

Mark 12:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

Analysis

Jesus' assessment—**Thou art not far from the kingdom of God** (Οὐ μακρὰν εἶ ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ)—is both commendation and warning. The scribe **answered discreetly** (νουνεχῶς, *nounechōs* = 'intelligently,' 'wisely'), demonstrating spiritual insight. He understands that love surpasses ritual, that relationship with God exceeds religious performance. Yet he is 'not far'—implying proximity but not arrival. To be near the kingdom isn't to be in it.

What separates this perceptive scribe from kingdom citizenship? Personal faith in Jesus as Messiah and Lord. Theological understanding, even accurate understanding of Scripture's priorities, doesn't save. The scribe affirms truth about God but hasn't yet submitted to God's Messiah standing before him. Jesus' response is tender but sobering—moral insight and religious knowledge bring one close but cannot substitute for repentance and faith in Christ himself (Mark 1:15). The verse's final note—**no man after that durst ask him any question**—signals Jesus' decisive victory in the temple debates. His wisdom has silenced all challengers.

Historical Context

This encounter occurred during Passion Week, Jesus' final week before crucifixion. Successive groups—Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees—had attempted to trap Jesus with hostile questions (Mark 12:13-27). This scribe's genuine inquiry breaks the

pattern of antagonism. His recognition that love exceeds sacrifice echoed prophetic tradition and aligned with Jesus' own teaching (Matthew 22:37-40; Luke 10:27). Yet tragically, we have no record this scribe took the final step of discipleship. He represents many in Israel who intellectually grasped Jesus' teaching but didn't embrace Him as Messiah. Within days, religious leaders who knew Scripture would condemn Jesus to death, proving that theological knowledge without spiritual transformation leads to perdition.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How can someone be 'not far from the kingdom' yet ultimately lost? What distinguishes proximity from possession?
2. What would it have cost this scribe to move from affirming Jesus' wisdom to confessing Him as Lord?
3. In what areas of life might you possess accurate theological knowledge without corresponding personal surrender and obedience?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	ἰδὼν	αὐτὸν	ὅτι	νουνεχῶς	ἀπεκρίθη	
And	G3588	when Jesus	saw	him	that	discreetly	he answered	
G2532		G2424	G1492	G846	G3754	G3562	G611	
εἶπεν	αὐτὸν	Οὐ	μακρὰν	εἶ	ἀπὸ	τῆς	βασιλείας	τοῦ
he said	him	not	far	Thou art	from	G3588	the kingdom	G3588
G2036	G846	G3756	G3112	G1488	G575		G932	
θεοῦ	καὶ	οὐδεὶς	οὐκέτι	ἐτόλμα	αὐτὸν	ἐπερωτῆσαι		
of God	And	no man	after that	durst	him	ask		
G2316	G2532	G3762	G3765	G5111	G846	G1905		

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 4:6 (Parallel theme): Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Luke 20:40 (Parallel theme): And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.

Matthew 22:46 (Parallel theme): And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

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