

Mark 12:35

by W.F. Anderson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the authority of God in all areas of life, including the temple, civil authority, and personal relationships.

Duration: 49:11

Scripture: Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:18-27, Mark 12:29-35

Topics: "Loving God", "Submission To Authority"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, as well as loving our neighbor. He criticizes the religious leaders for prioritizing religious rituals over these two commandments. The preacher also highlights the story of the widow who gave all she had as an example of true devotion to God. He concludes by discussing the ongoing struggle in society about who is in charge, emphasizing the need to submit to God's authority.

Transcript

California, Virginia, and myself, our thanks to all of you for this week together. Good food, yes, but fellowship, sharing the Word of God together. We just had a good week.

I hardly believe the week's over and we're on our way home tomorrow, but thanks for letting us have this week with you. And we stick our name on your prayer list. We're going up to California in June.

We're moving there. I think it was pretty obvious that I enjoyed those services in the lounge these last three mornings. I have to admit, I felt much more at home there than I do here, and I'm hoping.

So I'm going back to that kind of work. I'm going back to teaching in a Bible school. I'm going up to the California Center for Biblical Studies, a very grand name for Culver City Bible School, and we'll pick up duties there this coming September, but we're expecting to move there in June.

So we'd value your prayers for us and for the work at the school there as we go. Now I've got three books. I was going to pick up something light tonight that you would just sit down and enjoy reading, and then I found three books.

No, I just have to take these three. I needn't tell you the name C. H. Macintosh, need I? No. Everybody wants his notes on the Pentateuch.

That's fine. They're good, but give me his miscellaneous writings. That's just a matter of taste and what has helped, and they're all in one volume now, The Macintosh Treasury.

If you don't have it, get it. Delightful reading. I don't know whether the story's apocryphal or not, but someone has once said to have asked Mr. Macintosh why he didn't write like J. N. Darby, and he said, I write to be understood.

If you've read Macintosh, you'll appreciate that. Now last night I mentioned W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, which we don't have in the bookstore, but which are in order. But a work has been collected of Mr. Vine's writings called an Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words.

So if you already have his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, then this is a good companion volume to give you some of the riches of the Hebrew language in the Old Testament. And there are several copies of this in the bookstore. You'll find it an invaluable tool for your study of the Old Testament, just as his work is an invaluable tool in the study of the New Testament.

And I was delighted to see H. R. Ellison's little booklet, The Mystery of Israel. It's an exposition of Romans 9 through 11. Now don't turn it off.

Don't turn off your hearing aid until I'm through. Romans 9 through 11 is a happy hunting ground for the doctrine of election. And that is not why Romans 9 through 11 was written.

It deals with the problem of the nation of Israel and the purposes of God. And Mr. Ellison sees that. And it is one of the finest discussions of Romans 9 through 11 I have read.

I think it's one of the finest because his theological position happens to agree with mine. So naturally I think this is a good exposition of Romans 9 through 11. And he also has added to this revised edition, The Nation of Israel and the Epistles of the Ephesians.

This is a fine little book. It'll open up. If you have been in the habit of reading Romans, and you come to the close of chapter 8, and then you jump over to chapter 12, verse 1, because 9 through 11, you can't make ends or tails out of it.

Get this. Get this. And you'll discover 9 through 11 is part of the heart of the Epistles of Romans.

Great little book. And there are several copies of that in the bookstore as well. Now let's turn again tonight to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 12.

We'll begin reading at verse 35, and I'd like to read through the end of the chapter. Mark chapter 12, verse 35. Now we've hopped, skipped, and jumped all through the Gospel of Mark, and we've come down to the last week of our Lord's life on earth, as far as his public ministry is concerned.

And we are on Tuesday of Passion Week, the week he died, and it's toward the close of the day, and he has spent most of that day discussing questions with people who opposed him. And when all the questions are finished, he poses one. And that's where we pick it up in verse 35 of Mark, chapter 12.

And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? No, that's the wrong emphasis, as you read through it. How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemy thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord.

How is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly. And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes who love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These shall receive greater condemnation.

Most long prayers in public do. And Jesus sat opposite the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, this poor widow hath cast more in than all they who have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living. A brother here in the congregation who shall remain nameless has today been drawing my attention to a comic strip, Dagwood.

If you saw it in this morning's paper, two little children come in behind Dagwood's chair, with Blondie sitting over in the other chair, and they raise a question about who is boss, husband or wife. Dagwood will look silently over at his wife, and then he turns back to the two kids, and he whispers to them. And as they walk out, the fellow is saying to the girl, See, I told you, the husband is the boss.

But there's a great deal behind that cartoon. And in our society, a great struggle goes on in all spheres of it, who is boss. And I think our society is deteriorating to the point that every person is his own boss, and we recognize no authority but ourselves.

Every question that was thrown at our Lord on Tuesday of Passion Week has to do with the area of authority. Four questions, and then he asked a final question. But every last one, all of them, including the question he asked, has to do with authority.

If we were to go back and look at the first of those questions at the end of the previous chapter, we discover that the chief priest, the scribe from the elders, come to him on Tuesday morning when he returns to the temple. And you remember what he did on Monday of Passion Week when he cleansed the temple. On Tuesday of Passion Week, when he returns to the temple to resume his teaching in Solomon's Court, the chief priest, the scribes, and the elders who controlled the worship and the conduct in the temple, meet him.

And they have a question for him. By what authority do you do these things? We are the ones who control what goes on in the temple. What right do you have to come in and clean out the court of the Gentiles? We set that up.

We control the temple. By what authority do you do these things? And when he has met that question, he is faced with another one in which a coalition of Pharisees and Herodians, and the only thing that united them was their common hatred of Jesus. Theologically, they were as wide apart as you could be.

Their whole aims, goals, purposes, methodologies were as different as night and day. But they united in a common hatred of Jesus Christ. And they face him with a question, is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not? And it's another question about authority.

And he is faced with a third question when the Sadducees come to him. The Sadducees who did not believe in resurrection, nor spirit, nor angel. And they raise a preposterous story that tends to discredit the idea of physical resurrection.

His response indicates that everything is based upon the authority of Scripture. And then an honest lawyer. Yes, there are such things.

An honest lawyer. Of course, the lawyer, that word in first century Palestine meant the one who interpreted, officially interpreted the law for people, the Ten Commandments. And the civil law of Israel, and the religious law of Israel.

He was a scribe. And he came to the Lord and asked him, what is the greatest commandment? And our Lord's response indicates the authority of God. And then in his own question, it's bound up in David's address to the Messiah in the 110th Psalm, in which he calls the Messiah Lord.

Jehovah said unto my Lord. And all five of these questions have to do with authority. And they begin with the authority of religion in the temple in Jerusalem.

And then we move from the temple in Jerusalem to Caesar's palace in Rome, and we have a whole question of civil authority raised by the Lord. There's the question of the authority of the Scriptures in the question raised by the Sadducees. And in the question raised by the lawyer, there is the whole authority of God himself in the totality of one's life.

And finally, there is the authority of the Messiah. And I'd like to put these five questions together tonight, and just look at what was asked, and how our Lord responded. And then see the whole thing as it focuses on two kinds of people at the close of the chapter.

The first question brought by the leaders of the temple had to do with authority in the temple, which was the focal point of the religion of Israel. At least it was the focal point for the ritual of Israel. The focal point of the religion of Israel was never the ritual, it was the law.

But nevertheless, the focal point of the ritual, what we would call the religious side of Israel's life, was the temple. And they came to the Lord and said, by what authority do you do these things? And his response was a question. He was always forcing people to think.

No pat answers. Things that make you think. You have to stop, and you have to think.

He said, I'll ask you a question. You answer mine, and I'll answer yours. The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? Now remember that these religious leaders of the people of Israel had as one of their functions to protect the people from false prophets.

On more than one occasion, an official delegation came from Jerusalem up into Galilee to check out Jesus himself. And people were warned, this man is a false prophet, he is empowered by Satan. They had already decided the question, where he got his authority, it came from Satan.

So, if they are able to distinguish God's authority from demonic authority or from human authority, then the question is John the Baptist. Did God send him? Or was he self-appointed as a prophet? You know, when you begin to play fast and loose with truth, you get yourself in trouble. Four years before, these men had played fast and loose with God's truth in John the Baptist, and now it's catching up with them.

And because they played fast and loose with the truth of God, they are unable now to answer this pointed question that really challenges their authority as the religious leaders of Israel. If they were to say his authority came from heaven, they never bowed to his preaching of repentance, and they were never

baptized by him in Jordan, which would mean they were publicly confessing they had refused the command of God. So they couldn't say that.

At the same time, they knew that the mass of people accepted John as God's prophet. Now remember, this is Passion Week. Passover is coming.

Jerusalem is packed with pilgrims who have come to the Passover. Masses of them would have been disciples of John the Baptist. And if these religious leaders dare say one word against John the Baptist, they're going to have a riot on their hands.

Another cup. They really can't answer either way, and he leaves them in their dilemma. Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Why not? They had already shown themselves incapable of deciding on the authority of heaven. Not really. They had already shown themselves to be rebels against the authority of heaven.

And remember that John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus. If they couldn't decide the authority of the forerunner, how are they going to decide the authority of Christ who followed him? Who has authority in that temple? What did our Lord say to them on the previous day when he had cleansed the temple, quoting from Isaiah? God is speaking in Isaiah. My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.

Who has authority here? God has authority. This is not your house, this is God's house. And when they wanted authority in the temple, on the evening of this very day, our Lord will turn from that temple and say, your house is left unto you desolate.

You want authority here? Have it. But you've got authority in an empty house. If it's God's house, that temple, God must be the authority.

If you're the authority in this house, then it's your house and God means. That of course is true of any local church. If we exclude certain people from our fellowship whom God has brought into the body of Christ by regeneration, then there's no use saying it's his church, it's ours.

We have refused his authority. He has clearly spoken about that, and we have refused his authority. It's not his house, it's ours, and it's going to be empty.

It doesn't matter how many people are there, he won't be there in a temple. I remember years ago, not too many years ago, listening to a couple of very intelligent black Christians who were livid with being excluded from a white assembly. Their response was, you can call it what you want to, but this is only your private club.

And he was right. In the temple, in the church, the authority is God's, not ours, it's his. We don't set up the rules, he does.

We are his servants to obey his rules, not to set up ours. And the whole question of religious authority comes down to that. It is God's house.

He rules it. Ours is only to obey. Whether we like it, whether we don't, has nothing to do with it.

Ours is only to obey. But if we were to move to the second question, which has to do with civil authority and the right of seizure, the Pharisees and the Rhodians come together, and as I've suggested they were

mutual enemies, united by the common hatred of Jesus Christ. Isn't it strange how he unites people? Hatred of him will unite people, and love of him will unite people.

You have just as diverse people within the fellowship of his immediate disciples. Pharisees and Herodians were no more opposed to each other than publicans and zealots. Tax collectors and zealots.

Tax collectors who worked for Rome, and zealots who were the underground, who would split your throat or burn your field if you served Rome, who were working as an underground to free Israel from the bondage to Rome. And yet our Lord takes Matthew the tax collector and Simon the zealot, and he pulls them together into his band of twelve apostles. Hatred for Christ can unite people, and so can love for Christ.

There aren't any differences among us as strong as the differences between Matthew the tax collector and Simon the zealot. Simon would cheerfully have split Matthew's throat, given half a chance. The Lord Jesus Christ brought them together.

I don't care what our differences are, what our problems are, what our feelings are, how diverse we may have become, as long as we are looking at each other and the wrongs in the other person, whatever it is, yes, we are going to be driven apart. And I dare say if there were sometimes, there were side-long glances between Matthew and Simon in that band of disciples, and I'm not sure how long it took Matthew to trust Simon. You know, I guess for a while there he was feeling a knife between his ribs.

Every time he turned his back, what pulled them together? Was their love for Jesus Christ. That submerged their differences. Again, it all depends what you emphasize.

If you are looking at each other all the time and finding all the faults in each other, or are we seeing the glory of our Lord Jesus and being pulled together around him? It's too bad on this occasion it was hatred for Christ that pulled people together, but he's the focal point. One way or the other, love for him or hatred for him, he's the focal point. And these two hostile groups came together to try to trip him up.

And they showed him, or asked him the question, whether it's lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not. We are God's people. To give tribute to Caesar is to acknowledge the control and the authority of Caesar, a Gentile king.

We are God's people. Our only king is God. Now, is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not? Now, seemingly he's on the horn of the dilemma.

There's no way to answer this question without getting in trouble. If he says, yes, it's lawful to give tribute to Caesar, he has all the nationalistic spirit of Judaism against him. If he says, no, it is not lawful to give tribute to Caesar, then he's going to have the authority of Romans.

Which is, of course, what they want. One way or the other, to destroy him. And he simply asks for a coin.

That's not because of his poverty, but because he's in the temple, and the only coins you could use in the temple were Jewish coins. We looked at that the other night. And so they need to go to the money changer's table and get a Roman coin.

And he holds up that Roman coin. Whose image and superscription is on this? Caesar's. All right.

Then give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. And then he adds, give to God what belongs to God. If you use a coin with Caesar's image on it, you are already acknowledging the authority of Caesar.

That coin belongs to Caesar. It doesn't belong to you. Then you simply give back, is the word he used.

You give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. How do you know that coin belongs to Caesar? Has his image on it. That's how you know it belongs to him.

So give it back to him. And then when he adds, and to God, what is God? What is it that bears the image of God? We ourselves. Then give back to God what belongs to God.

I should not withhold from Caesar what bears his image, nor should I withhold from God what bears his image. And there may be implied in his answer, that had you first of all given to God what bears his image, you would not now be in the position of having to give to Caesar what bears his image. But the third question with which he was faced had to do with resurrection, and that fantastic story about this woman who had all these husbands.

They all died one by one, and she survived them all. And then finally she died, much to the great relief of any surviving brothers who had married her, you know. This is a dangerous woman to marry.

I don't know how much insurance these fellows had, but nevertheless, if there were eight brothers, I'll bet that eighth one breathed a great sigh of relief when she died. But it was the law of leverage marriage in the Old Testament. The living brother was obliged to marry the widow of a brother who died, in order that children could be raised up to the name of the dead brother, and the inheritance that had been divided in the days of Joshua would not be lost to the family.

Well, they didn't have any children, and they're all dead. Now, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be? All seven had heard a wife. I rather expect them to say, you take her, I don't want her, man.

But whose wife shall she be? Our Lord says, your problem is you don't know the scriptures, nor the power of God. You don't know the scriptures. And he goes back to the Pentateuch, which is the Bible, part of the Bible in which they based their doctrine, the first five books of the Old Testament.

And out of the incident of the burning bush, on the authority of what is written in scripture, he preaches physical resurrection. Had I been faced with a question like that, even knowing that they accepted as prime authority the Pentateuch, I don't think I would have turned to that passage. The incident of the burning bush, God making a statement to Moses, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Okay, fine, that identifies you, big deal. So what? What does that have to do with resurrection? Every word of scripture was authoritative for our Lord Jesus. God didn't say, I was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He said, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And all the promises I made to those men I will fulfill. All those men died in faith.

They laid hold of promises that would never be fulfilled in their lifetime. And they acted on them. And God is still their God, and he will still fulfill his promises to them.

And on that basis, Jesus says, there's going to be a physical resurrection. God is the God of the living, all live under him. The authority of the word of God and the teaching of our Lord Jesus.

That settles the question, period. That was it. The word of God had spoken.

Your problem is, he says, you don't know the scriptures. In my judgment, that's the problem with most theological problems. We don't know the scriptures.

This good scribe comes to our Lord and asks, which is the greatest commandment? And he's an honest man, he really wants to know. His heart has been stirred as he's listened to this man answer these questions. And our Lord responds, Dear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself.

Everything he says hangs on that. And that man makes a very positive response to that statement. He saw the significance of what he heard.

He saw it. He saw that all the religious ritual on which they had put their emphasis was of lesser priority than these two great summations of the law. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength.

I want to say that to myself as I come to the Lord's Supper. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength. And you can go through the ritual without doing that.

And when I leave, I want to say, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. And if coming from that table does not send me out in acts of love for my neighbor, the whole thing is in. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

And there is no way to separate those two. It seems to me liberalism broke them in half and tried to take the one, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. And it seems to me fundamentalism broke them in half and took the one, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And we are just as wrong for taking the vertical alone as they were for taking the horizontal alone. What God has joined together, let not man put asunder, whether he's a liberal or a fundamentalist. And God has joined that double summation together, and you cannot separate them.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. That's the authority of God over the totality of my life. Now finally, and I'm sorry folks, we will get through this, our Lord asks the question, if you had asked any Orthodox Jew of what line is the Messiah to come, there was no question.

He was to come of David's line. He was to be the line of the tribe of Judah. Anybody could have answered that.

And then our Lord says, that's not the real problem. How can the Messiah, or is this man Jesus who came from the line of David, how can he be the Messiah? That's not the real problem. People think that's the real problem.

How can this man Jesus of Nazareth be the Messiah? That's not the real problem. The reverse is the real problem. In the 110th Psalm, David says, Jehovah said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

And they all acknowledge the 110th Psalm to be Messianic. And in that Psalm, David is calling the Messiah his Lord. That establishes who the Messiah is, David's Lord.

And if we really wanted to reason from it, it establishes the deity and eternity of the Messiah. The real problem is not how to get this man Jesus to be the Messiah. How in the world are you going to get David's Lord to be David's son? That's the problem.

I hope you see that problem. My Lord, David addresses the Messiah, already existing as David's Lord. How are you going to get that exalted being to end up being David's son? And they've never thought of it.

And they couldn't answer him. And we know the story of the miraculous conception, the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus. I mean his miraculous conception in the womb of a virgin.

That's the real miracle in his virgin birth. And we know in those tremendous words of Paul in Philippians chapter 2, how the eternal Son of God took our humanity in the womb of a virgin and became human without ever ceasing to be God. He became human.

And David's Lord became David's son. Now the process is not that one who was David's son then became David's Lord. No, no, no, no.

No. The real miracle is one who was already David's Lord condescended to become David's son. There was no problem in getting David's son exalted.

That's not the problem. The problem is in getting David's Lord to be David's son. But who is that Messiah? Let's never forget that.

Long before he was David's son, he was David's Lord. And we do not begin with Bethlehem. We begin with eternity.

And all the questions of authority that have been asked on that day have got to find their focal point right here. And until I settle the question of the lordship of the Messiah, the lordship of Jesus Christ, I am in no position to settle any other question of authority. That is the key question of all of us.

And when we talk about our Lord Jesus Christ on earth, we must never forget He was Lord from all eternity. He became David's son. He never became Lord.

Does all that have relevance to life? Oh yes. Two kinds of people at the close of this chapter. The scribes, the religious authorities, who loved to have all their authority displayed.

They were really great big fish in a very small fish bowl. And they didn't realize it. We were talking about this at the dinner table the other day.

And it's not to disparage this area you know, but Keystone Heights is a very small town. There are people who are very prominent in Keystone Heights, right? If we were to take those people and transport them up to the six million of Chicago, they'd disappear. They wouldn't be prominent in Chicago.

It all depends on the comparison, where you are. They wouldn't be anybody in Chicago. And we go strutting around like peacocks in our very little spheres of influence.

Drop us out in the great wide world nobody ever heard of. But now carry that to its extremes. Put us in the presence of God, the creator of the whole universe.

And the problem with the scribe was, though he strutted in the temple and the synagogue, he had never been in the presence of God. Here on the other hand is this insignificant widow, never knew that our Lord was watching her, comes into the court of the women. And there were the various chests into which the offerings were put, marked for different functions and purposes.

She has two coins, and that's all she has, everything she owns. One goes into one chest and the other goes into the other, and she slips out unnoticed, unknown, except noticed by the Lord. And her action is the living answer to every question that was raised that day.

She acknowledges the authority of the temple in her relationship to God. She has no problems with the authority of Caesar, because she doesn't have any of his coins. She obviously knows the authority of Scripture, that there's going to be a resurrection.

She's willing to give her total living and trust the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And the authority of God, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. It's completely speculation, you understand that.

But as others have speculated, I wouldn't be surprised if one coin didn't go into the box marked for the temple, and another coin went into the box marked for the poor. And she balanced the two commandments. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength.

One might go in there. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The other might go in there.

And in that simple act, she answered all the great theological questions that the professionals had raised, but never practiced. And our Lord took note of what she did. He warned his disciples against the scribes, and he told them to watch, see what she did.

And he held her up as he did. Now look, we all, we need that so much. We are so impressed by wealth, aren't we? We are.

We're impressed by wealth. People who give millions to the Lord's work, they get their names on buildings, and if you give so much, you get it on a plaque. And we are impressed by that.

And it's not to take away from what they have given. But we may discover when we stand before our Lord that his arithmetic is not like ours. Our Lord said of this woman's two mites, she has put in more, and the way he has expressed it, than everybody together.

And Mark notes that the rich have cast in much. And our Lord says in my arithmetic, when I add up the sums, those two mites count for more than all the wealth that has been put into that treasury today by all these pilgrims. How so? They gave of their abundance.

Didn't hurt them. Didn't hurt them. It was of their abundance.

What was left over? How in the world can you acknowledge the authority of God and of his word when you keep what's left over? Is that all the authority God has in my life? She, on the other hand, put in everything she had. Her whole living. She put her life in those coins.

That's what God was looking at. Not the amount. God is never impressed with the amount.

What he is impressed with is the sacrifice. Let me close by asking you a question. In the commercial market of the world, how much would God's greatest gift be worth? Let's pray.

Oh our Father, we thank you for that great sacrifice of our Lord Jesus on the cross. The Lord of glory, eternal son of God, came into our world and offered himself in the humiliation and shame of that crucifixion as a sacrifice for our sins. Deliver us from pettiness.

Deliver us from grasping after things. And we pray that the lordship of Jesus Christ will be the dominant factor in our lifestyle, in our attitudes to each other, in our thinking about the church, our thinking about the world, and our thinking about ourselves. We pray in his name.

Amen.

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