

Gospel of Mark 23 - Chapter 12, verses 35 - 44:-

The reading this week takes place in the Temple in Jerusalem. At the time of the Lord Jesus it was the centre and heart of Jewish worship. Here was the daily sacrifice as well as the yearly festivals that the people had celebrated for centuries. This was also the scene of the “cleansing of the Temple” recorded in Mark chapter 11, verses 15 – 16. Even in his youth the Lord Jesus Christ recognised the Temple as “*my Father’s house*” - see Luke chapter 2, verse 49. The setting of the teaching on the Messiah (the Christ) in Mark chapter 12, verses 35 – 37 is important as we look at the implication of the words of the Lord Jesus in context and, in the next study, move on to the prophecy about the destruction of the Temple in chapter 13.

Verses 35 – 37 – Teaching about the Messiah:- Because “*No one dared to question him any more*” (verse 35) the Lord Jesus continues with his teaching to anyone who will listen. The Pharisees and Scribes held firmly to the doctrine that the coming Messiah would be ‘Son of David’; i.e. that he would be ‘of the tribe of Judah and the house and lineage of David. The question asked can be taken as being directed at the opponents of the Lord Jesus who, no doubt, were still listening in the background.

The quote is from Psalm 110 verse 1. By his introduction to this passage the Lord Jesus Christ affirmed the Davidic authorship as well as the divine “*inspiration*” of the psalm. His purpose in using David’s words was to press home from the Scripture itself the truth of the deity of the Messiah. The fact that the Lord Jesus pointed up was that David called him Lord. How can the Messiah be both David’s exalted Lord and his son? In the Gospel of Matthew we read that “*no one was able to answer him a word*” (Matthew chapter 22, verse 46). There standing before them was the incarnate Son of God, Israel’s Messiah. He was “*descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God according to the Spirit of Holiness*” see Romans chapter 1, verses 3 – 4.

That “*a great crowd listened to him with pleasure*” or “*heard him gladly*” Mark chapter 12, verse 37. Remember that this teaching came just two days after the ‘Triumphal Entry’ into Jerusalem. The ‘great crowd’ were no doubt looking for the leadership expected from the traditional Jewish Messiah.

Verses 38 – 40 – Condemnation of ‘the Scribes’:- It would seem that some at least of the Jewish religious leadership were ‘on the make’! The Scribes were recognised as honourable community leaders but were actually guilty of the most despicable kind of dishonesty. Pretending to visit, and no doubt help widows with the paperwork, as well as offer consolation on their loss, the Scribes were engaged in crooked schemes to deprive the widows of their very houses. See the condemnation of both the Scribes and the Pharisees in Matthew chapter 23, verses 2 – 12.

Verses 41 – 44 – The Value of a Gift:- “*The treasury*” was located in the temple area known as the Court of the Women. It contained thirteen trumpet-shaped chests for the deposit of gifts and the Temple tax. It appears that the Lord Jesus sat and watched the giving for some time and that he observed a number of wealthy people making gifts. Some of these must have been ostentatious in showing the amount of money they were giving. A bit ‘look at me, aren’t I generous!’ The word for “*a poor widow*” can be translated as “*a pauper*”. She was seen by the Lord Jesus as she very carefully put in “*all that she had*”, two of the smallest coins in circulation valued at one-quarter of a cent.

The principle pointed up by the Lord Jesus on this occasion is that a gift is to be evaluated, not by its size but by the total amount available to the giver. A large donation out of abundance may be less significant than a small donation out of poverty. This woman gave the smallest possible gift, but it was more significant than the others for it was “*all that she had*”.

As an example of the blessing that may follow this kind of giving, read 1 Kings chapter 17, verses 8 – 16.