

45. Jesus Warned About the Scribes

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to answer the questions of others with the Word of God, instead of their own opinions. We said that the Father will use such answers to draw people to Jesus. In this topic, we are going to see that Jesus questioned the religious leaders about the Messiah.

The religious leaders had tried to trap Jesus by asking Him a series of questions. Then, Jesus went into the temple courtyard and began to teach. Mark 12:35-37 says, “Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, ‘How *is it* that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” Therefore David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; how is He *then* his Son?’ And the common people heard Him gladly.” Here, we see what Jesus often did when He went to Jerusalem. He went into the temple and started teaching. We see that Jesus often taught by asking questions. That was what He did that day.

We see that these questions were designed to help the people think about the Word of God, so they could begin to understand that the Old Testament taught that the Son of God came from the family of David. However, they also showed that the religious leaders did not understand what they taught. One of the teachings of the scribes was that the Christ is the Son of David. That was a true statement about Christ, because the genealogies in Matthew and Luke show us that both Mary and Joseph were descendants of David. Matthew 1:17 gives a summary when that verse says, “So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon *are* fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ *are* fourteen generations.” This verse says that Jesus was the twenty-eighth generation after David, thus showing that He is a descendent of David.

However, the second question of Jesus showed that the religious leaders did not understand what they taught, even when they taught from the Old Testament. David wrote, in Psalm 110:1, “The LORD said to my Lord, “‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” Jesus quoted this verse, and then asked the question, “Therefore David himself calls Him ‘*Lord*’; how is He *then* his Son?” We see that the quotation from Psalm 110 used two different names for God. The first word LORD is the Hebrew word Yahweh (Jehovah). By using this title, David made it clear that it was God the Father who called the Messiah “Lord”. Since the Father called the Messiah “Lord”, this quote shows that the Father says that Jesus is both the Son of David and the Son of God.

By His question, Jesus showed that David called one of his own descendants “Lord”. Romans 1:1-4 further explains, “Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, *and* declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Paul said that God promised through the prophets, who wrote the Holy Scriptures, that His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Lord. Paul also pointed out the fact that Jesus

was also a descendant of David by physical birth. Paul said that He was declared to be the Son of God with power. The common people heard Jesus gladly, but the religious leaders were very upset.

Jesus went on to give a warning about the religious leaders. Mark 12:38-40 says, “Then He said to them in His teaching, ‘Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, *love* greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.’” Christ warned the people to beware of the scribes, because He knew that their influence was very evil. Here, we see that Jesus pointed out that the religious leaders, especially the scribes, were controlled by pride and were not led by God. Then, Jesus gave several ways that they showed their pride.

First, they showed their pride by the wearing of long robes. Long robes were the loose outer garments, for men, that extended to the feet. They were usually only worn by kings, priests, and other persons of high rank. Matthew 23:5 adds one additional thing when that verse says, “But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.” Phylacteries were small cases that were fastened by a strap to the forehead or the left arm near the heart. These cases would have the following verses written on them: Exodus 13:1-10, 11-16, and Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21. Many Jews thought that these would drive away demons. The scribes made much larger cases, so they would be more noticeable. The Jews wore tassels on the bottom of their robes. However, the scribes would make their tassels longer to try to make other Jews think they were more spiritual.

Second, their pride was shown by the fact that they loved greetings in the marketplaces. The Jews had various titles for religious leaders like “Rabbi”, “Father” or “Teacher”. The scribes wanted the people to call them by these titles to cause the people to think they had more spiritual authority. Spiritual authority cannot be given by men, because Jesus said, in Matthew 28:18, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Titles can be given by man, but all spiritual authority belongs to Christ. Christ said, in Matthew 23:6-8, “They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.” Third, these verses also say they showed their pride because they wanted the best seats in the synagogues. Fourth, this pride was shown by the fact that they also wanted the best places at feasts.

Christ pointed out two things that showed their true character. First, the true character of the scribes was really shown by the way they took advantage of widows. We read that the scribes devoured widows’ houses. The job of the scribes was to make copies of written documents. As a result, they were often given the responsibility to write certain documents for widows regarding their estates. Many scribes would convince the widows to use much of their money to support their work as a scribe or to give much of their money to the temple since the scribes also received money for making copies of the Old Testament scrolls. Either way, it was self-gain for the scribes.

Second, Matthew 6:5 says, “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” It was a common practice of the scribes to pray for long periods in places where they could be seen by other people. They were not talking to God, but were only trying to impress the people.

While Christ was in the temple, He was sitting close to the treasury where the people gave their offerings. Mark 12:41-44 says, “Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many *who were* rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to *Himself* and said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.’” Jesus observed how the people put their money into the containers for their offerings.

In that day, the money consisted of coins of various sizes and various kinds of metal. A denarius was a coin that was a day’s wage for a common laborer. As Jesus, and the disciples, observed the giving of the people, many of the rich came and placed large bags of coins in the treasury. Of course, bags of coins usually rattle and often get noticed by others. As Jesus watched, He saw a poor widow come and drop two mites in the treasury. The two mites were small copper coins that together were only worth 1/64 of a denarius.

Jesus called the disciples to Himself and taught them a very important lesson that day about giving. Jesus said that the poor widow had given more than anyone else that gave an offering that day. Then, Jesus explained what He meant by that statement. The rich were giving out of their abundance. Jesus used this word when He warned about the danger of riches in Luke 12:15, which says: “And He said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’” The Jews thought that riches were a sign of God’s blessing. That was why Jesus gave this warning. Jesus followed this warning by giving the parable about the rich fool who died that night and took nothing with him.

In contrast, Jesus said that this woman gave out of her poverty. We see that she gave her whole livelihood. The word translated “livelihood” means *resources or goods*. This is the word that is used in the parable of the prodigal son, who told his father in Luke 15:12, “‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls *to me*.’ So he divided to them *his* livelihood.” Here, we see that the word spoke of the entire inheritance the man gave to his sons. Since this poor widow gave her entire livelihood, it meant she had nothing for her next meal until she earned some more money. Her love for the Lord caused her to give from her heart, and she gave all that she had. That was why Jesus said that she had given more than anyone else that day. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to give generously from the heart to the Lord by our example. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to focus on eternal riches, instead of worldly riches.