

JESUS IS THE LORD OF DAVID

Mark 12:28-44

Key Verse: 12:37a

“David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?”

Thus far in Mark 11-13, Jesus has revealed himself as Lord in many ways. Especially while teaching in the temple courts, he answered his opponents, group by group, with the Messiah’s divine wisdom. In this passage Jesus particularly addresses the teachers of the law. Jesus taught that the most important commandment is to love the Lord. Then he concluded that the Messiah is the Lord of David by quoting Psalm 110:1. Jesus seems to relate the teaching about the Messiah’s Lordship to the greatest commandment. How are they related? Simply speaking, as the Lord, Jesus is the object of our love. Jesus wants us to love him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. Usually we emphasize how much Jesus loves us. We quote John 3:16 again and again. But we rarely quote Mark 12:30. We talk about Jesus’ unconditional love in many ways, but less about how we should respond. We emphasize Jesus’ one-sided love one-sidedly. It may be comparable to teaching how parents should take care of their children, but not how children should respond to their parents. This is unbalanced and unhealthy. It is easy for us to take Jesus’ love for granted and to become like spoiled children. But we need to understand that love is relational. Jesus wants us to have a healthy relationship with him. In order to do so, we need to acknowledge Jesus as Lord—the object of our love—and to respond to him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. Let’s learn how we can do so.

First, the most important command (28-34). The most prominent religious leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees, tried to trap Jesus in his words. But Jesus won each debate decisively and completely with the Messiah’s wisdom. When a teacher of the law heard Jesus’ answer, he was amazed. The teachers of the law, known as scribes, were very influential among people of the times. They interpreted the law for common people and taught them how to live it out in everyday life. In addition to the written law, they also emphasized practicing the oral law, that is, the traditions of the elders (Mk 7:1-13). Jesus often came into conflict with the teachers of the law because he and his disciples did not follow their oral traditions. So they strongly opposed Jesus. But the teacher of the law in this passage was different. Recognizing that Jesus had given a good answer, he asked genuinely: **“Of all the**

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commandments, which is the most important?” (28) At that time it was common for religious leaders to debate this question. The teachers of the law had identified 613 separate commands of God to be obeyed. Among them 365 were negative and 248 were positive. They further divided them into “heavy” and “light,” that is, the more important and the less important. They tried to summarize all the laws in brief statements. For this purpose they debated endlessly without making clear what the core of the law was. Jesus, however, answered right away by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18b.

Deuteronomy 6:4 begins with the word “Hear,” which is “Shema” in Hebrew. The word “Shema” carries the idea of listening to something important which must be obeyed. We must hear what God says about himself to know him truly. People have a tendency to invent their own god by taking smatterings of teachings from various religions, mixing them together, and making a god of their own liking. This is idolatry. Our concept of God must be based on what God himself tells us in his word. What does God say? **“The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”** In the original text of Deuteronomy 6:4, **“the LORD”** is in all capital letters. It was translated from the Hebrew “YHWH,” the name God revealed to Moses when he met him at the burning bush. It means “I AM WHO I AM.” God is pure and ultimate Being and the source of all things. God is living and eternal. This God is “one.” The word “one” is “echad” in Hebrew. It means “one,” but with a plural connotation. Literally it means, “together make one.” So it implies the Triune God. Actually, the Triune God is revealed in Genesis 1. “God” is translated from “Elohim” in Hebrew, which means Almighty God. It is singular with a plural connotation. So when God made mankind, he said, **“Let ‘us’ make mankind in ‘our’ image”** (Gen 1:26). Yet God created mankind in “his” own image (Gen 1:27). In Genesis 1:2, the Spirit of God is mentioned. With his word God created the universe. John 1:1 tells us that the Word was with God and the Word was God. This Word is Jesus. From the beginning of the Bible, the Triune God is revealed: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This God is the one true God, there is no other. This one true God is the one we must hear and obey.

In what ways is this God the one true God? First of all, it is because he is the Creator God and Sovereign Ruler of all. King Hezekiah prayed: **“Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and**

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earth” (Isa 37:16). This God is the living God who hears and answers prayer, while false gods do not respond, for they are mere figments of man’s imagination (Isa 40:18-20). Our God is different. Isaiah said: **“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint”** (Isa 40:28-31). Our God is the Creator God who is living and almighty and eternal. Furthermore, God is the Redeemer. God redeemed Israelites from the power of Pharaoh through the blood of the lamb. In the same way, out of his great love, he redeems sinners from the power of sin and Satan through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. God bought us at great price and made us his children. Our God is the God of love, mercy and compassion.

When we hear of the one true God and what he has done, how should we respond? Let’s read verse 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.”** In this verse we find some very important lessons. First, God should be the one we love first and foremost. There are many things to love: spouse, parents, children, one’s nation, career, academics, art, music, sports, food and so on. That is wonderful. But we must be sure to love God first and foremost. God is the source of all of these things. If we love something he created more than God we become idol worshipers. If we love God’s blessing more than God himself, we are ensnared by idolatry. Many relationships have an element of sickness because God is not the first and foremost object of love. If a mere human being takes the place of God in relationship to another, that relationship will not bear good fruit and will end up in disaster. But if we love God first and foremost, we can have a right relationship with God and with others and bear good fruit.

Second, God wants us to love him with our whole being. Deuteronomy 6:5 encapsulates the idea of total devotion to God. God wants us to love him with all our heart. The heart is the center of the total personality, especially with reference to intuition and emotion. If our heart is stolen by something or someone, we cannot love and serve God. If we had

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two hearts, or if our heart could be divided, it would be okay. We could serve God and something else at the same time. But we have only one heart and it cannot be divided. Jesus said, **“No one can serve two masters”** (Mt 6:24a). When we love God with all our hearts, we are full of spirit and joy. The Biblical understanding of soul is simply “life.” So we are to love God with all our lives. The mind refers to intelligence, understanding and reason. Our strength is our energy and stamina. Young people are especially full of strength. If they love God with their strength, they can be a blessing. Otherwise they will be troublemakers. “Heart,” “soul,” “mind” and “strength” do not represent rigid compartments of human beings, but the whole person. So it means to love God with our whole being. The word “all” is repeated four times in this command. God does not want us to love him partially, but with everything. God does not want us to be lukewarm, but passionate. So Paul says, **“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord”** (Ro 12:11).

When we think about Jesus’ command, a question may arise in our hearts, “Why is God so demanding?” “All our heart?” “All our soul?” “All our mind?” “All our strength?” If we love God in this way, what will be left of us? Does God command this to bind us as slaves? Actually, the opposite is true. St. Augustine said, “Love God and do as you please.” When we love God with our whole being, we can be free from all other things. When we love God with our whole being we can find real satisfaction, joy and happiness. Otherwise we will be corrupted and miserable slaves of Satan. That is why Apostle John said, **“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them”** (1Jn 2:15). In a word, God wants to establish an intimate love relationship with us. God loved us fully and completely by sending his one and only Son, who was everything to him. So this is how we should love God. When we love God with our whole being, an intimate love relationship with God is established. For example, when a husband loves his wife wholeheartedly, she wants to reciprocate that love, or vice versa. When love is reciprocated, they grow and become dynamic. But if we just take God’s love for granted, we do not grow; we remain childish and immature. Complaining, bitterness and frustration follow. But when we love God with our whole being, our relationship with God becomes like a vine and branches. We can continue to draw life and love from God and grow and bear good fruit.

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After teaching the most important commandment, Jesus added a second important one: **“Love your neighbor as yourself”** (31a). Our love for God should be unconditional. But loving neighbors has a condition: “as yourself.” As we love ourselves, so we should love our neighbor. Basically we all love ourselves very much. We don’t need a commandment to tell us this. We are naturally concerned about our health, security, honor, well-being, and so on. If we become sick, we don’t hesitate to seek care or take medicine. If someone offends our dignity, we become upset. We want to be respected by others and treated well. So we should respect others and care for them. As the golden rule says: “In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you” (Mt 7:12). The question is, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus answered by teaching us to care for the person in need around us, whoever that may be (Mt 25:40; Lk 10:29-37). The best way to love others is to help rescue their souls by sharing the gospel with them. That is why Jesus said, “Do you love me? Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:15).

When the teacher of the law heard Jesus’ answer, he was really moved and responded, **“Well said, teacher. 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”** (32-33). Through Jesus’ answer, he could understand the core of the law which is to love God and love neighbors. Christian life is not a matter of following rules and regulations. It is primarily loving God and loving others. When Jesus saw that this teacher of the law had answered wisely, he said, **“You are not far from the kingdom of God”** (34). Jesus complimented his understanding. But understanding is just the beginning. Knowing is one thing and doing is another. The question is, “How can we love God and love others?” We can find the answer in the next teaching.

Second, Jesus’ Lordship (35-44). Until this moment, Jesus had answered all the questions of the religious leaders with God’s wisdom. His answers were so profound, and the everlasting truth. So no one dared ask him any more questions. Now Jesus takes the initiative to correct their concept of the Messiah. While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, **“Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David?”** (35) Jesus came into the world as “the son of David,” as God had promised. Jesus accepted this title and the teachers of the law were right in teaching it. But

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their understanding was incomplete. They emphasized only his humanity, ignoring his divinity. But David declared: **“The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet’”** (36). Jesus was quoting Psalm 110:1. This was not a mere human word, but God’s divine revelation spoken by the Holy Spirit. Jesus pointed out that David called the Messiah his “Lord.” So how could he be his son? When Jesus revealed the Messiah’s divinity, the large crowd was delighted (37).

Why is Jesus’ divinity so important? If he was merely a human descendant of David, he would not be able to fulfill God’s salvation work. His suffering and death would be insufficient to solve our sin problem. But the Messiah is more than David’s son; he is David’s Lord. The Messiah is fully human and he is fully God. Paul said, **“...who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord”** (Ro 1:3-4). Paul also said, **“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people...”** (1Ti 2:5-6a). When Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1, he wanted them to know that his death was not the end. Afterward, God would raise him from the dead; he would ascend into heaven and sit at the right hand of God to reign as the Sovereign Ruler until all enemies were put under his feet. Jesus became our Savior and Lord. Jesus saves us from the power of sin, death and the devil, and reigns over us with life and peace and love.

Here we learn how we can love God. When we hear **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength,”** we feel burdened. It is because we want to do it, but we can’t, for our sinful nature rules over us and is hostile to God. The more we try to love God, the more we love ourselves and are enslaved by sinful desires. We become lovers of ourselves, lovers of money, proud and boastful, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2Ti 3:2-4). This was Paul’s agony, as expressed in Romans 7. He had the desire to do what was good, but he could not carry it out. What he did was not the good he wanted to do, but the evil he did not want to do—this he kept on doing. Through this he realized that sin was living in him and he became powerless. So he cried out, **“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”** He realized that only Jesus could deliver him from the power of sin and death (Ro 7:24-25a). Jesus not

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only delivers us from our sins, he became our Lord who reigns over us. This Jesus enables us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. When God's love abides in us, we can love our neighbors as ourselves.

When Jesus said he is the Lord of David, it means he reigns over us as the sovereign Ruler. In verses 38-44 Jesus contrasts teachers of the law, many rich people and a poor widow. This tells us what the Lord values most, and what kind of life we should live in this world. The teachers of the law knew the law very well, but did not practice God's love. They were characterized by pride, self-glory seeking and greed. Jesus said, **“These men will be punished most severely”** (40b). Rich people offered large amounts of money. But it was not before God; it was to show off. Jesus said they gave out of their wealth; they were not really sacrificial. So Jesus did not value their giving much. On the other hand, a poor widow offered two small copper coins, worth a few cents (42). Jesus said, **“...she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on”** (44b). So Jesus valued her offering highly. People look at the outward appearance. But the Lord looks at the heart (1Sa 16:7b). In making her offering, she gave her heart to God. She loved God with all her heart.

Let's accept Jesus as Lord in our hearts and love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength and love our neighbors as ourselves.