

The Question of Tribute | 12:13-17

- 13 – No introduction but likely occurred in one of the porches of the Temple (11:15-16, 27). Here we have again a joint question (3:6) intended to entangle Jesus in his words – for in his words they sensed his claim to absolute authority and, thus, his threat to them.
- 14-15a –Opening disingenuous remarks were intended to close any possible evasion to their difficult question = “Jesus, you’re a good guy, a smart guy, let us ask you a question!”
- Note import of the question of tribute money ever since it had been imposed by Romans in AD 6.
 - Josephus notes that Zealot Jews refused to pay as it was a form of slavery & Caesar’s dominion.
 - Pharisees considered it a humiliation but justified its payment. They were concerned with the moral implications, “Does the Law of God allow it?”
 - Herodians supported it on principle and were concerned with the political implications, “Is it practical given our present national situation?”
 - Hence the question was insincere, an effort to force Jesus into a compromised position either spiritually or politically. They were thrusting Jesus onto the horns of a dilemma.
 - A “Yes” would discredit him in the eyes of the people. A “No” would invite censorship from Rome.

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- 15b-16 – Jesus recognizes the question is fraudulent. Note the exasperation in his voice.
- A Roman denarius was the only coin accepted for payment of taxes in Judea. Here again, we have Tiberius portrayed as the semi-divine son of the god Augustus and the goddess Livia with the inscription “Son of the Divine Augustus.” Both the image and inscription were rooted in the imperial cult of emperor worship. Everyone knew the coin.
- 17 – Jesus, accepting the use of Caesar’s coins, implicitly acknowledged his authority. His image and inscription demonstrated the right of the sovereign who coined the money to exact tribute. There are obligations to the state which do not infringe up the rights of God but are grounded in his appointment.
- By acknowledging Caesar’s authority, Jesus showed himself opposed to any theocracy.

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- But by demonstrating so sharply between Caesar and God, Jesus bluntly protested the idolatrous claims advanced by the coins.
- Civil authority always tends to reach beyond appointed function. The temptation to self-glorification always accompanies power. This was particularly clear with Caesar.
- Jesus rejected worship of anyone other than God. Divine honors belong to God alone.
- Jesus shows duties to God and Caesar, though distinct, are not completely separate. They are united & ruled by the higher principle of doing all things according to the will of God.
- There is an irony in Mark’s closing statement that Jesus’ adversaries marveled greatly at Jesus. They had come to trap him but could not escape the devastating realization of the authority displayed in his word.

The Challenge to the Resurrection | 12:18-27

- 18 – Sadducees were likely a splinter group, who supported the legitimacy of the Hasmonean throne (Maccabees). When the last Maccabee died, they assumed a merely negative role fighting with the Pharisees on matters of law and practice. Took their doctrine from the Pentateuch only.
- Rejected the resurrection because they believed you could not prove it from the Pentateuch even though numerous Jewish benedictions included it.
- 19-23 – The use of Scripture and an illustrating story to challenge accepted interpretation was a common scribal practice. Hence, Sadducees were most likely scribes, specialists in interpretation.
- They quote Moses' provision for a brother-in-law marriage from Deut 25:5-10. Woman married to 7 brothers may have been from the book of Tobit (Apocrypha).
- They intend to force Jesus to confess his belief in the resurrection and then ridicule him with their question "Whose wife will she be?"

The Challenge to the Resurrection | 12:18-27

- 24-25 – The Sadducees were mistaken about the character of the resurrection life. Common Jewish conception was that earthly relationships would be resumed after the resurrection. But the Sadducees failed to understand the Scriptures or the power of God. Marriage is not the point as they supposed. The resurrection is the point.
- Jesus affirmed that the resurrection life is like that enjoyed by the angels. Its great purpose and center is communion with God.
- 26-27 – Jesus quotes Exodus 3:6 (which the Sadducees acknowledged). But Jewish resurrection teaching did not come from this passage. They used Numbers 11:9 or 18:28 arguing that the patriarchs has to be alive to see their promises fulfilled in the future.
- Jesus' argument is far more profound than this. And Jesus is concerned to repudiate the error of the Sadducees by replacing it with simpler truth from the Scriptures.

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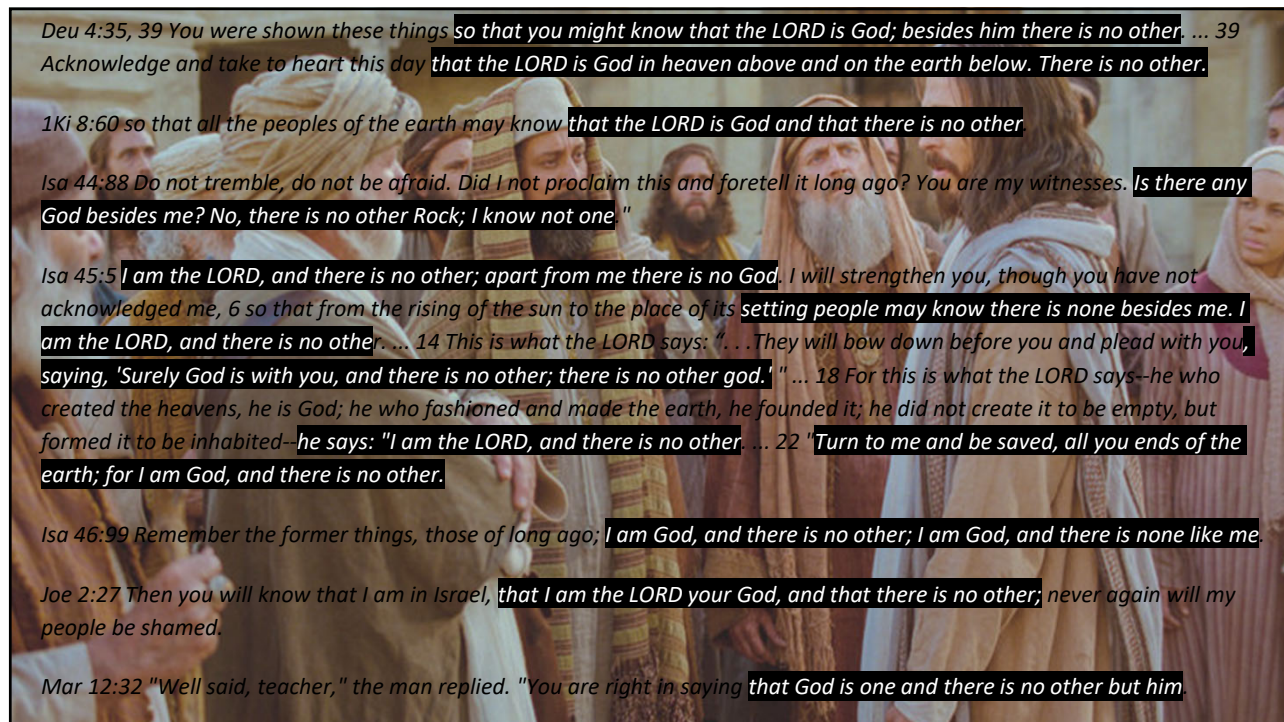
- *Jewish phrases like "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" referred to God as the protector and Savior of the three patriarchs. "The God of" = helper, savior, rooted in God's covenant provision. They got the covenant part right but missed the resurrection assertion.*
- *By the time Moses wrote Exodus 3 & 4, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had physically died. Yet here is God declaring them alive. This is a far claim regarding the resurrection that Jesus is asserting. And why are they alive? Because Luke 20:38 states ". . . for to him all are alive."*
- *God self-reveals himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to Moses in Ex 3:6 because he is the God of the covenant for the patriarchs. It is inconceivable that God would provide for the patriarchs in this life only and leave the final word to death for them.*
- *3X in Ex 3:6, 15, 16, 4:5 God extends his covenant-keeping promises to Moses and to his people. God's promise of salvation to the Jews and me is based on his covenant to the patriarchs. Hence, Jesus triumphant statement, "He not the God of the dead, but of the living!"*

The Question of Which is the Great Commandment | 12:28-34

- 28 – *But this man was impressed with Jesus’ previous answer. And he asked a much more honest question. But one that was loaded with implicit bias.*
- *He attempts to distinguish between lighter & weightier commandments, an inevitable feature of Palestinian piety. Both the question and the assumption stem from a piety of human achievement supported by the scribe’s interpretations.*
- 29-31 – *Jesus’ answer goes much deeper. Jesus understood the question to be at the very heart of the principle of Law.*
- *Jewish teachers tried to answer this question. Hillel the Elder “What you yourself hate, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Law, the rest is commentary. Go and learn it.”*
- *For Jesus the whole Law is summed up in the will of God which calls for a wholehearted love response to God and to neighbor.*

The Question of Which is the Great Commandment | 12:28-34

- *The Shema as introduction to the command to love is critically important (Mark alone reports it Duet 6:4. This prayer was used by pious Jews 200 years before Christ.*
- *The command to love God is an obligation which stems from his uniqueness as God and his gracious favor in extending covenant love to Israel.*
- *Because the whole man is the object of God’s covenant-keeping love, the whole man is claimed by God for himself. The great commandment is to seek God for his own sake, to have pleasure in him for his own sake, to strive after him in friendship & love for his own sake.*
- *This kind of love is a matter of the will and of action. Love which is determined that the whole disposition of my life and my whole personality will be at the service of the singularly unique God.*



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- Jesus ties in the second commandment because they are inseparable. A wholehearted love for God necessarily finds its expression in a selfless concern for other men.
- In the second commandment, God addresses us as we are, sinners who love themselves ". . . as you love yourself."
- The Jews taught that neighbor extended only to the sons of Israel (Lev 19:18). But in Luke 10:25-37, Jesus freed this command from that restraint and extended it to all men.
- Gal 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (See also Romans 13:8-9, Gal 5:14, James 2:8)
- In doing good to others, we are not attempting to win them for the Kingdom – that is manipulation. "The second is like unto it" – Our doing good to others is exclusively the worship of God as the unique One.

The Question Concerning David's Son | 12:35-37

- 35 – *This question from Jesus concerning the Davidic line of the Messiah is understandable in the context of the expectation of a restored kingdom. The popular hopes expressed in 11:10 in the temple procession, "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"*
- *That the Messiah was the son of David was a tenet of Judaism firmly grounded in OT prophecies (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea and Amos all speak of it).*
- *Question 1 could be phrased, "What do the scribes mean when they say that the Messiah is the son of David?" And Question 2, "In what sense then is he his son?"*
- *The scribes would have recognized this as a Haggada-question intended to reconcile two seemingly contradictory points in Scripture. Here the unity of Scripture was demonstrated by bringing the two passages into harmony, demonstrating their correct relationship to each other. We recognize this approach too in preaching.*

The Question Concerning David's Son | 12:35-37

- *Jesus question then is this, "How can the Scripture teach both that the Messiah is David's son and also that the Messiah is David's Lord?"*
- 36-37 – *Jesus quotes David from Psalm 110:1*
 - *David is clearly regarded as a prophet witnessing to the supreme dignity of the Messiah.*
 - *In this verse, David hears a conversation between the Lord (Yahweh, God the Father) and David's Lord (Adonai, the Messiah, God the Son) saying that Christ would sit at the Father's right hand, the place of honor, until God subjugates Christ's enemies under his feet.*
 - *Only this saying of Jesus traces the authority of an OT passage to its inspiration, the Holy Spirit.*
 - *If David referred to the Messiah as his "Lord," he clearly understood that the one who was to receive the promise was far greater than himself.*
- *Relationship of Jesus as son of David and the Messiah's exultation is further developed in Acts 2:29-36, 13:32-39, Heb 1:5-13. In each the promise to David is the starting point that Jesus is the Messiah whose resurrection & exultation mark the fulfillment of the promise.*

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- *Jesus is not teaching that the future glorification of the Messiah affirms he is David's Lord. David is not the one in view here. The Messiah is in view. Here Jesus anticipates his own resurrection and exultation as the fulfillment of the Messianic promise given to David.*
- *David himself in Ps 110:1 distinguishes between his earthly, political sovereignty and the higher level of the sovereignty assigned to the Messiah.*
- *Christ did not come to restore David's kingdom as popular opinion supposed. He does not merely extend an earthly kingdom, but establishes a wholly different Kingdom.*
- *Jesus knew himself to be in a battle for the salvation of the people of God, not fought against Rome or any earthly power, as it has no earthly, political goals. Jesus set himself against the demonic powers of Satan. And victory demanded placing complete trust into the hands of his Father who had given to his Son this very promise.*