

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION TO MARK 12

Ver. 1. *And he began to speak unto them by parables,* etc..] As of the two sons the father bid go to work in the vineyard; and of the planting of a vineyard, and letting it out to husbandmen, as here; though the latter is only related by this evangelist, yet both are by Matthew. This was not the first time of his speaking by parables to the people, though it might be the first time he spake in this way to the chief priests and elders, and who are particularly designed in them.

A certain man planted a vineyard. The Persic version adds, “with many trees”: that is, with vines, though sometimes other trees, as fig trees, were planted in vineyards; (see ^{<2336>}Luke 13:6). This man is, by the Evangelist Matthew, called an “householder”: by whom is meant God the Father, as distinguished from his Son, he is afterward said to send: and by the “vineyard”, planted by him, is meant the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, the men of Israel, (^{<2337>}Isaiah 5:1,7);

and set an hedge about it, or “wall”, as the Persic version renders it; meaning either the law, not the Jews oral law, or the traditions of the elders, which were not of God's setting, but the ceremonial and moral law; or the wall of protection by divine power, which was set around the Jewish nation especially when they went up to their solemn feasts.

And digged a place for the winefat. The Syriac and Arabic versions add, “in it”; and the Persic version, “in the vineyard”; for this was made in the vineyard, where they, trod and squeezed the grapes when gathered; and may design the altar in the house of the Lord, where the libations, or drink offerings, were poured out;

and built a tower. The Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions add, “in it”; for this also was built in the vineyard, and may intend either the city of Jerusalem; or the temple in it, the watch house where the priests watched, and did their service, day and night.

And let it out to husbandmen; or “workmen”, as the Arabic version renders it, who wrought in it, and took care of the vines. The Ethiopic version renders it, “and set over it a worker and keeper of the vineyard”; by whom are meant the priests and Levites, to whom were committed the care of the people, with respect to religious things:

and went into a far country; left the people of the Jews to these husbandmen, or rulers, whether civil or ecclesiastical, but chiefly the latter, to be instructed and directed by them, according to the laws and rules given them by the Lord; (see Gill on “⁴²³³Matthew 21:33”).

Ver. 2. *And at the season he sent unto the husbandman a servant*, etc..] The Evangelist Matthew says, “when the time of the fruit drew near”, (⁴²³⁴Matthew 21:34); and so the Persic version here reads. The Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, “in its own time”, or “season”, which was the fourth year from the planting of it; and then it was holy to the Lord; and might not be eaten until the fifth year, (⁴⁸²³Leviticus 19:23-25). According to the Jewish canons ^{f203}, a vineyard of the fourth year was marked with clods of earth, to show it was not to be eaten of; and the fruit of it was brought up to Jerusalem, from every place that was but a day's journey from thence, there to be eaten, or redeemed. Nor by the “servant” are intended the prophets of the Old Testament, who were sent to the Jews to call upon them to bring forth fruits of righteousness; for not a single person, but a set of men, are here designed; and the Evangelist Matthew expresses it in the plural number, “servants”:

that he might receive from the husbandmen the fruit of the vineyard: by the hands of his servants; for in Matthew it is, “that they might receive”, etc.. such as righteousness and judgment, truth and holiness, so as to give an account of them, which might have been expected from a people under such advantages, (²¹⁰⁷Isaiah 5:7); (see Gill on “⁴²³⁴Matthew 21:34”).

Ver. 3. *And they caught him*, etc..] This clause is left out in the Syriac and Persic versions, though it seems proper to be retained; and denotes the rudeness and violence with which the prophets of the Lord were used by the Jewish nation:

and beat him: either with their fists, or with rods, and scourges, till the skin was flayed off:

and sent him away empty; without any fruit to carry with him, or give an account of, to the owner of the vineyard.

Ver. 4. *And again he sent unto them another servant*, etc..] Another set of good men, to instruct, advise, and counsel them, and exhort them to their duty; such as were Isaiah, Zechariah, and others:

and at him they cast stones, and wounded [him] in the head; for of these were stoned, as well as sawn asunder, and slain with the sword; though it seems, that this servant, or this set of men, were not stoned to death, because he was afterwards said to be sent away: nor could the stoning be what was done by the order of the sanhedrim, which was done by letting an heavy stone fall upon the heart ^{f204}; but this was done by all the people, by the outrageous zealots, in the manner Stephen was stoned. Dr. Lightfoot thinks, the usual sense of the Greek word may be retained; which signifies “to reduce”, or “gather into a certain sum”: and so as this servant was sent to reckon with these husbandmen, and take an account from them of the fruit of the vineyard, one cast a stone at him, saying, there is fruit for you; and a second cast another stone, saying the same thing; and so they went on one after another, till at last they said, in a deriding way, now the sum is made up with you:

and sent [him] away shamefully handled; with great ignominy and reproach.

Ver. 5. *And again he sent another*, etc..] That is, another servant, or set of men, it may be in the times of the Maccabees, who were used in a very inhuman manner; (see ^{<8157>}Hebrews 11:37,38);

and him they killed; either with the sword, or by inflicting some capital punishment, as stoning, strangling, etc..

and many others; that is, either the owner of the vineyard sent many other servants, or the husbandmen ill used many others that were sent to them:

beating some; with their hands, or with scourges;

and killing some; in one or other of the above ways.

Ver. 6. *Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved*, etc..] The Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the one, and only Son of God his Father, his only begotten Son, for he has no other Son in the same way of filiation; and who is his dear Son, the Son of his love, who was loved by him before the foundation of the world; and whom he declared to be his beloved Son, both at his baptism, and at his transfiguration upon the mount, by a voice

from heaven: this Son he having with him, in his bosom, as one brought up with him, and rejoicing before him,

he sent him also last unto them; after all the prophets had been with them, when the last days were come, the end of the Jewish state, civil and ecclesiastical; (see ^{<3001>}Hebrews 1:1);

saying, they will reverence my son. The Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions read, “perhaps they will reverence my son”, as in (^{<2013>}Luke 20:13); (see Gill on “^{<4215>}Matthew 21:37”).

Ver. 7. *But those husbandmen said among themselves*, etc..] This, in the Persic version, is introduced thus, “when the vine dressers saw the son of the lord of the vineyard”: agreeably to (^{<4218>}Matthew 21:38). The Ethiopic version renders it, “and the servants said”; not the servants that had been sent, but the workmen in the vineyard:

this is the heir; that is, “of the vineyard”, as the Persic version expresses it they knew him by the prophecies of the Old Testament which had described him, and by the miracles which were wrought by him; and they could not deny but that the vineyard of the house of Judah belonged to him, and he was right heir to the throne of Israel; though they refused to embrace him, confess him, and declare for him: but, on the other hand, said,

come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours; that is, “the vineyard”, and the Persic version again read. The priests, Scribes, and elders of the people consulted together to take away his life, with this view: that they might continue in the quiet possession of their nation, temple, and worship, in the office they bore, and in the privileges they partook of; and that the Romans might not come, and take away their place and nation, (^{<3147>}John 11:47,48); (see Gill on “^{<4218>}Matthew 21:38”).

Ver. 8. *And they took him, and killed him, and cast him, out of the vineyard*.] They sent their officers and servants, and apprehended him in the garden; they delivered him to the Gentiles, who were without the vineyard, and by whom, at their instigation, he was put to death, even to the death of the cross. The Ethiopic version reads it in the same order as in Matthew; “they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him”; (see Gill on “^{<4219>}Matthew 21:39”).

Ver. 9. *What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do?* etc..] The Arabic and Ethiopic versions add, to them; that is, to the husbandmen, as is expressed in (^{<414>}Matthew 21:40), (see Gill on "^{<414>}Matthew 21:40"):

he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. As the former clause contains a question put by Christ upon his having finished the parable, this is an answer to it, given by the chief priests, Scribes, and elders, in whose presence, and for whose sake it was delivered; (see Gill on "^{<414>}Matthew 21:41").

Ver. 10. *And have ye not read this Scripture?* etc..] In (^{<482>}Psalm 118:22,23) these are the words of Christ directed to the above persons, who were, many of them, teachers of the people, and therefore ought to have read the scriptures, and have taken notice of, and considered more especially such as respected the Messiah, as this passage did, and was very appropriate to the case in the parable Christ had respect unto:

the stone which the builders rejected, is become the head of the corner: by "the stone" is meant the same with the son and heir in the parable, even himself, the true Messiah; and by "the builders", the chief priests, Scribes, and elders, the same with the husbandmen, whose rejection of the stone, or of the Messiah, is signified by their seizing him, casting him out of the vineyard, and killing him; and yet notwithstanding all this, according to this Scripture, he was to be, and now is become, the head of the corner, exalted above angels and men, at the right hand of God; (see Gill on "^{<414>}Matthew 21:42").

Ver. 11. *This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.*] That is, the exaltation of the Messiah, after he had been so ill treated, and at last put to death by the Jews. These words are a continuation of the passage cited out of (^{<482>}Psalm 118:22,23).

Ver. 12. *They sought to lay held on him,* etc..] That is, the chief priests, Scribes, and elders, after they had heard the parables he spake to them, were greatly irritated, and provoked, and had a good will to have seized him, and carried him away, and have had him before their court, and condemn him:

but feared the people; lest they should rise up in his defence, and fall on them; for many of them liked; and were attached to his ministry; and others had received favours of one kind or another from him through his miracles:

for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and that they were the husbandmen designed, who had not brought the fruit of the vineyard to their lord, but had ill treated his servants, and would his son.

And they left him; in the temple, not daring to do any thing to him:

and went their way; to their council chamber, perhaps to consult what measures to take, and how to destroy him.

Ver. 13. *And they send unto him,* etc..] That is, the chief priests, Scribes, and elders, who had been with Jesus in the temple, and were silenced by his reasonings, and provoked by his parables; and therefore left him, and went together to consult what methods they should take to get him into their hands, and be revenged on him; the result of which was, they send to him

certain of the Pharisees. The Syriac and Persic versions read “Scribes”, who were the more skillful and learned part of that body of men, and scrupled paying tribute to Caesar, he being an Heathen prince, and they the Lord's free people:

and of the Herodians; who were, as the Syriac and Persic versions read, “of the household of Herod”; his servants and courtiers, and consequently in the interest of Caesar, under whom Herod held his government, and must be for paying tribute to him: these two parties of such different sentiments, they sent to him,

to catch him in his words; or “in word”, or discourse; either with their word, the question they should put to him, or with his word, the answer he should return: and so the Ethiopic version supplies it, reading it, “with his own word”; they thought they should unavoidably catch him, one way or other; just as a prey is hunted, and taken in a net or snare, as the word used signifies: for if he declared against giving tribute to Caesar, the Herodians would have whereof to accuse him, and the Pharisees would be witnesses against him; and if he should be for it, the latter would expose him among the people, as an enemy to their civil liberties, and one that was for subjecting them to the Roman yoke, and consequently could not be the Messiah and deliverer they expected; (see Gill on “⁴²⁶Matthew 22:16”).

Ver. 14. *And when they were come,* etc..] Unto Jesus in the temple:

they said unto him, master; they saluted him in like manner, as they did their doctors and Rabbins, calling him “Rabbi”, though they were not his

disciples; but one part of them were the disciples of the Pharisees, and the other had Herod for their master;

we know that thou art true; an honest, sincere, and upright man,

and carest for no man, for thou regardest not the person of men; no, not Caesar himself;

but teachest the way of God in truth; instructest men in the word, will, and worship of God, with all integrity and faithfulness; answer therefore this question,

is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not? The Syriac and Persic versions read, “head money”; and so it is read in Beza’s most ancient copy; a tax that was levied on the heads of families; or on every particular head in a family; (see Gill on “⁴¹²¹⁶Matthew 22:16-17”).

Ver. 15. *Shall we give, or not give?* etc..] They not only ask whether it was lawful, but whether also it was advisable to do it, that they might not only accuse him of his principles, but charge him with persuading, or dissuading in this case. These words are left out in the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions:

but he knowing their hypocrisy; expressed in their flattering titles and characters of him, and which lay hid in their secret designs against him; which being thoroughly known to him,

said unto them, why tempt ye me: bring me a penny, that I may see it; what it is, that is required for tribute; (see Gill on “⁴¹²¹⁸Matthew 22:18-19”).

Ver. 16. *And they brought it*, etc..] The penny, which was a Roman one, and worth seven pence halfpenny of our money:

and he saith unto them, whose is this image, and superscription; for it had the head of an emperor upon it, very likely the image of the then reigning emperor Tiberius, and a superscription on it, expressing his name, and perhaps a motto along with it:

and they said unto him, Caesar’s; one of the Roman emperors, Augustus, or Tiberius; most probably the latter; (see Gill on “⁴¹²²¹Matthew 22:20-21”).

Ver. 17. *And Jesus answering said unto them*, etc..] Very wisely and pertinently,

render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's: or “to the king, which are the king's”, as the Arabic and Ethiopic versions render it:

and to God the things that are God's; (see Gill on “⁴⁰²¹Matthew 22:21”);

and they marvelled at him; at his wisdom and prudence in returning such an answer, which cut off all occasion against him.

Ver. 18. *Then came unto him the Sadducees*, etc..] The same day, immediately after he had silenced the Pharisees and Herodians: these were a set of men distinct from the former, in some of their sentiments, especially in their religions ones, and particularly in the following:

which say there is no resurrection: of the dead, in a literal sense, either general or particular; (see Gill on “⁴⁰²³Matthew 22:23”);

and they asked him, saying; as in the next verse.

Ver. 19. *Master, Moses wrote unto us*, etc..] Has left in writing for us the following precept to observe; for they acknowledged the writings of Moses, and indeed all the Scriptures of the Old Testament; adhering to the literal sense of them, and rejecting the traditional interpretation of them by the Rabbins:

if a man's brother die, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother; which is the sense of the law in (⁴⁰²⁵Deuteronomy 25:5); (see Gill on “⁴⁰²⁴Matthew 22:24”).

Ver. 20. *Now there were seven brethren*, etc..] In a certain family, at a certain place; perhaps at Jerusalem, who were brethren by the father's side; for such only were reckoned so, and such only did this law oblige:

and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed: no child: hence it is clear that the ancient Jews used the word seed, of a single person, as these Sadducees did; though modern ones deny such an use of it in our present controversies with them about the sense of (⁴⁰²⁵Genesis 3:15 22:18); (see Gill on “⁴⁰²⁵Matthew 22:25”).

Ver. 21. *The second took her*, etc..] To wife, married her, as the next eldest brother, by the above law was obliged to: and so the Jewish ^{f205} canon upon it runs thus;

“the command is, **I wdgb**, “for the eldest” to marry his brother's wife: if he will not, they go to all the brethren; if they will not, they

return to the eldest, and say, the command is upon thee, either pluck off the shoe, or marry.”

Maimonides ^{f206} relates it in this manner;

“if a man dies, and leaves many brethren, the command is upon the eldest to marry, or pull off the shoe; as it is said, (^{<RB>}Deuteronomy 25:6), “and it shall be the firstborn which she beareth”. From tradition, it is learned that it does not speak but of the firstborn among the brethren; and it is all one as if it was said, the eldest of the brethren shall succeed in the name of his brother that is dead; and this is what is said, “which she beareth”: the sense is, which the mother has borne, and not which the brother's wife beareth; if the eldest will not marry her, they go round to all the brethren; and if they will not, they return to the eldest, and say, upon thee is the command, either pluck off the shoe, or marry; and they do not compel him to marry, but they compel him to pluck off the shoe;”

i.e. in case he will not marry.

And died, neither left he any, seed, and the third likewise; married her, and died without issue, as the second did. The Persic version adds, “and the fourth, and fifth”; for so they all did to the seventh.

Ver. 22. *And the seventh had her, and left no seed,* etc.] All, the seven brethren married her, one after another, and neither of them had any children by her:

and last of all the woman died also; after all the seven brethren, to whom she had been married.

Ver. 23. *In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise,* etc.] This last clause, “when they shall rise”, is omitted in two copies of Beza's, and in the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, because, perhaps, it might be thought superfluous; but this is agreeably to the way of speaking and writing with the Jews: so in the Targum on (^{<RB>}Zechariah 3:7): *nya ayty m twyab*, “in the quickening of the dead I will quicken thee”; or, in the resurrection of the dead I will raise thee. The question put on supposition of a resurrection, and that these seven brethren, and the wife they all had should rise, then is,

whose wife shall she be of them? of the seven brethren;

for the seven had her to wife. She was, according to law, the lawful wife of all seven; what particular and special claim could one have to her above the rest? (see Gill on “⁴¹²⁸Matthew 22:28”).

Ver. 24. *And Jesus answering said unto them,* etc..] Which they thought he was not able to do, but would have been silenced at once by them, as many of their antagonists had been:

do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God? what is expressed in Matthew affirmatively, is here put by way of interrogation, which, with the Jews, was a more vehement way of affirming; (see Gill on “⁴¹²⁹Matthew 22:29”).

Ver. 25. *For when they shall rise from the dead,* etc..] These seven brethren, and the woman; and so any, and every other:

they neither marry, nor are given marriage: there will be no such natural relation subsisting, nor any need of any:

but are as the angels which are in heaven; (see Gill on “⁴¹³⁰Matthew 22:30”).

Ver. 26. *And as touching the dead, that they rise,* etc..] For the proof of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead,

have ye not read in the book of Moses; that is, in the law of Moses; for though it was divided into five parts, it was but one book; just as the Psalms are called the Book of Psalms, (⁴¹³¹Acts 1:20), and the Prophets, the Book of the Prophets, (⁴¹³²Acts 7:42). The book of Exodus is particularly intended; for the passage referred to is in (⁴¹³³Exodus 3:6),

how in the bush God spake unto him, or “out of the bush”, as the Syriac and Persic versions read;

saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? (see Gill on “⁴¹³⁴Matthew 22:31-32”).

Ver. 27. *He is not the God of the dead,* etc..] This is our Lord's reasoning upon the passage; showing from hence, that since God is the God of these persons, they must be now alive in their souls, for God is not the God of the dead; and that their bodies must rise again, or he will not be the God of their whole persons;

but the God, of the living: the word “God”, in this clause, is omitted in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, but retained in the Persic and Ethiopic versions; (see Gill on “^{<423>}Matthew 22:32”);

ye therefore do greatly err; signifying, that it was not a slight mistake, an error of small importance, but a very great one; inasmuch as it was contrary to the Scriptures, and derogated from the power of God, and destroyed that covenant interest, which God has in his people, and particularly in the principal men of their nation, who were the fathers and founders of them.

Ver. 28. *And one of the Scribes came*, etc..] Matthew calls him a lawyer, (^{<425>}Matthew 22:35), an interpreter of the law, as a Scribe was:

and having heard them reasoning together; being present at the dispute between Christ and the Sadducees, which he diligently attended to:

and perceiving that he had answered them well: in a most beautiful manner. The Jews have adopted the very Greek word here used, and make use of it in the same sense as **wl aq hyl rma**^{f207}, “he answered him well”: or, as the gloss upon it, “praise worthily”; in a manner deserving praise; and is the same with **trmaq ry**^{f208}, “thou hast said well”, or beautifully; and so the answer here was with great solidity, and judgment, and strength of argument, to their utter confusion and silence; whereby he understood he had considerable knowledge in the law, and yet was willing to try if he could not puzzle him with a question relating to it:

asked him, which is the first commandment of all? of all the commandments in the law, moral and ceremonial.

Ver. 29. *Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is*, etc..] Christ replied at once, without taking any time to consider of it, that the chief and principal of all the commands of the law, and what is of the greatest importance is,

hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. The Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions read, “one God”; but the Syriac, and Ethiopic render it, “one Lord”; and that rightly, agreeably to the Greek text, and to (^{<404>}Deuteronomy 6:4), from whence this is taken. This passage of Scripture, to the end of the ninth verse, is the first of the sections which were put into their phylacteries; (see Gill on “^{<425>}Matthew 23:5”); and was repeated twice every day, morning and evening; which is by the Jews called

from the first word **m taylorq**, “the reading of the Shema”: concerning the exact time of the reciting of this, morning and evening, and of the posture in which they do it, reclining in the evening, and standing in the morning, and of the prayers before and after it, various rules are given in their Misna ^{f209}, or oral law; it is a precept of great esteem and veneration with them, and attended to with much solemnity. The account Maimonides ^{f210} gives of it is this:

“twice every day they read Keriath Shema; (i.e. “hear, O Israel”, etc..) in the evening and in morning, as it is said, (^(-f117)Deuteronomy 6:7). “When thou liest down, and when thou risest up”; in the hour it is the custom of men to lie down, and this is night; and in the hour it is the custom of men to stand, and this is day: and what does he read? three sections; and they are these, “hear”, etc.. (^(-f118)Deuteronomy 6:4), and it shall come to pass, “if ye shall hearken”, etc.. (^(-f119)Deuteronomy 11:13), “and Moses said”, etc.. (^(-f120)Exodus 13:3), and they read the section, “hear, O Israel”, first, because there is in it the unity of God, and the love of him and his doctrine; for it is, **l wdgh rqh**, “the great root”, or “foundation”, on which all hangs or depends.”

And it is observable, that the last letter of the word “hear”, and the last of the word “one”, are both written in very large characters in the Hebrew Bible, to denote the greatness of the command, and to cause attention to it. The Jews seek for mysteries in these letters, and think the unusual size of them, points at some very great things: they observe, that the first of these letters is numerically “seventy”, and directs to the seventy names of the law, and the seventy ways in which it may be interpreted, and the seventy nations of the world, from whom the Israelites are distinguished, by their belief of the one God ^{f211}; and that the latter stands for the number “four”, and shows that the Lord is the one God, in heaven and in earth, in all the world, and in the four parts of it; and that both these letters put together, make a word, which signifies “a witness”; showing that this passage is a glorious testimony of the unity of God, and that the Israelites are witnesses of it, by believing and professing it; and that should they depart from the faith of it, God would be a witness against them: and now, though there is no solid foundation for such interpretations, yet this shows what an opinion they had of the greatness of this command; to which, may be added, they ask ^{f212},

“why does, “hear, O Israel”, etc.. go before that passage in (^{f2113}Deuteronomy 11:13). “And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments”, etc.. but because a man must take upon him, first the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, and after that he must take upon him the yoke of the commandments.”

The sense is, that he must first make a confession of his faith in God, which is contained in (^{f2113}Deuteronomy 6:4) and then he must obey his commands; so that they plainly considered this, as the first and greatest of all. These words are frequent in the mouths of the modern Jews, in proof of the unity of God, and against a plurality in the Deity; but the ancient ones, not only consider them as a good and sufficient proof, that there is but one God, but as expressive of a Trinity in the Godhead: with a view to this text they observe ^{f213}, that

“Jehovah, “our God, Jehovah”; these are, **ygrd tl t**, “three degrees” (or persons) with respect to this sublime mystery, “in the beginning, God”, or “Elohim, created”, etc..”

And again ^{f214},

“there is an unity which is called Jehovah the first, our God, Jehovah; behold! they are all one, and therefore called one: lo! these three names are as one; and although we call them one, and they are one; but by the revelation of the Holy Ghost it is made known, and they are by the sight of the eye to be known, that “these three are one”, ((see ^{f2117}1 John 5:7),) and this is the mystery of the voice that is heard; the voice is one; and there are three things, fire, and wind, and water, and they are all one, in the mystery of the voice, and they are not but one: so here, Jehovah, our God, Jehovah, these, **ynewg atl t**, “three modes, forms”, or “things”, are one.”

Once more they ^{f215} say,

“there are two, and one is joined to them, and they are three; and when they are three, they are one: these are the two names of hear, O Israel, which are Jehovah, Jehovah, and Elohenu, or our God, is joined unto them; and it is the seal of the ring of truth.”

To which I shall subjoin one passage more, where R. Eliezer is asking his father R. Simeon ben Jochai, why Jehovah is sometimes called Elohim, he replies ^{f216}, among other things;

“come see, there are *ygrdg*, “three degrees”, (or persons,) and every degree is by itself; although they are all one, and bound together in one, and one is not separated from another.”

To believe this, is the first and chief commandment in the law, and is the principal article of the Christian faith; namely, to believe that there is one God, and that there are three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, in the Godhead.

Ver. 30. *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God*, etc..] Which is to be understood of the one God, Father, Son, and Spirit; for all the three divine persons are to be equally loved, being possessed of the same perfections and excellencies, and having done the same works, and having bestowed like benefits and favours upon men: and though there is now no principle of love to God in men; but, on the contrary, men are enemies to God in their minds, which appears by their wicked works; yet this commandment is still in force, and the obligation to it is the same; the fall of man, the corruption of nature, and the impotency, and even aversion in man to observe this command, do not make it null and void: and in regeneration, when God puts his laws into the heart, and writes them in the mind; love is produced in such persons, to God the Father, who has begotten them again, according to his abundant mercy; and to Christ, who has saved them from their sins; and to the blessed Spirit, who has quickened and comforted them: and this love is in some measure exercised as it should be, and as here directed to,

with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; that is, with all the powers and faculties of the soul; or with the affections, as under the influence and guidance of the more noble faculties of the soul, the mind, the understanding, judgment, and will: it is added here, which is not in Matthew,

and with all thy strength; which answers to the phrase in (^{<4185>}Deuteronomy 6:5), “with all thy might”; that is, with the greatest vehemency of affection, in the strongest expressions of it, and with all the strength of grace a man has. This passage follows the former in (^{<4185>}Deuteronomy 6:5) and is what is only cited in (^{<4125>}Matthew 22:37).

Ver. 31. *And the second is like*, etc..] “Unto it”, as in (⁴¹²³Matthew 22:39) and so it is read here in two ancient copies of Beza's, and in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions;

[namely] this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. This commandment stands in (⁴¹⁹⁸Leviticus 19:18) and respects not an Israelite only, or one of the same religion with a man's self, or his intimate friend and acquaintance, or one that lives in the same neighbourhood; but any man whatever, to whom affection should be shown, and good should be done to him, and for him, as a man would have done to and for himself; as much as lies in his power, both in things temporal and spiritual; see the note on (⁴¹²³Matthew 22:39).

There is none other commandment greater than these; in the whole law, moral or ceremonial; not the sabbath, nor circumcision, nor the phylacteries, nor the fringes on the borders of the garments, nor any other.

Ver. 32. *And the Scribe said unto him*, etc..] This reply of the Scribe, is not related by Matthew:

well, Master, thou hast said the truth: what thou hast said is truth, and thou hast expressed it in a most beautiful manner: the Scribe was charmed with his answer, and could not forbear speaking in commendation of it, and even before the multitude, and those of his own sect: this was a rare and uncommon instance; it was not usual with the Scribes and Pharisees, whatever convictions they were laid under, either by the miracles or discourses of Christ, to own any thing, or make any concessions in his favour, or speak in his praise: but this man not only commends him, but gives reasons for it, and confirms the doctrine he taught in his own words;

for there is one God, and there is none other but he. The Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, leave out the word “God”; but it is in the Greek copies, and rightly retained in other versions: for the sense is, that there is one God, and but one; and which is perfectly agreeable to the Christian doctrine, of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead; for though the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, yet there are not three Gods, but one God. Nor are we to imagine, that this man said or thought any thing to the contrary, or had it in his mind to oppose the doctrine of the Trinity; which, though more clearly revealed in the New Testament, was not unknown to the ancient Jews, and might be learned from the writings of the Old Testament: but this he said, in opposition to the many

idols, and fictitious deities of the Gentiles; and if he spake in the Hebrew language, as it is probable he did, there must be a beautiful “paranomasia” in his words; “for there is”, **da**, “Achad, one God; and there is none”, **ra**, “Achar, other but he”: and it is observed by a Jewish writer^{f217}, that the reason why the last letter of, **da**, “one”, is greater than the rest, as before observed, in (^{<41129>}Mark 12:29) is, that there might be no mistake of **d**, for **r**, which are much alike; and if mistook, the word would signify “another”, and not “one”: but this is done, lest a man should mistake, and worship “another”, and not the “one” God.

Ver. 33. *And to love him with all the heart*, etc..] That is, the one God, with a sincere hearty love and affection;

and with all the understanding; of his being, perfections, and works, which will serve to draw the affections to him: this clause answers to that, “with all thy mind”, in (^{<41123>}Mark 12:30);

and with all the soul; with all the powers and faculties of it;

and with all the strength; a man has, or is given him; with all the vehemency and fervency of soul he is master of:

and to love his neighbour as himself; which are the two great commandments of the law:

is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices; that is, more excellent in their nature, more acceptable to God, and more useful among men, than all the rituals of the ceremonial law, than any sacrifice whatever: for the two words here used, “burnt offerings and sacrifices”, include all offerings; as those which were wholly consumed upon the altar, and those of which part was given to the priests; and all sin offerings, meat offerings, and peace offerings, and whatever else. This man had now at least a different sense of things, from the rest of his brethren; who placed religion chiefly in the observance of the rituals of the law, and the traditions of the elders; and neglected the duties of the moral law, respecting God and their neighbour: things which are to be preferred and attended to, before any ceremonial institutions, and especially the inventions of men. This entirely agrees with the sense of the passage in (^{<2006>}Hosea 6:6). “For I desired mercy and, not sacrifice”; that is, willed and required, that men should show mercy to one another; or that every one should love his neighbour as himself, and attend to this, rather than to the offering of any ceremonial

sacrifice: this being more delightful and well-pleasing to God, than that: “and the knowledge of God”; of his unity, perfections, and glory: “more than burnt offerings”; which were entirely devoted to him: and it also agrees with the ancient sentiments of the people of God; so Samuel says to Saul, “Hath the Lord [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? behold, to obey [is] better than sacrifices, [and] to hearken, than the fat of rams”, (⁽¹⁵²⁾1 Samuel 15:22). And yet it may be observed, that there is some likeness between these things, burnt offerings and sacrifices, and the love of God and love to our neighbour; though the latter are greatly preferable to the former; true love to God being no other than the offering up of the soul, as a whole burnt offering to God, in the flames of love to him; and love to the neighbour, or doing good and communicating to him, is a sacrifice well-pleasing to God.

Ver. 34. *And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly*, etc..] Wisely and prudently, as a man of sense and understanding; by taking in the several parts of our Lord's answer very distinctly, and reasoning upon them, and confirming them:

he said unto him, thou art not far from the kingdom of God: not meaning from heaven, and eternal happiness; for right and distinct notions of the above commandments, and even the performance of the in by a sinful and imperfect creature, can neither give a man a title to, or bring him near, or introduce him into the heavenly glory, which is a pure gift of God's grace; but our Lord's sense is, that he was not far off from the Gospel dispensation, and was in a fair way of entering into it; his sentiments were very near to such, who became followers of Christ, and embraced the doctrines, and submitted to the ordinances of the Gospel state: since he preferred those things, which related to the knowledge of the being and perfections of God, to the love and worship of God, and to the good of his neighbour; before the ceremonies of the law; which were quickly to be abolished, and make way for the setting up of the kingdom of God, or of the Messiah, in a more glorious and visible manner. Indeed there are some persons, who seem not far off from the kingdom of God, in the other sense of the phrase, as it may respect eternal glory and happiness, who will never enter into it: there are some that seem very devout and religions; hear the word, attend on all ordinances, join themselves with a church, submit to baptism, and sit down at the Lord's table, and live a moral life and conversation, and yet are destitute of the grace of God: yea, there are some who have clear notions of the Gospel, and make a bright profession of it,

and yet have no experience of the power of it upon their hearts, and have not the oil of grace there: and even hold this profession to the end, and yet come short of the kingdom and glory of our Lord Jesus: such are almost Christians, but not altogether; virgins, but foolish ones; have lamps, but no oil; come as far as the door, but that is shut upon them.

And no man after that durst ask him any question; in any captious matter in order to ensnare him; finding they could get no advantage, or occasion against him that way; he having silenced the Herodians, Sadducees, Scribes, and Pharisees.

Ver. 35. *And Jesus answered and said,* etc..] To the Pharisees that were gathered together about him; (see Gill on “^{412d}Matthew 22:41”).

While he taught in the temple; Whilst he was in the temple, and as he was teaching the people there; among other things in his doctrine, he put this question,

how say the Scribes, that Christ is the son of David? Not that Christ meant to deny or invalidate the truth of this; for the Messiah was certainly to be the son of David, and was; but he wanted to know, inasmuch as they commonly said, and instructed the people to believe, and it was in general believed by them, that he was David's son, how they could reconcile this to his being the Lord of David: or how they could give out, that he was only and merely the Son of David, when he was David's Lord. Matthew relates the matter thus; that Christ first put these questions to them, what they thought of the Messiah, and whose son he was; and that they immediately replied, he was the son of David: wherefore this question seems to be put upon that, with another along with it,

how then doth David in spirit call him Lord? (see Gill on “^{422d}Matthew 22:42-43”).

Ver. 36. *For David himself said by the Holy Ghost,* etc..] In (^{430d}Psalm 110:1), being inspired by the Spirit of God:

the Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. This is a proof, that David did call Christ his Lord; and that he called him so in spirit; since these words were delivered by him under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: that the psalm was wrote by David, the title shows; and that he spake it as he was influenced by the Holy Ghost, our Lord declares: the passage relates to what God the Father said

to Christ, when being risen from the dead, he ascended on high, and entered into the most holy place; he bid him sit down at his right hand, as having done the work of man's salvation, he was sent about, to full satisfaction; and as a mark of affection to him, and honour conferred upon him in the human nature; where he should continue, till all his enemies, Jews, Pagans, Papists, and Mahometans, as well as Satan, and all his principalities and powers, were so subdued under him, as to be as a footstool to his throne: and when David prophetically speaks of this, he calls the Messiah his Lord; saying, the “Lord said to my Lord”; on which account the prophecy is cited; who was so, as he is God, and his Creator and Redeemer. That this prophecy is a prophecy of the Messiah, and is applicable to no other but he; and is therefore pertinently cited, and applied to him here, (see Gill on “⁴¹²⁴Matthew 22:44”).

Ver. 37. *David therefore himself calleth him Lord*, etc..] David, whose son you say the Messiah is, speaks of him as one superior to himself; as Lord, and as his Lord:

whence is he then his son? from what passage of Scripture does it appear, that he is his son? and how can these two different characters of him, be made to agree in him? Our Lord meant by this, to observe to them, that the Messiah was God, as well as man; that he was not merely the son of David, as was commonly received, or a mere man, but that he had a superior nature, in which he was David's Lord, and even Lord of all. This is a Talmudic way of speaking, frequently used when a proof from Scripture, or reason, is demanded to support any opinion or article of faith; as, **arb yah ynm**, “from whence is this opinion”^{f218}? what proof is there of it? And again it is said^{f219}, **ytmh tyyti ynm**, “from whence” is the proof of the resurrection of the dead out of the law? It is said, (⁴¹¹⁴Exodus 6:4), “and I have also established”, etc.. Sometimes it is expressed thus^{f220}, **nydy anm**, “from whence do we know that it is so?” And sometimes the word is doubled^{f221}; says, R. Simeon ben Lekish, there is an intimation out of the law, concerning that which is torn, **ynm ynm**, “from whence? from whence?” (⁴²³¹Exodus 22:31): “Neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn”, etc.. But the Scribes produced neither Scripture nor reason to support their assertion, though it was true; because they could not reconcile it with the passage cited by Christ.

And the common people; or the “whole multitude”, as the Syriac and Persic versions render it; or a “great multitude”, as the Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions; or “all the people”, as the Ethiopic; all but the Scribes and Pharisees, the populace in general,

heard him gladly; with great pleasure and satisfaction, observing that his doctrine was superior to that of any of the sects among them; particularly his reasoning about the Messiah, was listened to with great attention, and who, no doubt, could gladly have heard how these things could be reconciled; but we read not that any answer was returned to our Lord's queries, either by himself or any other.

Ver. 38. *And he said unto them in his doctrine*, etc..] As he was preaching, not to the Scribes and Pharisees but to the multitude, and to his disciples particularly; and to them in the audience of the people, as appears from (^{423b}Matthew 23:1 ^{423b}Luke 20:45).

Beware of the Scribes; for though he had just spoken favourably of one of them, this was but a single man, and a singular instance; the body of that set of men, were very bad in their principles and practices, and therefore to be avoided, and that for the reasons following:

which love to go in long clothing; the Persic version renders it, “who affect to walk in coats and garments conspicuous, and in long robes”; such as were very particular, and different from others, and out of the common way of apparel; and so were observable and taken notice of by others: very likely it may have reference to the common length of their fringes on the borders of their outward garment, which they enlarged beyond others; (see Gill on “^{423b}Matthew 23:5”);

and [love] salutations the market places; or “streets”, as the Syriac and Arabic versions render it, in any public places, where there was a resort of men, and they were taken notice with respect, in a public manner. The Syriac Persic supply the word “love”, as we do from (^{423b}Matthew 23:6,7).

Ver. 39. *And the chief seats in the synagogues*, etc..] Where the rulers of the synagogue, and the elders of the people sat; (see Gill on “^{423b}Matthew 23:6”).

And the uppermost rooms at feasts; or the first and chief places where they sat, or rather lay along at public entertainment; (see Gill on “^{423b}Matthew 23:6”).

Ver. 40. *Which devour widows' houses*, etc..] (See Gill on “⁴¹²³⁴Matthew 23:14”).

Ver. 41. *And Jesus sat over against the treasury*, etc..] the Arabic version reads, “at the door of the treasury”; the place where the chests stood, into which money was put for various uses: there were thirteen chests in the temple ^{f222}; six of them were, **hbdnl** , for voluntary oblations, or freewill offerings; for what remained of the sin offering, and of the trespass offering, and of the turtles; for those that had fluxes, and for new mothers; and of the sacrifices of the Nazarite, and of the trespass offering for the leper; and the last was for a freewill offering in general; and into one of these chests, or all them, was the money cast, afterwards spoken of. The Ethiopic version renders it, “over against the alms chest”; but this contribution in the temple, was not for the maintenance of the poor, but for the supply of sacrifices, and other things, as mentioned. Jesus having done preaching, and the Scribes and Pharisees having left him, and the multitude being dismissed, he sat down, being weary, and rested himself in this place: *and beheld*; with pleasure.

how the people, of all sorts, rich and poor,

cast money into the treasury; into one or other of the above chests: the word rendered “money”, signifies “brass”, which the Jews call, **twm**; for they had shekels of brass, as well as silver; and brazen pence, as well as silver pence ^{f223}; and also “prutas”, or mites of brass ^{f224}; and such, the poor woman cast in:

and many that were rich cast in much: they gave very liberally and largely, as they were possessed with much worldly substance; for though religion was at a low ebb with them, yet they took care to support the external and ritual part of it.

Ver. 42. *And there came a certain poor widow*, etc..] Among the many that came to offer their gifts freely, there came one that was particularly taken notice of by Christ; and she was a “widow”, had no husband to provide for her, and was a “poor” one; had no substance left her by her husband to support her with; very likely she was an inhabitant of Jerusalem:

and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing; a “quadrant”, which was the fourth part of the Roman assis, or farthing; which seems to be

much the same with the **τεταρτημοριον** of the Greeks, which is said ^{f225} to be,

“the fourth part of an obolus (the least Athenian coin), that is, two brass pieces.”

These mites seem to be the same with the “prutas”, the Jews often speak of; who say ^{f226}, that a “pruta” is the eighth part of an Italian farthing; though some make it to be the sixth: hence the Syriac version here renders it, “two menin, that is, eighths”; and the Jerusalem Talmud expressly says ^{f227}, that, **j nydrq twj wr yn**, “two prutas make a quadrant”, the very word here used: and that the Jews took the freewill offerings of the poor as well as the rich, though ever so little, is clear from this canon of theirs ^{f228};

“a poor man that gives a “pruta”, or mite, into the alms dish, or a “pruta” into the poor's chest, they take it of him; but if he does not give, they do not oblige him to give.”

Nor were they obliged to cast into the treasury; but if they did, they received it, be it less or more: and indeed, the rich might throw in as little as they pleased: as for instance; into the chest for gold, they might throw in as little as the weight of a barley corn of gold; and into the chest for frankincense, as little as the weight of a barley corn of frankincense ^{f229}. The Persic version here, different from all others, instead of “two mites”, renders it, “two bottoms of thread”, or “yarn”.

Ver. 43. *And he called unto him, his disciples*, etc..] Who were at some little distance from him, he having finished his discourses:

and saith unto them, verily I say unto you: a way of speaking he often used, when he was about to deliver something of importance, and not so easy of belief, and which required attention, and what he solemnly affirmed:

that this poor widow, pointing to her,

hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: not that she had cast in more, or so much as any one of them as to value and substance, much less more than them all put together; but that she had cast in more in proportion to what she had, than they had in proportion to their substance; and that hers, though very small in itself, and might be contemptible to others, yet it was more in the account of God and Christ,

and more highly valued and esteemed of by them, than all that the rich men put in: since what she gave, she gave in faith, and from a principle of love, and with a view to the glory of God; when theirs was given only in hypocrisy, to make an outward show, and to be seen of men.

Ver. 44. *For all they did cast in of their abundance*, etc..] Or “superabundance”, as the Arabic version renders it; or “superfluity”, as the Ethiopic: they abounded in the things of the world, of which they gave only a part; and though they might give much, yet they could easily spare it, and had enough remaining:

but she, of her want; or “penury”, as in (~~2204~~ Luke 21:4); (see ~~5702~~ 2 Corinthians 8:2);

did cast in all that she had, even all her living; her whole substance, all that she had in the world; what was to have bought her food, for that day; she left herself nothing, but gave away all, and trusted to providence for immediate supply.