**Mark 12:18-27 Whose wife is she anyway?**
This is the second of 3 questions asked by groups from the Sanhedrin to try and trap Jesus. This time it’s the Sadducees, who come with a question about the resurrection. They were a group who didn’t believe in the supernatural and who held that when you die, that’s the end – no life after death. They come with a ridiculous story about a woman who marries 7 times - If there is a resurrection, then whose wife will she be when they all come back? Jesus corrects their understanding of both the manner of the resurrection and the fact of it. Marriage between men and women will not be a part of our resurrected life (instead, we will be like the angels) and as to the fact of it, you only need to look at the way God talks about the patriarchs – “I AM the God of Abraham” for, “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living”.

Summary: *This life is not all there is; the resurrection is a certainty. But we should be careful not to create a picture of the new creation based only on things in this life we live now.*

Q How would you describe the worldview of the Sadducees? (cf. Acts 23:8) Where might you find a similar worldview today?

Q Why does Jesus say they do not know the scriptures (v24, 26-27)? What does Jesus point out from the burning bush incident?

Q What’s fundamentally wrong with their understanding of life after the resurrection?

Q Discuss how C.S. Lewis helps us to avoid an inadequate understanding of heaven when he writes:
“All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”

**Mark 12:28-34 The Greatest Command**
This is the third and final of 3 questions asked by groups from the Sanhedrin to try and trap Jesus in His words. However, it has the appearance of being unplanned, and it looks to be an honest enquiry. It comes from a Scribe (a teacher of the Law) and He want Jesus to clarify which commandment from God is above all others. Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6 and from Leviticus 19 to show that the most important thing is whole-hearted love for God and after that, loving your neighbour as yourself. The Scribe agrees and acknowledges that this is more important than sacrifices and offerings. And because of this understanding, Jesus declares him to be “not far from the kingdom of God” (v34).

Summary: *Jesus points out that there is nothing more important than loving God and loving your neighbour. Offerings and sacrifices are no substitute for these things.*

Q Take a look at the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17. How is Jesus’ answer a perfect summary of God’s law?

Q Jesus goes back to the books of Moses (Genesis to Deuteronomy) to teach us about what is most important. What implications does this have for us when we read these books?
Q Do you think it’s actually possible to keep these commands perfectly?

Q Why does Jesus say this man is, “not far from the Kingdom of God”? What must he do to actually enter it?

Mark 12:35-37 The Son of David

Having answered the 3 questions from the Jewish Council, Jesus now asks a question of His own. It was widely held (and taught) that the coming Messiah would come from the family line of king David. This was in line with the prophecies of the Old Testament, especially 2 Samuel chapter 7. But Jesus draws their attention to Psalm 110. Here we have a psalm written by David himself, which was acknowledged to be forecasting the Messiah... and yet in the opening line, David calls his son “My Lord”, a title of highest honour, using a word that often referred to God Himself! If the Messiah was to be merely a human descendent of David, why does he address him like this?

Summary: The hope of the Messiah is much bigger than the earthly reign of a king descended from David, He is in fact David’s (and our) LORD.

Q What does the title “Christ” mean? What was the prevailing view about the identity of the Messiah? So, what point is Jesus making with this question?

Q Take a look at the parallel account of this incident in Matthew’s gospel (Matthew 22:41-46). Who is Jesus engaging with this question? Luke makes it plain that Jesus is also directing this question towards the teachers of the law. Why do you think He finishes the dialogue between Himself and these leaders with this particular question?

Q In what ways might we “domesticate” Jesus today?

Mark 12:38-44 God looks at the heart

Jesus preaches to the gathering crowd in the courts of the temple, warning them about the hypocrisy of the Scribes (Teachers of the Law). They are supposed to be the leaders of the people, but their religion is only skin deep and everything they do, they do for their own benefit; to gain power, respect and money. ...Their punishment will be severe.

In contrast to them, a poor widow catches Jesus’ eye. The Scribes are all about taking what they can get, but she has come to give to God out of her poverty, all she has to live on.

Jesus holds her up as example to His disciples of what devotion to God really looks like.

Summary: Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Jesus is not interested in the trappings of religion, instead He is looking for disciples who will give their all to Him.

Q Read the description of the Teachers of the law in v38-40. How would you sum up the religion of these men?

Q What Kinds of “surface” things do people think will please God today? Why don’t these things impress God?

Q How might we fall into the trap of superficial religion today?

Q How is the poor widow in v41-44 different? How would you sum up the kind of religion that God wants?