



# The Gospel of Mark

A Living Word Independent Bible Study



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## Part 33

### Mark 12:35-44

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(NIV)

## INTRODUCTION

The series of confrontations between Jesus and the Jerusalem authorities has now come to an end.

ALL of these confrontations have been a direct result of Jesus' demonstration of authority in the Temple upon his arrival in Jerusalem.

Now, Jesus will take the initiative with a series of teachings that continue to be deeply critical of the Jerusalem establishment.

## Mark 12:35 (NIV)

While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, “How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David?”

“While Jesus was teaching”

This is a continuation of the temple teaching, but here, Jesus takes the initiative to talk about Messianic expectation.

“the Christ is the son of David”

“Son of David” as a reference to the Messiah was very common in Jesus’ day.

But Jesus implies that there is no Scriptural basis for doing so!

This actually is somewhat curious – while the term is nowhere EXPLICITLY used in the Old Testament, there are a number of texts that make reference to the idea:

Jeremiah 23:5 – “The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.”

Jeremiah 33:15 – “In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line; he will do what is just and right in the land.”

Isaiah 11:1 – “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a branch will bear fruit.”

Zechariah 3:8 – “Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch.”

Zechariah 6:12 – “Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord.”

All of this led scribes to adopt the name “Son of David” for “the Messiah”.

So what is Jesus getting at here?

# Mark 12:36 (NIV)

“David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: ‘The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’””

“David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit”

David was understood by the people to have had the gift of prophecy.

2 Samuel 23:1-2 – “These are the last words of David: ‘The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel’s singer of songs: ‘The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.’”

“the Lord said to my Lord”

Thus, Psalm 110:1, which is quoted here, is Spirit-inspired – this is God’s direct word.

“sit at my right hand”

This would be a great honor.

Jesus will talk about being seated at the right hand of God in 14:61-62 at his Jewish trial.

“until I put your enemies under your feet”

This is a promise that God will defeat the king’s enemies and make them subservient to David.

## Mark 12:37 (NIV)

“David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?” The large crowd listened to him with delight.

“How then can he be his son?”

The gist of the argument is this:

The first “Lord” in the quotation is referring to God the Father.

The second “Lord” (MY “Lord”) is a reference to the Messiah, the one who will come and conquer all enemies.

The point rests in the assumption that to be the “son of” someone is to be subordinate or inferior to them.

David calls the Messiah “MY LORD” – a superior, not an inferior.

Jesus is asking, “Is the Messiah NO MORE than a “later David”? He suggests that David himself did not think so!

Jesus does not DENY the concept of Davidic descent, he is just shifting the emphasis and the point.

The Messiah is rightfully understood as GOD’S Son, not merely as DAVID’S son.

Therefore, “Son of David” is an INSUFFICIENT label for the Messiah!

Remember, again, Mark 1:1

Mark 1:1 – “The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

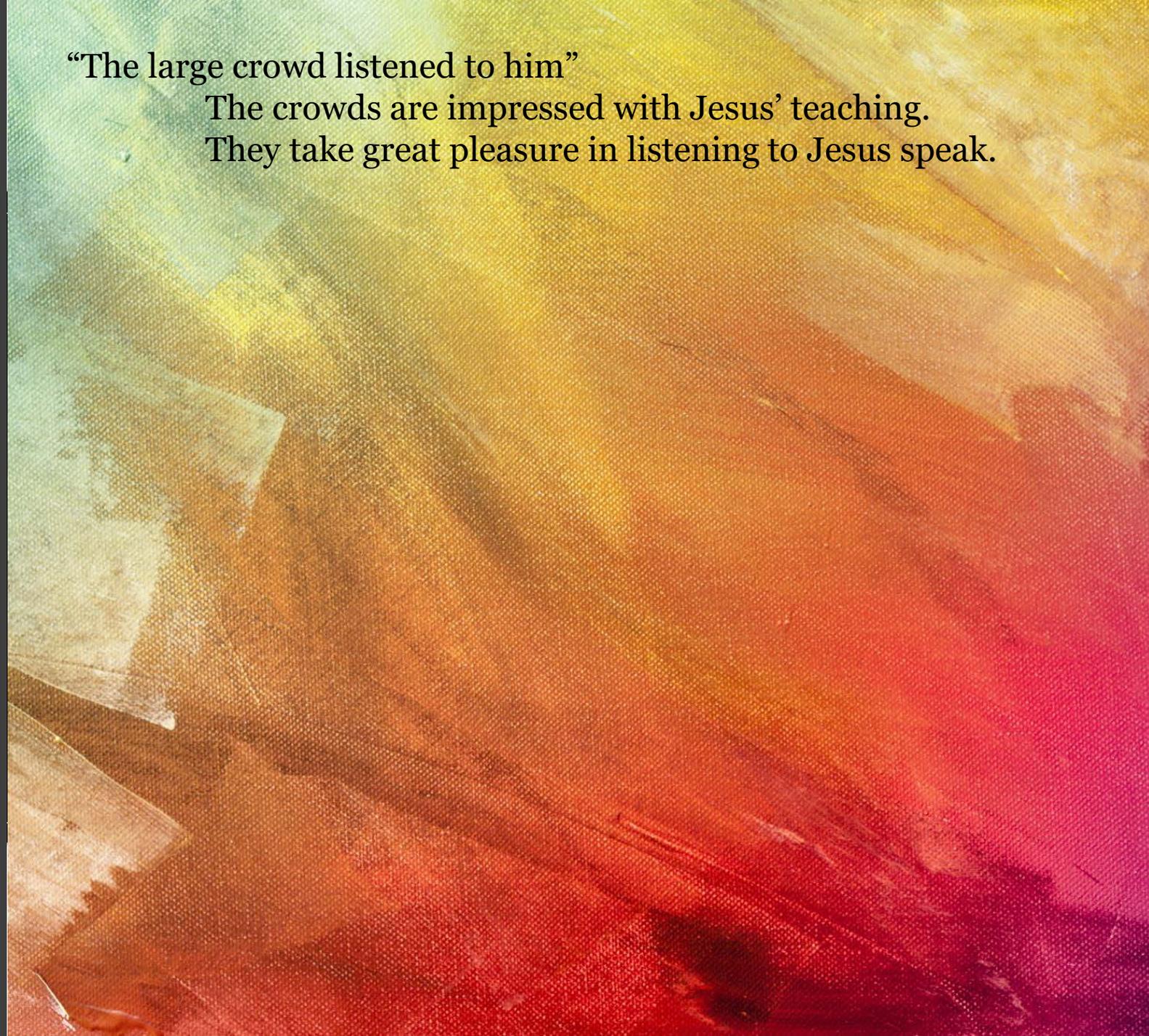
David can call his own descendant “My Lord” because he is more than a biological descendant, he is related to GOD, the one “like a son of man” from Daniel 7:13-14.

## Mark 12:37 (NIV)

“David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?” The large crowd listened to him with delight.

“The large crowd listened to him”

The crowds are impressed with Jesus’ teaching.  
They take great pleasure in listening to Jesus speak.



# Mark 12:38-39

(NIV)

As he taught, Jesus said, “Watch out for the teachers of the law.

They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets.”

In this new passage, notice that there are three parts here:

A warning

A description of behaviors

A pronouncement of judgment

“watch out for the teachers of the law”

There have been two earlier “watch out!” statements:

Mark 4:24 – “Consider carefully (‘watch out’ in Greek) what you hear,’ he continued, ‘With the measure you use, it will be measured to you – and even more.’”

Mark 8:15 – “‘Be careful,’ Jesus warned them. ‘Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.’”

This time, it is a warning about false piety and worship.

“flowing robes ... be greeted ... most important seats”

These are three descriptions of VANITY!

Special robes that draw attention to themselves, even in the marketplace

By custom, those of lower rank were expected to greet those of higher rank

At banquets, people sat near the host in order of acknowledged rank

## Mark 12:40 (NIV)

“They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.”

“devour widows’ homes”

Not only are they vain, but they are complicit in the ruination of the most vulnerable members of society, too.

We don’t have a lot of details, but scholars offer these possibilities of what their activities actually consisted of:

As lawyers, cheating widows out of houses left to them by deceased husbands’ wills

Taking advantage of (freeloading off of) the hospitality of widows

Mismanaging widows’ estates that had been entrusted to them

Taking money from widows in return for the benefit of intercessory prayer

Taking houses as pledge for debts that could not realistically be repaid

“lengthy prayers”

Again, it is the ostentation and pursuit of recognition.

“punished most severely”

Because they exploit the poor and insult God with phony prayers.

These are explicit examples of failures to fulfill the Great Commandment to love God and love neighbor.

# Mark 12:41 (NIV)

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.

This story is a direct contrast to the condemned scribes – contrasting false and genuine religion.

Could it be, perhaps, that the widow who is praised in the story is poor BECAUSE she is a victim of the scribes' behavior?

If so, Jesus' words here are as much lament as they are praise.

“the temple treasury”

There were 13 trumpet-shaped receptacles to cast money into.

Some were designated to specific purposes, others were for “freewill” offerings.

“rich people threw in large amounts”

The temple had IMMENSE wealth.

Wealthy landowners DID contribute huge sums to the temple.

## Mark 12:42 (NIV)

But a poor widow came  
and put in two very  
small copper coins,  
worth only a fraction of  
a penny.

“a poor widow came”

Again, this reminds us of the previous story.

“two copper coins”

In Greek, “two lepta”.

100 lepta made a denarius, which was about a day’s  
wages.

2 lepta in Jesus’ day could buy a handful of flour, or  
enough for one meager meal.

## Mark 12:43 (NIV)

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.”

“calling his disciples to him”

Notice that this teaching, once again, is private.

“I tell you the truth”

Always signals an important teaching.

“this poor widow”

Jesus could probably tell she was poor from her dress.

## Mark 12:44 (NIV)

“They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.”

“out of their wealth ... out of her poverty”

Jesus emphasizes the contrasting circumstances.

“Wealth” here could be translated “surplus”.

“Poverty” here could be translated “deficiency”.

The point is that the woman had nothing extra – the large gifts would not be missed by their donors, but the widow’s gift took food right out of her own mouth.

As expected, Jesus takes up the cause of the marginalized.

And at the same time, has leveled another accusation against the religious temple establishment for failing to live up to its obligations under the Law to protect widows.

# Mark 12:35-44

(NIV)

## SUMMARY

Throughout the teaching in Jerusalem, Jesus has been increasingly critical of the temple establishment.

Taking the initiative, Jesus taught that the Messianic expectation of the Jews was insufficient – the Messiah is not merely “son of David”, but “Son of God”!

We have also now seen Jesus leveling additional accusations against the religious elite.

They are utterly vain, but Jesus’ deepest criticism concerns their utter failure to protect widows – even preying upon them instead.

One of these widows then becomes the living example of sacrificial giving to God.

In the next lesson, the criticism reaches a major culmination, as Jesus prophesies to his inner circle of disciples about the coming destruction of the temple itself.



## Bibliography

The following materials have been used as sources for this Bible study:

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