

1. Identify any 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).

In the chart below, **Blue text indicates similarity with 12:28-34** and **Red text indicates difference from 12:28-34**



#	<i>Descriptive Labels</i>	12:28-34	11:27-33	12:1-12	12:13-17	12:18-27
1	<i>Setting</i>	Jerusalem; In temple courts, immediately following the events of 12:18-27 (28; “came and heard them debating” = Scribe came to where Jesus and co. already were)	Jerusalem; In temple courts (27)	Jerusalem; In temple courts, immediately following the events of 11:27-33 (1; “then began”)	Jerusalem; Nothing indicates having left the temple courts, <u>but some time has passed</u> (13; “Later” = no clear indication as to how much time had passed)	Jerusalem; In temple courts, immediately following the events of 12:13-17 (18; “Then”)
2	<i>Nature of Jesus’ Main Actions</i>	Response to questioning (28-29; “he [the Scribe] asked...answered Jesus”)	Response to questioning (28-29; “they asked...Jesus replied)	Parabolic Teaching/Speaking Against the Opposition (1,12; “speak...in parables, spoke the parable against them”)	Response to questioning (14-15; a question is posed by group of Pharisees or Herodians, and Jesus responds)	Response to questioning (18,24; “came to him with a question, Jesus replied”)

3	<i>Content of Question</i>	Most important commandment (28)	Origin of authority (28)	NA	To pay, or not to pay (14b-15a)	Marriage after the Resurrection (23)
4	<i>Purpose of Question</i>	Test Jesus' knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of the Scriptures ▼ (Inferred; See response to question 2)	Interrogation of Christ	NA	Entrapment of Christ	Undefined... Presumably meant to befuddle Christ (i.e. make others question his teachings)
5	<i>Purpose of the Asking</i>	To Gain Clarity on Jesus' Intention and Motive for Teaching (Inferred; See response to question 2) ▼	Bring into Question Christ's Authority (28)	NA	Bring into Question Christ's Integrity (14)	Bring into Question Christ's Wisdom (Implied from the structure of the question, 19-23)
6	<i>Askers</i>	Unnamed Scribe/Teacher of the Law (28)	Chief Priests, Scribes, and Elders (27)	NA	Pharisees and Herodians (13)	Sadducees
7	<i>Type of Response Given by Jesus</i>	Teaching/Proclamation via Scriptural Reference (29-31)	Question of his own, followed by dismissal of opposition (29)	Deliverance of a Parable (1)	Teaching/Object Lesson (15)	Teaching/Proclamation via Scriptural Reference (26-27)
8	<i>Nature of Interaction</i>	Non-confrontational intrigue and answer (Inferred from the approach in 28) ▼	Active Conflict and Confrontation (27)	Passive Conflict and Confrontation (1,12)	Confrontation by-proxy (13)	Intrigue with implied ulterior motive, and correction (18,24,27)

Order of Important (in descending order) with justification

8 – **CRITICALLY IMPORTANT**; Indication of the progression of enlightenment of those found in the temple courts as evidenced by change in approach and motives.

- Beginning with an active argument, throughout the scenes, players become less argumentative and confrontational.
- The final question seems to be one less about “catching Christ” and more of a show of solidarity.

4,5 – **High Importance;** Supporting evidence to the trend spoken of above.

- Through the nature of the questions (4) and the motivations for asking (5), we see a certain relief of tensions between some characters as those in the temple courts witness the interaction of Jesus and his many interrogators.

2,7 – **Moderate Importance;** Edifying materials that help readers understand how Jesus approached these confrontations in such a manner as to dissuade the opposition in peaceful ways while also actively teaching to those around him.

1,3,6 – **Low Importance;** Material that provide contextualization and creates a seam between each scene by presenting the place, time, actors, and roles.

2. What is the meaning of the question in v. 28? *(Don't just repeat the question. Describe/define it in your own words.)*

The question asked by the unnamed Scribe in v. 28 serves a two-fold purpose:

- On the surface (obvious and safe): The Scribe inquires as to what this teacher (Jesus) would describe as the “greatest commandment,” or in other words, which of the many laws Jesus holds in the highest esteem; thereby judging his knowledge of the Law and respect for its sanctity.
- In the subtext (inferred from evidence below): By inquiring into Jesus’ respect for the Law, as well as his interpretation of the Law, the Scribe seeks to confirm for himself a solidarity with this man whose teaching has brought so much commotion to the Temple in these previous scenes.

Evidence:

1. Nothing is presented within the text by which to infer contempt or malice on the part of this inquiring Scribe.
2. The Scribe had “heard them debating” which means he must have been nearby, and may have heard the other interactions between Jesus and his opposition over the course of these scenes.
3. **The text describes the Scribe’s reaction to Jesus’ answer to the Sadducees in 12:18-27. It is said that the Scribe believes Christ to have “given them a good answer.”**

- a. For the answer to have been “good,” the Scribe must have agreed with it in principle and placement.

- i. Principle = overall, agrees with the assertion Jesus is making
- ii. Placement = feels that his use of this assertion in response to the Sadducees is valid

b. **This implies a potential notion of respect from the Scribe toward the teachings of Jesus.**

c. Because the Scribe realizes that perhaps Jesus' teachings are not so radical or troublesome, the Scribe seeks to test Christ a final time; not to discredit him per say, but to affirm for himself that **Christ** is worthy of teaching and, in fact, not an enemy.

3. What are the key components of the answer in vs. 29-33? Interpret each individually and as a whole.

I see 3 key components that come together to comprise the full structure of 'the answer'; each of which is reflected within Jesus' answer and the Scribe's answer.

1. The Lord is One Lord; 29,32
2. Love the Lord Completely; 30,33a
3. Love Your Neighbor Likewise; 31,33b



1. The Lord is One Lord; 29,32

a. Christ asserts that the Lord is singular, unique, and apart from anything else (29)

i. "The Lord our God" = recognizes the unique position of the Lord

- Implies sovereignty (Lord) and holiness (God)
- Indicates that we are His, as He is "our" God
 - Further indicates that God is relational.

ii. "the Lord is one" = recognizes God's singularity

- This demonstrates that Jesus has taught others to believe in/serve the One God, that is apart from himself

iii. **By using the statement as a whole, Mark shows Jesus to be expounding on the authority of God above all of mankind.**

- "our" God = our subordination to the Lord
- "one" Lord = Jesus' subordination to the Lord

- b. The Scribe displays good agreement that the Lord is the ultimate authority (32)
 - i. Mark shows the Scribe to declare Jesus as correct in his assertion
 - This is the first (potentially only) time in the series of events in the temple courts that the questioning party replies directly to Jesus' response to their inquiry.
 - **Also, Mark begins the Scribe's response by having him commend Jesus' teaching by stating "Well said, teacher..."**
 - ii. "one", "no other but him" = Scribe displays a likewise understand of God's singularity and sovereignty
 - iii. *Unlike Christ, however, Mark does not show the Scribe to imply any relationality within the identity of God*

Summary: Mark indicates the interaction between Jesus and the unnamed Scribe to begin as one of good faith by demonstrating both to agree on the terms of the Lord's authority as the "one" God, though Mark is potentially hinting at small discrepancies in their *full* understanding.

2. Love the Lord Completely; 30,33a

- a. Jesus states that mankind should love God completely (30)
 - i. "Love the Lord **your** God"
 - Again, use of the full title indicates the recognition of God's sovereignty as well as God's holiness
 - Jesus' use of the word "**your**" again implies a relationality that accompanies the identity of God
 - ii. Describes four modes of loving:
 - Mode 1: "all your heart"
 - Mode 2: "all your soul"
 - Mode 3: "all your mind"
 - Mode 4: "all your strength"
 - **Each mode envelopes a different facet of the human identity and is accompanied with the word "all" indicating that, according to Jesus' teaching, in every part of the life of humanity, mankind should love the Lord completely.**
- b. The Scribe demonstrates his agreement to Jesus' notion that mankind should love God completely (33a)
 - i. "To love him"
 - Mark seems to have the Scribe reflect Jesus' answer in structure and content in order to compare the level of understanding between the two.
 - ii. In reflecting Jesus' answer, the Scribe only mentions three modes of love:

- Mode 1: “all your heart”
 - Mode 2: “all your understanding”
 - Mode 3: “all your strength”
- c. Mark seems to be drawing the reader to compare the content of Jesus’ and the Scribe’s answer.
- i. Jesus seems to purposefully distinguish between “soul” and “mind”
 - ii. Scribe either leaves one of these two out, or groups them into the single notion of “understanding”
 - iii. The OT text also indicates only three modes of love: the heart, the soul, and the strength (cf. Duet. 6:4-5)

Summary: *Perhaps Mark means for the reader to see that though the Scribe has begun to agree with Jesus’ teachings, Jesus is actually adding subtle points to further develop the meaning of the Law and the Scribe does not fully grasp what Jesus is doing.*

3. Love Your Neighbor Likewise; 31,33b

- a. Jesus denotes that the “second” greatest commandment is the love of neighbor (31)
 - i. *Mark indicates by “second” that this is unwarranted information from Christ, as the inquiry requested only the single “greatest commandment.”*
 - ii. **Jesus’ expression of this information, however, leads the reader to believe that Christ saw this commandment as having similar value to that of “loving God.”**
 - iii. Jesus holds that with whatever measure you love yourself, at least that same measure of love should be expressed to your fellow man.
 - iv. This carries with it the implied connotations of relationship expressed in Christ previous statements.
- b. Scribe again expresses his agreement through the reflection of Christ’s answer (33b)
 - i. The Scribe reiterates Christ assertion here verbatim.
 - ii. Mark presents the Scribe’s response in such a way that *there is no acknowledgement of the superfluidity of the extra information* given in this part of Christ’s answer.
 - *This implies that the Scribe may have been expecting that this information should accompany the “greatest” commandment.*
 - iii. The Scribe goes on to overtly express that both of these are “more important” than offerings and sacrifices.

- Both offerings and sacrifices would have been regular topics of significant interest to the vendors in the temple courts.

Summary: Mark presents further, cementing agreement between Jesus and the unnamed Scribe that displays growing solidarity between the pair. The inclusion and acceptance of the “second” greatest commandment implies that Jesus was aware of the Scribe’s true purpose in asking, and the Scribe is satisfied by and supportive of Christ’s answer.

a. What is the meaning of Jesus quoting these OT texts?

- By presenting thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, Christ displays an ability and affinity for teaching that would be considered on par, if not superior, to those of the other teachers present in the temple courts.
 - This would allow him to demand the attention of those who are in the temple courts so that they would listen to him, as they would the other religious leaders.
- **By referencing the OT text, Jesus meets the unnamed Scribe (as well as the elders, chief priests, and other teachers of the law) “where they are” by speaking in terms of material that they would also be familiar with.**
 - *Furthermore, this would show that what Jesus means and intends to teach is not all that far removed from what “good” teachers would have already been teaching. So then, if the opposition were to challenge him on these points, they would likely be contradicting themselves.*
- Speaking in terms of OT knowledge, Jesus is able to expand the common understanding of what/who God is through his own interpretation of the text. [*inferred from the addition of a 4th mode of love and the persistent presentation of God as relational*]

b. What is the meaning of the scribe repeating them in his answer?

- By reflecting the points Jesus spoke on, the Scribe shows an acceptance and agreement with Christ’s assertions.
- In repeating the quoted OT knowledge, Mark is indicating that the Scribe believes that he understands what Jesus means by what Jesus has spoken, and may be repeating it for the sake of certainty.
- **By presenting the Scribe’s view of what Jesus has spoken, Mark allows the possibility for Christ to act further by correcting, commending, or ignoring what the Scribe understands himself to have heard.**

- In repeating what Christ said, further stating it to be “right” and “well said,” the Scribe would also inform those who bear witness to the exchange (those watching or within earshot) that Jesus is not an enemy and is not teaching anything that is against the Law.

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

To answer this question, I want to look further into v. 34a (Jesus’ final response to the unnamed Scribe).

- a. Jesus believes that the Scribe is “wise” in his response in 32-33
 - i. Wise = positive response, esteemed
 - ii. Mark conveys here that Jesus finds the Scribe’s interpretation of what he said to be correct**
 - iii. Use of the term “wise” *may also suggest* that the Scribe was more fully aware of the meaning of Christ’s statement than previously indicated.
- b. Mark has indicated that Jesus and the unnamed Scribe are now definitively on the same page**
 - i. It could be **assumed** that the unnamed Scribe believed as the other scribes and religious leaders believed, up until bearing witness to Jesus’ teaching.
 - ii. By conveying a mutual understanding resulting from these many exchanges, Mark displays a solidarity between this Scribe and Jesus that is not found in the other interactions at the temple courts.
 - iii. Jesus has communicated his message effectively to at least one person belonging to the opposition.**
- c. “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”
 - i. Mark does not provide evidence to *precisely* interpret what Jesus means in saying this
 - ii. Mark does make it apparent that Jesus is speaking this as a proclamation – a pointed final response – to the Scribe.
 - iii. This would be a statement of great gravitas (i.e. one only spoken from a position of high authority)

With this in mind, I am led to believe that no one dared to ask more questions for these reasons:

- **Christ has proven that he is knowledgeable in the Scriptures**
- **Christ has shown that he is not overtly opposed to the religion of the people, as he shows solidarity with a teacher in the unnamed Scribe**
- **In showing solidarity with the Scribe, Christ poses a new type of threat to religious leaders in the temple courts, as continuing to contest Jesus may result in a rift being created between these religious leaders and may also result in Christ gaining even more followers.**

Interaction with Secondary Sources:

The following notes are review from Donahue and Harrington's, *The Gospel of Mark*, which is the only secondary source that was able to be reviewed in a timely manner.

First Impressions: I observe that my findings throughout the study of the text presented above are in good agreement with the notes and interpretations made in Donahue and Harrington (DH), pg. 354-358. Below are summaries of their notes accompanied with any pertinent discussion or reflection.

- v. 28: DH acknowledges the difference in approach and disposition of the unnamed Scribe relative to that of the other religious leaders in previous scenes.
 - Normally, the opposition approaches Jesus in a controversial manner.
 - This Scribe is seeming positively disposed toward Christ.
 - These observations are in agreement with those above that are used as evidence in my response to question 2.
 - This suggests that Mark has distinct purpose for presenting this question asker as “a Scribe” rather than just any individual.

- v. 29: DH makes note that Jesus responds with two commandments, rather than the single greatest commandment which was asked of him.
 - DH states that the purpose of this suggests the belief that “no one commandment suffices” to answer the Scribe’s inquiry.
 - See point 3.a.i-iv beneath question 3 to see my own observation and commentary on this.

- v. 30: DH suggests purpose within Christ’s referencing of the OT text and responding in such a manner.
 - By founding his response on Scripture, and structuring his reply in this way, Jesus’ assertion is firmly rooted with Jewish tradition.
 - DH goes on to support the notion that this was in order to appeal to what was familiar to the Scribe directly (which I state above, I agree with)
 - In reference to 4 modes of loving that Christ proclaims, DH says “The reason for piling up all these...is to insist that the whole person is to love God.”
 - A claim I also make in point 2.a.ii.

- v. 31: DH notes the linking of the “first” and “second” by the word “love,” stating that this implies that the two must be joined together in order to constitute the “greatest” commandment.
- v. 32: DH goes beyond the scope of my study stating that in the parallel synoptic passages, the content of agreement and praise is absent.
- This suggests that Mark is **purposefully drawing the attention** of the reader/listener to the idea of connection and solidarity between the two individuals (the unnamed Scribe and Jesus)
 - This is outside the scope of my study, but I want to make note that I feel this is a MISSION CRITICAL (to steal Dr. Miller’s favorite phrase) element to understanding Mark’s purpose in his writing here.

Interpretative statement on purpose of the OT reference by Christ: pg. 358 – “Jesus summarizes the foundational ethics of the Torah and provides a basis by which Christians can appreciate the heritage of the Jewish Scripture.”

-- I do not actually mean to respond to this notion, as I do not believe it pertains to the actual question within this assignment, but I want to make note of it for personal study. It does not necessarily speak to Jesus’ purpose then, but certainly to a product of his purpose now.