

Commentary on Mark chapter 12 verses 26 - 44, by Chuck Smith 3.20.22

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March memory verse John 16:33 (NKJV) These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

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And as touching the dead, that they rise: [and Jesus is affirming the resurrection of the dead here] have ye not read in the book of Moses ([Mar 12:26](#)),

Now the Sadducees, being the materialists, rejected all of the Old Testament except for the five books of Moses. And they said, "There is no place where immortality or resurrection is taught in the Pentateuch. That all came along later with the prophets and all. But there's nothing in the Pentateuch." So Jesus takes them to the Pentateuch.

have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him [Moses], saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? [And Jesus said,] He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living ([Mar 12:26-27](#)):

And with their own book of Moses, He really cut them down.

Now, there was a certain scribe that was there and he was watching this whole transaction, interchange of thoughts and ideas, and he was captivated by Jesus and His answers that He gave.

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he [Jesus] had answered them well [was really coming up with some excellent answers], asked him [an honest question] ([Mar 12:28](#)),

These first two were dishonest questions. A dishonest question is a question that is not looking for an answer; it's looking for an argument. An honest question seeks an answer. I want to know, I ask a question; that's honesty. I have a point I want to prove, I want to get into an argument with you and show you you're wrong, I ask a question; I'm really not wanting your answer. I don't care what you answer. Your answer is wrong, and I'm going to prove it to you. And there are a lot of times that we are questioned by people, and the questions are not sincere; they're not honest questions. And one of the first things...and I can tell quite often by the question itself whether it's an honest or dishonest question. When a person says, "Why don't you baptize people the moment they accept Jesus?" I know that's not an honest question. They really don't want to know why we don't take you right down to the beach tonight and baptize you if you've accepted the Lord here this evening. They don't want to really know that. What they

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want to do is get into a big controversy with you, because they do believe in baptismal regeneration. And should you die before next Saturday, and had your chance to get baptized, according to their theology, you'd be lost. So, emergency baptisms. You know, get them into the tank as quick as possible and dunk 'em. And so they asked that question, and you know it's not an honest question. I really don't like to get into a controversy over scripture. The minute I can discern that a question is not an honest question, I'll quit talking. I mean, I'm not interested in getting in a dispute or an argument. The Bible says, "They that are ignorant, let them be ignorant still." That could apply to me as well as the next fellow.

This fellow has an honest question burning in his heart. It is a question that should concern every man who has become convinced of the existence of God. You say you believe in God. Hey, you can't rest there, you can't stop there. You see, if you believe that God does exist, then suddenly, as you start to develop from that basic concept "God exists," you start going out from there and you've got to handle a lot of things.

I grew up in a very godly Christian home. I believed in Jesus Christ from day one. From the time I was thirteen days old, I was carried to church, slept in the pews, and grew up in the whole environment and atmosphere. Yet, as every teenager I think must do, I came to that place in my own growth and development and maturing where I had to create my own relationship with God and develop my own foundation and my own theology, and my own building, you might say, of faith. And as I was going through that period, being challenged intellectually by my studies, by my philosophy classes and biology classes and all, there was a short period of time when I was questioning everything. And I began to question the existence of God. And I wondered if I really believed that God did exist. "Maybe there is something to atheism, maybe it is all just something that has just been conjured up by man." And I went through a couple of weeks of real misery as I was sort of in this place of floating and almost sinking, as these thoughts were coming, "Maybe God doesn't exist, and maybe it is just all man's concepts and ideas, as he needs to believe in something." And as I was going through this in my mind, I started to sink. And then I thought, "Well, it is easier to believe that God exists than to not believe that He exists." As I looked at the world around me, the universe around me, it is much easier to believe in the existence of God than not to believe in the existence of God. If you don't believe in the existence of God, then there are so many things that you've got to explain. The imponderables: how can you see? How can you hear? How can you walk? How can you feel? How can you remember? How can you have all of these capacities just by random, blind chance? And not to believe in God left too many unanswered questions. So I said, "Well, alright. I believe in God. "You say, "Well, that's not much." Well, if you're sinking, it's an awful lot to let your foot hit on something solid. And I thought, "Well, yes, I believe in God. But wait a minute!" I couldn't stop there. Just in the belief in God, I couldn't stop there.

If God then does exist, and I've come to that belief by the observation of creation around me, myself, as I observe creation I see the design and I see the purposes. I see the delicate balances in nature. I see the oxygen/nitrogen cycles. I see the water/dry land

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proportions, two-thirds to one-third. All of these are by design. They must be because they are all necessary for man's existence. If God has a design and a purpose for all things, then He must have had a design and a purpose for me. And if God has a purpose for me, then what is God's purpose for me? And that's at the point that this man was that came to Jesus. "What is God's purpose for me?"

This is basically what is his question:

Which is the first commandment of all? ([Mar 12:28](#))

Really, what is the most important thing?" "First," being in order; not, "What is the very first commandment God gave?" The first commandment was, "Don't eat the tree in the middle of the garden." But, first in the order, that is the most important commandment of God. What is it?

And Jesus answered him, The first of all commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord ([Mar 12:29](#)):

He goes back to Deuteronomy in what is known as the *shema*, the *hear*. It is that portion that the Jews roll up in these little boxes that they tie on their wrists. The boxes that they put on their foreheads; they all have this shema in it. "Hear, O' Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." It used to be in their feast days, when they would gather in the temple mount, that they would start chanting this. And it would build and build and build, as they would chant together, "Hear, O' Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." It is interesting to me that even in this declaration, the shema, the great commandment, the first, the primary commandment, that the word *one*..."the Lord our God is *one* Lord"...the word *one* is the Hebrew word *echad*, which is a compound unity. There is another Hebrew word for one, *yechyd*, which is an absolute unity.

Now, I have four fingers, but I have one hand. Now, on the one hand, there are the four fingers and the thumb. So you have one hand, but in it is a compound unity. There are better examples of compound unity. You have one egg, but it's composed of a shell, a white and the yoke. Yet, it's one egg; compound unity. "The two shall be one," speaking of marriage. Echad, one, there's two but they become one, the compound unity. So the Lord our God is echad, a compound unity, "is one Lord."

It is also interesting to me, and it's a baffler to the Jehovah Witnesses, that here and elsewhere in the New Testament the name Yahweh is translated into the Greek, *Kurias*, the title that was commonly given to Jesus Christ. Now if there was so much on the Jehovah Witnesses, and there's so much to that name, Jehovah, evidently Jesus and the New Testament writers didn't know that. Because instead of translating the name Jehovah, or Yahweh into Greek, they used the Greek word *Kurias*, which is the Greek word for Lord, which is the title that was given to Jesus Christ. And we read that God has given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is *Kurias*, which is the

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translation from the Old Testament of Yahweh, or Yahovah. So, interesting problem that they have to wrestle with.

Jesus is saying, "The primary thing, the most important, the basic thing is that you must know the true and the living God. That's first: knowing the true and the living God. But with so many religions, how can you know who is the true God? This was my next step as I was building my own faith and relationship with God. And so, I studied for a time Mohammedism. I studied Buddhism, and I began to make a serious study of the Bible. If God does exist, and God did create me for a purpose, then it would be necessary for God to reveal Himself to man early in the history of man. And God would of necessity have to perpetuate that revelation to the present day. So I immediately rejected all of the religious systems of the past that have fallen by the wayside. I didn't bother to look into Greek mythology or Roman mythology, or these other religions that already are parts of the history of man but are not current today. Because that would be an emission that God wasn't capable of keeping the revelation to the present time, and that God wasn't interested in man today; He was only interested in the early man, and He doesn't care what happens to us today. I also rejected all of these new religions that are coming out in recent years. These men who finally have received the "true revelation" of God. It's been hid from all men up until now, until we are blessed by this prophet, who has now the true understanding of God, and he brings us this new light and this new way. I rejected all that because that immediately then dismisses all of those people that have been born and died up to the present time, as if God doesn't care about them or wasn't interested in them, but suddenly God is now interested in man. I couldn't buy that. It had to be a revelation of God that began early in the history of man and was maintained to the present day. And that's why I chose the three that I did.

But as I studied, the more I studied, the more I became convinced the Bible was indeed the revelation of God. And today I have no questions, no qualms, no doubts. That it is indeed the revelation of God to man, and it stands separate, apart, distinct, and in many cases, in opposition to the religious systems of man. For the religious systems are man's attempt to reach out to God, where Christianity is God's attempt to reach man. In the religious system, man being good enough to be accepted by God, in Christianity, there's no way man can be good enough to be accepted by God. He has to just trust in the grace of God. There's no good work that you can do. It is not by works of righteousness that we have done, but by His grace alone. So rather than a system of works that can bring you to God, it bypasses all that and says, "There's nothing you can do to be worthy of God, you can only receive His grace, His love, His mercy that He extends to you through His Son Jesus Christ." God is reaching you; you can't reach Him.

And of course, as I read the Bible, I became fascinated with that prophetic aspect of the Bible, which the Bible itself declares is the built-in proof of its origin, that the Bible originates with God. "That you might know that I am God and there is none other like Me. I'm going to tell you things before they happen, so that when they happen you will know that I am indeed the Lord." Jesus said, "I've told you these things before they

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come to pass, so that when they come to pass you might believe." And so that prophetic element that we can even up until the present time read and know that God has spoken of the very days in which we now exist and has prophesied in advance things that we see in the world around us. The fact of the nation of Israel, whether or not the Arabs want to recognize it, they are there. God's word said they would be there. The Ten Nation European Federation, the movement that you read about all the time towards electronic funds transfers. And you're seeing the systems inaugurated in the stores when you go to these stores that are now using these scanning cash registers. God said, "I've told you in advance so that you might believe." And so, that built-in proof system. The most important thing for any man is to discover the true and living God. "Hear, O' Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." It's important that you know who God is.

Secondly, you must come into a loving relationship with Him,

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart [the deepest area of your life], and with all thy soul [that conscious area of your life], and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength ([Mar 12:30](#)):

Love God supremely; God must become the center of your existence, the center of your life. And all men's lives revolve around some access. There is that center to every man's life, and it is important that you look into yourself and find out what is the center of your life. Upon what does your life revolve? What is the axis upon which your life is revolving? And with most people it is self. For most people are living self-centered lives. But the Bible assures you that the self-centered life is destined for emptiness and frustration. And the book of Ecclesiastes gives you a classic example of Solomon who lived the self-centered life, did everything for himself and ended up with that plaintiff cry, "Vanity, vanity," or "Emptiness, emptiness, everything is empty and frustrating!" He did it all; he had it all. But because it was centered around himself, it was unfulfilling and he ended as a bitter cynic, as does that person who lives for himself. When you get to the end of the road, you say, "It wasn't worth it. Life is a mistake, a tragic mistake. It's a farce. There's no meaning; there's not purpose. I began as an accident, I go out as an accident. And there's no reason." Oh, how empty! How futile! That's because you've got yourself at the center of your life; you need to get God at the center of your being. And that's what Jesus is saying is the most important. That's primary; get God at the center of your life and come into a loving relationship with Him. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

Now, the second commandment in order, in priority, similar to the first, it's,

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself ([Mar 12:31](#)).

You cannot do this unless God is at the center of your life. You see, he's striking at that self-centered life, because now instead of loving yourself supremely, you've got to love your neighbor as you love yourself. You can't do that unless you love God supremely. And it's only as you love God supremely, that you can fulfill the second, loving your

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neighbor as yourself. But in this is all the law in the prophets. This sums up the whole Old Testament. It's what it's all about. A loving relationship with God, that you might have a meaningful relationship with your fellow man; God at the vertical axis of your life, in order that the horizontal plane might be imbalanced.

Now, people get all messed up in this horizontal plane. Their interpersonal relationships are just messed up completely. And so, you go to a shrink and you try to understand yourself, and "Why do I react? Why do I respond? Why do I yell? Why do I scream? Why do I drive people away? Why do I act in such an anti-social way?" And he tries to delve into your psyche and all, and to tell you, "Now, if you'll just do this and that, and take a little Valium and all, it won't make any difference." So, he's trying to help you to balance out these interpersonal relationships out on the horizontal plane. And so, no sooner do you get one in the focus and you sort of balance it, then the whole thing begins to go overboard. And the other side is way up, and you get up on the other side and jump up there, so that you can balance this thing out...and so, you see people spending their lives trying to keep things in balance. And it's always just sort of topsy-turvy. You've got to come to the center axis, man. It's out of kilter. Your relationship with God, it's just way off. And if your axis titled, then the horizontal plane spinning around that axis is going to be just in a crazy whirl. Just up and down, up and down, up and down, until you say, "Oh, God, stop this thing. I want off!" First thing: get right with God, know God, love God. The second then will fall into order, loving thy neighbor as thyself.

Now, this fellow was intrigued with the answer. He thought, "Alright, I'll buy that." And he repeated it just to confirm it in his mind. And he said,

Well, Master, [that's good] thou hast said [you've told] the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more [important] than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices [that you could ever give]. And when Jesus saw [that it was sinking in] that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God ([Mar 12:32-34](#)).

You're not far from the kingdom of God because the moment God comes at the center of your life, you are in the kingdom of God. That's what the kingdom of God is about, is having the King on the throne. The moment you bow and submit your life to God as King, as the Lord of your life, then you're in the kingdom of God, you see. But no man can serve two masters; no man can have two kings. And if you are sitting on the throne of your life, if you're living a self-centered life, then you're not in the kingdom of God, and you can't be in the kingdom of God as long as you're living a self-centered life. It's not until you're living a God-centered life that you've really entered into the kingdom. And this fellow was beginning to see the picture. And Jesus said, "You're not far from the kingdom." Get God into the center of your life, and you've come into the kingdom of God.

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And no man after that durst [didn't dare] ask Him any question. And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, [said to the scribes], How say the scribes [how is it that you scribes say] that Christ [the Messiah] is the son of David? ([Mar 12:34-35](#))

Now this, of course, was something that is taught that the Messiah will be the Son of David, because there were many predictions in the Old Testament. "He will sit upon the throne of David. He'll be the root out of the stem of Jesse," and so forth. And God promised to David, "I will build you a house;" and by this David understood that the Messiah was to come through his seed. And so, "How is it that you say that the Messiah is the Son of David?

For David himself said by the Holy Ghost [through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit] ([Mar 12:36](#)),

And Jesus here recognizing the Holy Spirit as the One who inspired the writing of David. David, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in [Psalm 110](#) said,

The Lord [or Jehovah, Yahweh] said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? ([Mar 12:36-37](#))

In that patriarch society, the father always ruled. As long as the old man was alive, he ruled. His word was law. Even when his sons were eighty, ninety years old, if he was still alive his word was the law. And in that culture there is no way that a father would call his son Lord. That would be a total antithesis to the culture and society itself. And so, how is it that if the Messiah is the Son of David, how is it that David called Him Lord? Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. How can He be a Son?

And the common people heard him gladly. And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing [robes], and love salutations in the market places ([Mar 12:37-38](#)),

"Oh, Rabbi, Rabbi, doctor, doctor."

And [they loved] the chief seats in the synagogue, and the uppermost rooms in the feasts: Which devour [and yet these scoundrels devour] widows' houses ([Mar 12:39-40](#)),

They take advantage of the little old women on Social Security, with their letters that they write of the desperate need that God has for their Social Security check this month, or God is going to be broke. And God's business is going to fail, unless they sacrifice. I've got a stack of letters in there that you can't believe, you can't believe the junk that these men write. I know that there's got to be a hot spot seven times hotter.

and for a pretense [they] make long prayers ([Mar 12:40](#)):

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And, all right. Jesus said it, "They are going to receive the hotter spot." Free translation...

these shall receive greater damnation ([Mar 12:40](#)).

Go to it, Lord! It's hard for me to express how I feel about those who would take advantage of people for religious purposes or under a religious guise. I really had no intention, when I was a young man, of being a minister. I had very set ideas. I was always sort of a goal-oriented person. And I knew from the time I was in junior high school that I was going to be a neurosurgeon, and I had studied all about the brain. From the time I was a kid, I'd check out all of the books from the library and read about the brain, fascinated with the human brain. And I just knew I was going to be a neurosurgeon, taking all the courses to prepare me for that profession. And I had a big thing against most of the ministers that I knew. I didn't feel that they were true, honest, normal people. I saw a lot of hypocrisy and it troubled me, and that's one of the reasons why I never wanted to go into the ministry. But when the Lord began to speak to my heart concerning the ministry, I said, "Oh, no way! I don't want to be one of those guys. I'm too normal, Lord. You know, I don't like to wear ties. I don't like to dress up in suits all the time. I love sports and..." The Lord said, "Who asked you to wear suits all the time? Who asked you to wear a tie all the time? Who said you can't enjoy sports? Who said you can't be normal?" You'll find me a very normal person. I don't try and create some illusion that I'm super spiritual or better or...God help us.

But then this thing of this gimmickry on money, this is the thing that really bothered me thoroughly. And I said, "Lord, I could never ask people for money." And the Lord assured me that He would be my supply, that He'd take care of my needs. And so, this is a thing of the ministry that galls me, these many, many gimmicks that are used for raising funds or for extracting or extorting money out of people. Let's go on....

And Jesus sat over against [went over and watched them give by] the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much [their large gifts] ([Mar 12:41](#)).

Now Jesus had earlier sort of come against this, and He said, "When you give, don't be like the Pharisees who like to sound the trumpet before them and make a big display over what they're giving to God." He said, "Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing; just give to the Father and see what He'll reward you." Don't look for the reward of man, the "aahs and the oohs."

So, He watched these rich people casting in these large amounts with great ostentation.

And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing ([Mar 12:42](#)).

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I have some mites at home. And I wanted to bring them tonight, and it was my intention to bring them to show you a mite. You can buy a hundred of them for a penny over in Israel. They're worth about one one-hundredth of a cent. This little gal threw in two of them.

And he [Jesus] called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you [I'm going to tell you the truth about this little woman], That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast [their money there] into the treasury: for all they did cast in of [gave from] their abundance; but she of her want [out of her need] did cast in all that she had, even all her living ([Mar 12:43-44](#)).

God doesn't measure your gifts by the amount. Never. But by what it costs you. By that measure God always measures what we give to Him. What did it cost me to give? David said, "I will not give to the Lord that which cost me nothing." Paul the apostle, talking to the church of Corinth, suggested that we examine ourselves. He said, "For if we will judge ourselves, then we will not be judged of God." As you look at yourself tonight, as you examine your heart, can you honestly say that your heart, your life, is centered in God? That He is the center of your existence? That your life is revolving around Him? If not, then you're far from the kingdom and you are heading down a road that can only bring despair, emptiness and frustration. I would encourage you: discover the true and the living God. Make Him the center of your affections, love Him with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind, with all your strength, and you'll find out how God intended man to live, rich, fulfilled, as you walk with Him. And thus, may you walk this week with God at the center of your life. May you be filled with His Spirit. And may God, by His Spirit, guide you, strengthen you, help you. In Jesus' name.