

Title: JESUS ANSWERS *OUR* QUESTIONS, MARK 12:28 – 34
(Chatham, NJ; 11/01/15, AM) [E – Topical, Contrasts]

Theme: Implied in the discussion Jesus has with a scribe are some answers to many contemporary questions about God, His law, and our relationship to both.

Purpose: To address contemporary issues about what God wants and to exhort the audience to enter the Kingdom, not merely be close to it.

Introduction:

1. Though Jesus answers a scribe's question concerning the Law, he also answers questions that puzzle contemporary people.
2. The answers may be implied, but they are answers nonetheless.
3. More importantly he challenges all people who are only close to the Kingdom but not fully entered.

I. Commandments, *Not* Suggestions (The speaker assumes that commands are essential. "Which *commandment* is most important?")

A. Love expressed as a *requirement* of the Law

1. Love tied to obedience, John 14
2. Verse 15, if . . . keep my commandments
3. Verse 21, whoever keeps my commandments . . . it is he who loves me
4. Verse 23, keeps my word . . . make our home with him
5. We cannot escape the imposition of the Law of God on our behavior
6. Paul in Romans 13:10 can say, "Love fulfills the law."
7. If we learn what true love is and practice it, we have satisfied the requirements of the Law; specifically love does no harm to a neighbor
8. Love demands a relationship, yet that relationship reflects more than saying, "I love chocolate cake," thus there are explanations of what does and does not constitute true love.

B. The Commandments Are Divine in Origin

1. Jesus begins with Israel's profession of faith, Deut. 6:4
2. The Ten Commandments identify the source: "I am the God . . ."
3. The greatest also originates with the one, true God
4. Jesus locates authority in the nature of God
5. The first priority of all human beings is to God, their creator

II. With Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength, *Not* the Impulse of Passion

A. To Love God

1. The whole person is required
2. Deut. 6:4-5 has only three items: heart, soul, might
3. Heart – biblically the center of thoughts as well as feelings; the inner being
4. Soul – physical and psychological energy; life itself encompassing feelings, desires, and thinking
5. Mind – perhaps added for emphasis; the Greek philosophers separated the mind from the heart; the understanding and ability to reason
6. Strength – physical and material capabilities; the power and capacity to act
7. Perhaps these are not meant to be needlessly separated and analyzed but only to represent the totality of a person's obedience to God

B. But not with the impulses and unguided passions of human origin

1. Romantic love is a great thing created by God
2. Today I think we are obsessed with it

3. More often than not we associate it with sexual passion
4. The Bible defines love beyond mere passions, 1 Corinthians 13:4ff.
5. Impulses are deceiving because they originate with sinful hearts
6. Loving God with every part of our being demands more than following our impulses

III. Not Far versus Fully In

A. The Scribe is "not far"

1. Jesus is impressed with the scribe's answer as the scribe is impressed with his
2. Jesus can see he is on the right track and moving in the right direction
3. However, he is only close
4. His understanding of what God wants from humanity has drawn him close to the gates of the Kingdom of God
5. We can only guess whether he entered after Pentecost (Acts 6:7 tells us that a large number of priests obeyed the Gospel)

B. Stalled at the gate

1. Whereas we think the scribe is moving in the right direction, many people today aren't moving at all
2. Stuck in living a good life
3. Many corners of our culture have adopted good deeds, activism, and contributing to needy causes as a way of life
4. Even some atheists claim you don't need God to live a life of compassion (another whole issue altogether)
5. Living a good life, however, and understanding that we should love each other is founded on Kingdom principles
6. Adopting the principles without entering the Kingdom will not work for long
7. "Cut flower generation" – separated from the soil of God and the entire Kingdom system of living, these people will eventually die off, without God as the foundation will not continue to figure out why they should live a good life, or fail miserably in some other aspect of good living
8. They have stalled at the gate because they think they are living a good life, but this is not really enough; it's only "not far from the Kingdom"

Conclusion:

1. These commands are founded upon the nature of God who created them and all things.
2. To separate them from the Kingdom will work for only a short period of time before people realize they haven't the foundation to keep doing them.
3. Don't be one of those people who has come close but not entered.
4. The Kingdom of God demands repentance, faith, baptism, and confession to enter.
5. We cannot love our neighbor properly unless we enter the Kingdom and learn to live by all the Kingdom principles.
6. Don't keep putting off being a part of the kingdom; don't just stand outside . . . enter!