

Mark 12:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

Analysis

The scribe's response—**Well, Master, thou hast said the truth**—affirms Jesus' authority as a teacher (διδάσκαλε, didaskale = 'teacher' or 'master'). His declaration **there is one God; and there is none other but he** echoes the Shema's radical monotheism from Deuteronomy 6:4. In a polytheistic Greco-Roman world where Caesar claimed divinity and provincial cults proliferated, this confession was countercultural and politically dangerous.

The scribe's emphatic statement—οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος πλὴν αὐτοῦ (ouk estin allos plēn autou, 'there is no other except him')—uses double negation for rhetorical force. This isn't mere theological abstraction but existential commitment: Israel's God alone deserves absolute allegiance. The scribe demonstrates genuine understanding by connecting Jesus' teaching to Scripture's foundational truth. His affirmation prepares for his profound insight in verse 33—that love surpasses ritual sacrifice.

Historical Context

The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4, 'Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD') was Judaism's most foundational confession, recited twice daily by devout Jews. It established ethical monotheism—worship of the one true God—as Israel's distinctive identity among pagan nations. In the first-century Roman Empire, Jews and Christians faced pressure to participate in emperor worship and civic religion. Confessing 'one God' excluded all rivals, including Caesar. This conversation

occurred in Jerusalem's temple, where sacrificial worship continued daily—yet this scribe will soon recognize that love transcends even temple ritual (v. 33), anticipating Christianity's break from sacrificial system after Jesus' once-for-all atonement.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the scribe's public affirmation of monotheism in polytheistic Jerusalem model courage to confess unpopular truth?
2. What modern 'gods' (money, career, nation, ideology) compete for the allegiance that belongs to God alone?
3. Why is theological orthodoxy (right belief about God's oneness) inseparable from practical worship (exclusive devotion)?

Interlinear Text

καὶ εἶπας, αὐτοῦ· ὁ γραμματεύς Καλῶς διδάσκαλε ἐπ'
And said he G3588 the scribe Well Master the
G2532 G2036 G846 G1122 G2573 G1320 G1909

ἀληθείας εἶπας, ὅτι εἷς ἔστιν Θεὸς, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν
truth said for one there is God And none there is
G225 G2036 G3754 G1520 G2076 G2316 G2532 G3756 G2076

ἄλλος πλὴν αὐτοῦ·
other but he
G243 G4133 G846

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 4:39 (References God): Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

Isaiah 46:9 (References God): Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,

Isaiah 44:8 (References God): Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Isaiah 45:14 (References God): Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God.

Isaiah 45:18 (References God): For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.

Mark 12:29 (References God): And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

Deuteronomy 6:4 (References God): Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

Deuteronomy 4:35 (References God): Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him.

Deuteronomy 5:7 (References God): Thou shalt have none other gods before me.