Father, our Brothers (B) and sisters, and we were to reach out in love to those that did not know God, the Great Commission (C). In every church that I have planted, I have kept that vision. I believe that there is not a single thing that is more important than loving God with all of our heart. I try and encourage people to spend time with the Father. I encourage people to read their Bibles. I encourage people to pray. I encourage people to worship. I encourage people to obey God. I encourage people to honor God with their tithes and offerings. I encourage people to love God with all of their heart. If at the end of my ministry I have helped people love God more, then I will have carried out the Father's instructions to me.

The vision of the Connection Church of Albuquerque is to connect people with God and with one another. How do we connect with God and with one another? We connect through a loving relationship with one another, a love relationship with God, and a love relationship with one another. My goal in worship is to help people connect with God. My goal in teaching is out of 1 Timothy 1:5. Paul wrote, "The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith." I did a seven-part series on that verse one year, but the goal of my teaching for the past sixteen years has been love. I want people to love God and love one another more. I also want to help people with relational skills so that they can love one another and have better connections. That is what we are about at the Connection Church.

Some churches have mission statements about making disciples, which is good, but that is not the greatest commandment. Some have purpose statements. Some have catchy phrases that sound good. Vision is who you are and mission is what you are going to do. In Revelations 2:4, God told the church at Ephesus that they had left their first love. They were doing good things, but they had left the first commandment. The things that we do should flow out of our love for God. God told them to do the deeds they did at first, the things that demonstrated their love for Him. I believe the vision of a church is critical. We must be a church that loves God with all our heart and loves others as ourselves. That is why we are the Connection Church – connecting people with God and one another.

Jesus went on to say, "The second is this, "'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." He was quoting the last part of Leviticus 19:18, where the Lord said, "but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord."

(Mark 12:31) "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

(Lev 19:18) "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD."

In Matthew's parallel account, he recorded that Jesus said, "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." The Ten Commandments can be broken down into commandments about our relationship with God, and our relationship with other people. If we love God and we love people, we will have no problem keeping the Ten Commandments.

(Matt 22:40) "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

When the scribe heard Jesus' answer, he replied, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that He is one, and there is no one else besides Him; 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." He acknowledged that Jesus had answered the question correctly, and He affirmed what Jesus taught.

(Mark 12:32-33) "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."

It is difficult for proud people to acknowledge that other people are right. This scribe displayed some humility and Jesus responded accordingly. Jesus said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." Jesus saw that the scribe understood the greatest commandments and had answered intelligently, and He also saw the humility and respect that this scribe showed.

(Mark 12:32-34) "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."

In Mark 10 Jesus had taught His disciples that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these, referring to children. He said if anyone does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all. This scribe was displaying the humility and teachability of a child, and Jesus said that he was not far from the kingdom of God.

(Mark 10:14-15) "But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. {15} Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*."

This was the third and final test and trap that the religious leaders had set for Jesus. He had navigated all three of them correctly. "After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions." They had meant to trap Him, cause Him to stumble, to lose favor with the people, and incriminate Himself. Instead, Jesus had turned the tables on them. Their traps did not catch Him. Instead, they were the ones that looked ignorant, foolish, and trapped by their own misunderstanding of the Scriptures. Instead of losing favor with the people, the crowds were

amazed and had enjoyed listening to Him. Therefore, they did not venture to ask Him any more questions.

4. Jesus' Questions and Warning (Mark 12:35-40)

a. Jesus' Questions

It was now Jesus' turn to ask some questions. The first question that He asked was, "How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David?" Then, He added some further information about the question. He quoted David who said in the Holy Spirit, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies beneath your feet.'" Then, He continued, "David himself calls Him 'Lord'; so in what sense is He his son?" Jesus was making the point that the Messiah would come through the lineage of David, but the Messiah was Lord.

(Mark 12:35-37) "And Jesus *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, "How *is it that* the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? {36} "David himself said in the Holy Spirit, 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.'" {37} "David himself calls Him 'Lord'; so in what sense is He his son?" And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him."

David called the Messiah, Lord. Since Jesus was a descendant of David, and He was being called Lord, were the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and other people going to accept the testimony of John, that Jesus is the Messiah, and that He is Lord. Throughout Jesus's ministry He has been demonstrating that He is Lord. He has the authority to forgive sins. He has the authority to heal. He has the authority to cast out demons. He has the authority to raise people from the dead. He is the Lord of the Sabbath. He even has the authority to cleanse the temple. Are they going to acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah and that He is Lord?

b. Jesus' Warning

Then, Jesus gave a warning about the scribes. He said, "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, who devour widow's houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers." Jesus is speaking of the pride and hypocrisy of the scribes.

(Mark 12:38-40) "In His teaching He was saying: "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and *like* respectful greetings in the market places, {39} and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, {40} who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation."

The pride was evident by their dress, their respectful greetings, their chief seats, and places of honor. This was not what Jesus taught His disciples. He taught them to humble themselves and take the last seat. He taught them to be servants. He taught them to avoid titles, and trying to honor themselves. At the last church that I pastored, Karen and I parked in the parking space that was furthest from our building. We wanted to give the best parking places to visitors, elderly, and our members. Inside the building, the swamp cooler put out lots of air on certain spots, and no one wanted to sit in those spots. People also did not want to sit in the front row. So, we sat either in the spot where the air blew, or in the front row. We tried to leave the best seats for others.

Jesus also spoke of their hypocrisy. Instead of taking care of widows, they were taking advantage of them. Instead of praying with humility and contriteness, their prayers were only to make themselves look righteous. They were righteous on the outside, but inwardly they were full of evil. In Matthew's account (Matthew 23) we read of eight woes that Jesus issued to the scribes and religious leaders.

Jesus finished by saying that these scribes would receive greater condemnation. This is a reference to the judgment. All of us will one day stand before God and give account. The judgment will be greater and more severe for these religious leaders.

Conclusion and Applications

Jesus ended by speaking about a greater condemnation for these religious leaders. The scriptures are very clear that when we die physically, our souls continue to exist. There will be a day that everyone will stand and give account to God. These religious leaders are going to receive a greater condemnation.

Jesus also asked the question about why David called the Son of David, Lord. He was giving the religious leaders a choice. Were they going to accept Jesus as the Messiah or were they going to reject Him.

Jesus was asked the question about the foremost commandment. He responded that it is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Loving God begins with believing that Jesus died for our sins and was raised from the dead, and confessing Him as Lord. When we enter into that relationship with God, God forgives us of our sins, and we do not come into judgment. Jesus said in John 5:24, "he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." This morning, if you would like to receive Christ into your life, I encourage you to pray with me. "Jesus, I do believe that You are the Messiah, and that you died for our sins and were raised from the dead. Please come into my life and forgive me of my sins. I give You my life and confess You as my Lord. I pray this in Jesus' name.

(John 5:24) "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

Jesus also said the greatest command is to love God. The great news is that in 1 John 4 we are told that everyone that loves is born of God and knows God. Those that do not love do not know God. When we confess Jesus as Lord, and He comes into our lives, He puts a supernatural agape love in us. He gives us the ability to love Him and love others with this perfect love. It is not automatic; but it is possible. We have a responsibility in loving God and loving people. We must spend time with the Lord. We must spend time reading His word and praying. We must spend time worshipping Him. We also must spend time with the body of Christ, His church. If you do not have a church home and would like to connect with us, we would welcome you into this church family.

(1 John 4:7-8) "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. {8} The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

Closing prayer

Introduction (Deut 6:4-5, Lev 19:18, Mark 12:28-40)

3. The Trap of the Scribe (Mark 12:28-40, Matt 22:34)

a. Their Question (Mark 12:28, Matt 23:23, 1 Cor 13:13, Acts 6:4)

b. Their Goal (Mark 11:18)

c. Jesus' Answer (Mark 12:29-34, Deut 6:4-5, 1 Thess 5:23, Lev 19:18, Matt 22:40, Mark 10:14-15, Rev 2:4)

4. Jesus' Question and Warning (Mark 12:35-40)

a. Jesus' Questions (Mark 12:35-37)

b. Jesus' Warning (Mark 12:38-40)

Conclusion and Applications (John 5:24, 1 John 4:7-8)