With regard to Mark 12:28-34, answer the following:

1. Identify the ways the episode of Mark 12:28-34 is similar to and/or different from the episodes that precede it in this context (11:27-33; 12:1-12; 12:13-17; 12:18-27). If you identify more than one, are any of these similarities or differences more important than the other? Why or why not?

Mark 12:28-34 episode	Similarity/difference	Other episodes
An individual teacher of the law (12:28)	Identity of people questioning Jesus (similarity)	Group of chief priests, teachers of law, elders (11:27) Pharisees and Herodians sent by chief priests, teachers of law, elders (12:13) Sadducees (12:18)
Honestly seeking out Jesus' answer (implied in 12:28)	Intent of Jesus' questioners (difference)	Challenge Jesus' authority (11:28) Catch Jesus in His words (12:13) Catch Jesus in His words (implied in 12:18-23)
Individual teacher of the law approached Jesus (12:28)	What triggered the episodes (similarity)	Group of chief priests, teachers of law, elders approached Jesus (11:27) Pharisees and Herodians approached Jesus (12:13) Sadducees approached Jesus (12:18)

Direct - asked honest question, sought honest answer (implied in 12:28)	Questioners' approach to Jesus (difference)	Confrontational - challenged Jesus' authority directly (11:28). Evasive when questioned by Jesus (11:31-33) Sucking up (12:14) Hypothetical, also hypocritical question (12:19-23)
Direct answer, quotes Scripture (12:29-31)	Form of Jesus' response (varies)	Countered with a question (11:29), refused to answer directly (11:33) offered a parable (12:1-9) and quoted Scripture (12:10b-11) Confronted them for trying to trap Him (12:15a), object lesson (12:15b-17) Teaching, quotes Scripture (12:24-27)
Agreement (12:32-33)	Questioners' reaction to Jesus' response (difference)	Evasive (11:31-33), sought to arrest Him (12:12) "Amazed" (12:17b) Sadducees' reaction in 12:18-27 episode not described
Commendation (12:34)	Jesus' response to questioners (difference)	Refuses to engage their question because they didn't answer His (11:29-33), spoke parable against them (12:12) Confronted them for their hypocrisy and trying to trap Him (12:15b)

		Chides them for not knowing Scripture & God's power (12:24-27)
Everybody stopped asking Jesus questions (12:34b)	How the episode ended (difference)	Sought to arrest Jesus (12:12) and sent Pharisees and Herodians to trap Jesus (12:13) Sadducees followed up with their own question (12:18-27) Teacher of the law heard the debate and posed his own question (12:28)

Of all these similarities and differences among episodes, I believe the two most important are the Intent of Jesus' questioners, and Jesus' response to them. Here is a summary list of the questions posed to Jesus in the various episodes:

- By what authority do You do these things? (11:28)
- Should we pay Caesar's imperial tax? (12:14-15a)
- How does marriage work in the resurrection? (12:19-23)
- Which commandment is the most important? (12:28b)

When these questions are taken at face value, while some of them reveal a misunderstanding of Scripture, they could easily be legitimate questions posed by honest people. However, Jesus treated only the last question as legitimate, because the questioner's intent was honest. He wasn't trying to challenge or trap Jesus. He simply asked an honest question and sought an honest answer. As a result, he was the only questioner in all these episodes to be commended by Jesus (12:34)

2. What is the meaning of the question in v. 28?

• The second and third questions asked of Jesus (12:14-15a, 12:19-23) concerned peripheral minutiae.

- The individual teacher of the law asked instead for an overarching summary of the commandments, for the one commandment that would rule them all (Lord of the Rings reference...).
- He confirms this by implication when he declares that loving God and neighbor is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices (12:33)
 - o No respectable Jewish teacher of the law would suggest that burnt offerings and sacrifices are unimportant
 - o However, this particular man recognizes that love of God and neighbor transcends and fulfills those ritual acts
- 3. What are the key components of the answer in vs. 29-33? Interpret each individually and as a whole. What is the meaning of Jesus quoting *these* OT texts? What is the meaning of the scribe repeating them in his answer?

I see two components of Jesus' answer in 12:29-33

- 1. Jesus quotes two Torah passages (Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18) (29-31)
- The Torah was highly regarded by Jewish leaders, so by quoting it Jesus was really speaking this man's language, creating common ground with him.
- Jesus answered by quoting existing Scripture, versus offering His own novel ideas. This shows Jesus' deference to God as revealed in the Torah, which is in line with Mark's theme of Jesus as the servant King.
- Jesus quotes these particular two OT texts because if a person obeys them, they will naturally meet the requirements of the entire Law.
- We are to love God with our whole, undivided selves.
- 2. Teacher of the law agrees with Jesus (32-33)
- · He demonstrates his understanding by repeating Jesus' answer
- He also voices the previously unspoken implication that loving God and neighbor is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices (33)
- This highlights the difference between the minutiae that other questioners asked about (12:14-15a, 12:19-23), and the overarching theme of loving God and neighbor.

Overall, 12:29-33 joins two commandments (Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18) into one great commandment through the concept of love. This passage also emphasizes that there is wisdom in pursuing the spirit of the Law rather than obsessing over the letter of the Law

4. What is the meaning of Jesus' response to the scribe (effect) in v. 34?

I see two possible meanings of Jesus' response to the teacher of the law ("You are not far from the kingdom of God).

- Could mean that he is close to qualifying for God's Kingdom
- Alternatively, could mean that he will enter into God's Kingdom when the time comes

Either way, this man is on the right track, certainly more so than Jesus' other questioners in the episodes in question. The way these episodes are set up suggests a contrast between Jesus' other questioners and this particular teacher of the law, and implies that the others are *not* close to the Kingdom of God.

5. Based on the interaction portrayed in 12:28-34a, why does no one dare ask Jesus any more questions (12:34b)?

- The Torah was what Jesus' opponents ostensibly held in high regard, and was the basis for the entire Jewish legal system
- Jesus had just upheld the Torah by quoting from it.
- He hadn't offered anything novel or any of His own opinion, and He certainly hadn't blasphemed.
- In effect, Jesus had beaten His opponents at their own game. In so doing, He demonstrated His authority.
- His opponents stopped asking questions because they knew they had been bested.