

“Jesus’ Last Day in the Temple”

October 16, 2016

Mark 12:35-44

I. Introduction

As we study the life of Jesus Christ, it is easy to focus on His divinity and forget His humanity. But [Hebrews 2:17](#) reminds us that Jesus “had to be made like them fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.” Like those He came to save, Jesus endured the physical limitations of being human, He became hungry ([Matthew 4:1-2](#)), thirsty ([John 4:7](#)), and tired ([John 4:5-6](#)). He also experienced the full range of human emotions, including joy ([Luke 10:21](#)), sorrow ([Matthew 26:37](#)), love ([John 11:5, 36](#)), compassion ([Matthew 9:36](#)), amazement ([Luke 7:9](#)), and anger ([Mark 3:5](#)).

As we pick up Jesus’ last day in the Temple in [Mark 12:35](#), it’s been a long day for Jesus—the day began with “the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders” coming to him and asking, “By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you the authority to do this?” ([Mark 11:27-28](#)). Later that same day, because of their hatred towards Jesus, the Sanhedrin had made three attempts to trap and destroy Him. But instead, He had defeated them and in the process He had humiliated them to the point that they didn’t dare ask any more questions. But, in spite of the animosity and hatred directed at Him by the leaders and the superficial indecisiveness of the crowds, Jesus remained concerned about their eternal destiny.

So in today’s Scripture, towards the close of this long, long day, it was Jesus’ turn to pose a question to His inquisitors—one which they were unable to answer, but would get some of them to think. It seems fitting that on His last day to ever teach in the Temple, that Jesus would focus on His identity as the Messiah. It all began with a question about David’s Son: Who is the Messiah?

II. Who is the Messiah?

The Jewish teaching was that the “*Christ*,” or the “*Messiah*,” the anointed One, was to be a direct descendant of David and that He would restore the Davidic kingdom upon His coming as the Messiah. However, He was viewed as nothing more than a man. They expected him to be an earthly ruler with unparalleled power and influence. He would conquer Israel’s enemies and fulfill all the promises that were given to Abraham and repeated and expanded in the promises given to David—promises of a coming king and kingdom. The Jewish people viewed the messiah as the savior of the nation as a whole, but not of individual souls. They did not (and still do not) believe that the messiah would be God in human flesh.

According to Matthew’s account in [Matthew 22:41-42](#), Jesus began by asking the religious leaders, “**What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?**” They replied, “**The son of David.**” Mark picks up the conversation when Jesus then asked, “**Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David?**”

The Bible does say that the Messiah is the descendant of David—[turn to Psalm 89:3-4, 35-37](#). The genealogies of Jesus offer irrefutable proof that He was a descendant of David. Both His earthly father, Joseph, in [Matthew 1:1-17](#) and His mother, Mary, in [Luke 3:23-38](#) are seen to be direct descendants of David and thus, Jesus was as well. The belief that the Messiah would be the son of David was correct, but incomplete. Jesus showed this lack by quoting from [Psalm 110:1](#), “**The LORD says to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’**”

Here is the problem—the conundrum, if you please: If the Messiah is the Son of David, why does David address Him “**by the Holy Spirit**” as Lord? It is hardly customary for fathers to address their sons in this way. One expects the exact opposite. The learned Jewish theologians didn’t have an answer and remained quiet.

The only way David's son could also be David's Lord; the only way God could declare to David's Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet," would be if David's Son was coequal with God the Father in rank and authority. The only possible answer is that David's Son, the Messiah, must be God come in human flesh. Just like the New Testament, the Old Testament reveals not only the Messiah's humanity as David's son, but also His deity as David's Lord exalted at the right hand of the Father. This is not an either-or answer, Jesus the Christ is both fully God and fully man. John summarizes this in his gospel—turn to the Gospel of John – John 1:1-4.

Mark wrote that "the large crowd listened to him with delight." Sadly, they merely enjoyed listening to Jesus and watching Him baffle the leaders. Jesus' final invitation to them didn't touch their hearts at all—no one fell on their face in the presence of almighty God incarnate to repent and confess Him as Lord and Savior. In fact in just a couple of days, some of these same people would be screaming for His execution.

III. Beware of the Teachers of the Law

After this last confrontation with the religious leaders, the Lord would say nothing more to them until His trial. Luke 20:45 tells us that the last two teachings that Jesus taught in the Temple were addressed to His disciples. The crowd may have listened in, but Jesus was focused on His disciples as He said, "Beware of the teachers of the law."

Earlier, in Mark 12:34, Jesus had commended one teacher of the law when He said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But here, Jesus denounced them as a group. Jesus has no tolerance for false teachers—those who hold a corrupt view of the Scripture, of Christ, and the Gospel. Since most teachers of the law, scribes, were Pharisees, they were included in this denunciation and warning.

Since they were held in such high esteem, to hear Jesus denounce the teachers of the law must have shocked everyone listening. The Pharisees and scribes were revered as the gatekeepers of the law and the protectors of the people. In theory, they defined the law for everyone and held them to its

standards. The Mishnah, a collection of Jewish religious writings, declares, *“It is more sinful to transgress the words of the Scribes, i.e. the teachers of the law, than those of the Torah.”* But in **Matthew 23:15** Jesus said, **“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.”** Jesus said that the teachers of the law were hypocrites and sons of hell.

After warning the disciples of their true nature, Jesus gave five examples of the hypocrisy of the teachers of the law. First, **“They like to walk around in flowing robes.”** In pride, they wore elaborate robes to set themselves apart from others and to emphasize their authority. Second, they expected to **“be greeted with respect in the marketplaces.”** In their pride, they expected to see the rabble stand and bow before them and hear them say, *“Good morning, Rabbi.”* Third, in their enormous pride and craving for attention, they eagerly sought **“the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets.”** They craved the spots that would allow them to be seen by all the *“common people.”*

The 1st three examples demonstrated the obsessive pride of the scribes and Pharisees, but the 4th example of hypocrisy showed their massive greed which led them to prey on the helpless members of society and **“devour widows’ houses.”** They abused their hospitality, defrauded others of their estates, mismanaged their property, and took their houses as pledges for debts that they could never repay. They also demanded that widows give money to purchase God’s blessings. They were greedy. Finally, **“for show”** they offered **“lengthy prayers.”** Their prayers, like the rest of their religion, was nothing more than a pretense; an outward show; as **Matthew 6:7** says, a **“babbling like pagans”** designed not to honor God but to exalt themselves.

Jesus said, that instead of being rewarded by God for their self-righteous, self-promoting religion, as they expected, the teachers of the law **“will be punished most severely.”** Because they

knew the truth and rejected it, they would receive a severe punishment-- [Hebrews 10:29](#) says, “How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?” The judgment on Israel’s leadership would be intensified because not only did they knowingly reject the truth, but also led others astray-- [James 3:1](#) says, “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” And then we see . . .

IV. The Widow’s Offering

At the end of this long, weary day of ministry, “Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury.” The “temple treasury” consisted of 13 trumpet-shaped chests around the walls of the court of the women, and here the people dropped in their offerings.

The rich made a big production out of their giving and their praying—turn to [Matthew 6:1-5](#). Jesus rejected them and their gifts—like the leadership, they gave out of pride as they gave out of their abundance, but there was no sacrifice. On the other hand, the poor widow gave all that she had to live on, which was next to nothing. She showed radical trust in God to provide for her and gave her all to God. For the rich, their gifts were a small contribution, but for the widow, her gift was a true consecration of her whole life.

V. Conclusion

Our love for God is in response to God’s love for us. God doesn’t love only certain portions of us, but He loves the whole person; therefore, we are to love God with our whole selves. God doesn’t save us by degrees or fractions and we are not to offer to God just a part or fraction of ourselves. In [Matthew 6:24](#) Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and

mammon or money.” We will be ruled by one or the other. The person who is double-minded will eventually fall to the power of Mammon. You cannot play in a pig pen without getting dirty. One cannot seek power, wealth, control, sensual gratification and at the same time be submissive to God’s will. In **Matthew 6:21** Jesus said, **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** Pride of living and pride of giving are sins we must avoid at all costs.

Those who give God an hour or two of worship in church on Sunday morning and maybe 5 minutes of daily Bible study while ignoring God in the rest of their lives—at work, at home, at play will suffer from a kind of religious schizophrenia. Those who try to straddle the fence by giving God only a token of love while maintaining a close friendship with the world are doomed to be frustrated in this world and doomed in the world to come. With God, it is all or nothing. That’s why Paul wrote in **Romans 12:1**, **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your true and proper worship.”**

Finally, let me ask the same question Jesus asked the leadership, “Who is the Messiah? Who is Jesus Christ?” As C. S. Lewis wrote, *“Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”* In **John 3:18** Jesus put it this way, **“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.”**

When it comes time for you to stand before God and He asks you why He should let you into heaven what is your answer going to be? **Turn to Ephesians 2:8-9.** As **Romans 10:9** says, you need to make Jesus your Savior and Lord. Being baptized, taking communion, giving sacrificially won’t save you from an eternity in hell—only by making Jesus your Lord and Savior will you have eternal life. If

you have never done this, why not do so today—before it is too late. If you have made Him your Savior and Lord, does your life proclaim it? Do you serve Him wholeheartedly or do you have a divided heart? Remember: **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** He gave His life for you, what have you given to Him?