

MATTHEW

22:15-46

Matthew 22:15-46

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 15th June 2025 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

Introduction

Last Sunday we got as far as verse fourteen of Matthew chapter twenty two, and you may recall that in those 30 or so verses we looked at, that Jesus spoke three parables to (or in many ways at) the Pharisees, who were some of the religious leaders of the day.

Overview of chapter twenty two

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- **v1-14** — ~~The parable of the wedding feast (many called, few chosen)~~
- **v15-22** — The Pharisee's disciples and Herodians question Jesus
- **v23-33** — The Sadducees question Jesus
- **v34-40** — The Pharisees themselves question Jesus
- **v41-46** — Jesus questions the Pharisees

And as we study the rest of this chapter this morning, we'll first see that the Pharisees respond by plotting against Jesus, how they might trip Him up in what He was saying, that they might have something to accuse Him of — and we see their first attempt (in a rare collaboration with the Herodians), recorded in verses 15-22, as their disciples try and put Jesus in a no-win situation.

Then, in verses 23-33, the more liberal group of religious leaders at that time — the Sadducees — also come to Jesus, to try and catch Him out in regard to *their* beliefs.

However, with both attempts unsuccessful the Pharisees *themselves* then come to Jesus, trying once more to trip Him up — only to find that they can't, and that *He* responds with a question to *them* that they are unable to answer, and as result are unwilling to ask Him any more questions.

So let us take a closer look at what Matthew writes.

Chapter twenty two

We read in verse fifteen, following the three parables Jesus spoke (during which the chief priests and Pharisees realised that He was speaking of them):

Matthew 22:15

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.

So then, having no good answer to Jesus' parables, and no willingness to be corrected by what He had said in them, they turn on Jesus once more. And in one sense this is rather comical, for they are trying to entangle the Word of God in the Word of God. It would be as futile as trying to catch someone out with questions about themselves — they are certainly going to know the answers better than you!

But of course, this is in fact desperately sad, that these men who had *everything* they needed to know that *this* Man stood before them was their Messiah, completely missed the fact that He was. A warning for *us* to not mistake who Jesus is, when the details of that are so clearly laid out here in front of us in the *Bible*.

However, back to our passage here, we might well wonder what the Pharisees were trying to accomplish through their plotting here. Well, simply put, they wanted to put Jesus in a difficult position, ideally an impossible position, whereby He might say something that they could accuse Him of, that they might finally pounce on Him, and have Him arrested. And so we read in verse 16:

QUESTION ONE

Matthew 22:16-17

And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

So, here the Pharisees, the conservative but legalistic religious leaders of the day, team up with the Herodians, a political party, who usually they wanted nothing to do with, and send their disciples with them to question Jesus. Why the collaboration? Because they saw an opportunity to put a mutual enemy — Jesus — in a difficult position.

You see, if Jesus answered their question by saying they *shouldn't* pay taxes to Caesar, then the Herodians would have claimed He was encouraging tax evasion, or even starting a rebellion, for which they would have Him arrested. But if Jesus said that the people *should* pay taxes to Caesar, then that would have been massively unpopular to say the least, and could have set *all* the people against Him for supporting Roman rule, which the Jews detested.

In other words, He couldn't win, or so the Pharisees and Herodians thought. And in their attempt to get an answer from Jesus, they preface their question by trying to butter Him up, saying *we know you are honest, genuine, sincere and we know that you teach the Word of God without hypocrisy or for personal gain and we know that you're not afraid of men, nor do you try to please others so that they may like you.* And then they give Him their question, even suggesting two possible answers — both of which would condemn Him. So *had* they cornered Him? Well, look at His response...

Matthew 22:18

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?"

That is, Jesus knew what they were up to. After all, He was God, and knew their thoughts. Yet, even we can see that they were being hypocrites here, for we know that they didn't think this highly of Him — for they had already been accusing Him of working for Satan! — nor were the Pharisees interested in giving to Caesar. And so Jesus says:

Matthew 22:19-20

Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"

And so, as Jesus often did, He turned a question to *Him* back into a question to the person who had asked — something that we're also wise to do, especially when sharing our faith, or teaching our children, because it causes the other person to think, and helps them be more willing to receive the truth of the matter. Indeed, Jesus didn't ask this question because He didn't know the answer to it, but because He wanted to bring these men to a logical conclusion.

And we read their reply in verse 21:

Matthew 22:21-22

They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left Him and went their way.

Of course, this is a genius answer. You see, Jesus effectively points out that they *did* own Caesar something — for they walked on Roman roads, they were protected (even if also occupied) by a Roman army. There was a sense of law and order, even if they were not fond of their captors. And likewise, we might not be fond of our Government, but we are to pay our taxes — that is right and proper. Of course, that doesn't mean *we're* happy with all the Government does, and it doesn't mean we should pay *more* than is due — but it does mean we shouldn't *evade* taxes and break the law.

And in His reply, Jesus also pointed out that they owed *God* something too. Why? Because they were made in *His image*. He had given them life itself, and everything necessary for it. And their responsibility to Caesar did not remove their responsibility toward their Creator. And it doesn't remove ours, as we'll see in the third question in this passage later on this morning — especially given all Jesus has done for us as our Saviour.

And now, here, the Pharisees' disciples and the Herodians, rather than condemn Him, can only marvel at what He said. For, you see, they couldn't dispute it. For if *they* now said they shouldn't pay their taxes, then *they* would be the ones inciting rebellion. And if *they* now suggested not giving God what He was due, *they* would be seen to be hypocrites. Jesus had reminded them of both their responsibilities, actually using the question to Him to highlight the action required on their part. And so they go on their way, and leave Him alone.

And we read on in the next 6 verses:

QUESTION TWO

Matthew 22:23-28

The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her."

So, now it was the turn of the Sadducees to question Jesus. And as Matthew records here, the sect of the Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection — that is, they believed that when you died, that was it. That there was no possibility of rising from the dead, nor was there life after death. They were the liberal ones amongst the religious leaders of the day.

And they brought their question to Jesus around the topic of marriage and eternity, for Rabbis at the time taught that if a woman had two husbands during her life, she would only have the first in eternity. But being that these men didn't believe in anything after death, they weren't looking for *clarification* from Jesus, but rather they were looking to draw Him into talking about something that they would be able to criticise and condemn Him for with regard to their doctrine.

In order to do that, they give Jesus this rather outlandish scenario. For while it was indeed custom that, should an older brother die without children, his younger brother (if unmarried himself) would marry his widow, so as to continue the family line, it would have been unthinkable that all 7 brothers would marry the same woman and die without any children. The *closest* to that which we know of, of course, was the situation with Judah's two sons in Genesis 38 whom God killed for their wickedness and disobedience.

But here the Sadducees are suggesting these seven brothers all died through natural causes. And they were making two errors, which Jesus now brings to their attention. We read:

Matthew 22:29-30

Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.

And so firstly, Jesus corrects them on their doctrine regarding marriage, for while marriage is to be permanent while here on earth, in heaven there will be only one wedding and only one marriage that we are focussed on, as the Bride of Christ, the Church (that's us!) will be united with her Bridegroom forever. That's why in our marriage vows we say "til death do us *part*".

Now, that parting of course seems sad (and that's an understatement, right?!), but the reality is we'll be headed to a wedding celebration that that puts any earthly wedding day in the shade. And at *that* wedding there will be no sadness, no wedding guests being unruly or drunk, no last minute panics, and no trouble with the caterers. Probably the only thing in common will be us thinking about how much it all cost, as we consider the cross on which Jesus died to purchase our salvation.

Indeed, the purposes of marriage now are things that will not be required in heaven — for right now marriage is in part to provide a stable home in which children can be born and raised to be godly men and women in this world, and it is also in part to point to the relationship between Christ and the Church. But once in heaven, those ends will no longer be our focus, as we will all be *with* our Saviour.

And He continues:

Matthew 22:31-32

But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Here then, Jesus calls out the Sadducees for failing to read the Scriptures, just as He had done to the Pharisees back at the end of the prior chapter. And as before, this should be a warning to us, that we don't do the same and fail to read or properly handle *our* Bibles. Indeed, may God never have cause to say to us "*have you not read what your Bible says?!"*

Now again, in the case of the Sadducees, they were the more liberal of the religious leaders, and they only took Moses' writings, that is the first five books of the Bible, as Scripture. But it is to those that Jesus points, showing them to be in error concerning the eternal nature of men's souls. For He points out to them that back in Exodus 3:6 God said "I **am** the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Not, I **was**, the God of those men. And in doing so shows us that though the bodies of these men were long dead, their souls were still very much alive.

Matthew 22:33

And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

I can picture them saying or thinking "*Huh, I'd never thought of it like that!*" as the penny dropped. But there's another warning here. For we also can all-too-easily come to conclusions about what the Bible says, without *properly* reading our Bibles. For example, many believers quote 1 Corinthians 2:9, saying "*well, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*" — but they miss the very next verse which says:

1 Corinthians 2:10

But God **has** revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

We need to search the scriptures daily, as the Bereans did. And we need to take note of what the apostle Paul instructed Timothy, saying:

2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Let us not be ashamed either, missing things in the Bible that we ought to know! Rather, let us be diligent to check out what we hear. Let us study the Bible for ourselves.

Now, back here in Matthew's gospel account, the Sadducees had been silenced in *addition* to the Pharisee's disciples with the Herodians. In fact, the Greek word translated silenced here literally means *muzzled*. That is Jesus had really left them speechless.

However, we read:

Matthew 22:34

But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

Why? Because they needed to form a new plan, a new topic to question Jesus on, if they were going to trip Him up, in order that they might accuse Him.

And as an aside, picture for a moment who may have been among them as this plotting happened — whether part of it, or observing it. For Nicodemus was probably there, as no doubt was Gamaliel, who we hear of in Acts chapter five (who was also the man who the apostle Paul studied under). Could Paul himself have been there as a young man? It's a possibility. Another option is Joseph of Arimathea who we learn later did not consent to their demands to crucify Jesus, and actually became a believer, even being the one who asked the Roman authorities to release Jesus' body to be buried.

And coming out of this gathering we see them make their final attempt to entangle Jesus in His words. We read in verse 35:

QUESTION THREE

Matthew 22:35

Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying,

And just pausing there for a moment, this wasn't a lawyer in the sense that they were a barrister or such, but rather they were so called because they were scribes who were entrusted with the diligent and very manual process of copying of the law of God, the Scriptures. And they were so diligent in this that if they made even one mistake, they would consider the entire manuscript void. And this wasn't A4 paper that they were writing on — that was a lot of work that would literally go up in smoke as they burnt it!

And it is one of these most diligent men, used to copying the very detail of the law, who was also a Pharisee, that now sought to entangle Jesus in the details of the law. And he tested Him, saying:

Matthew 22:36

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

And so their plan was to see if Jesus would elevate part of the law that they held in lesser regard, over parts that they were most fastidious about, that they were obsessively concerned with. And you know, there are those today who love to focus on just one thing, and make it *the* thing. Especially when they are twisting something in Scripture.

I was at a conference once, and just as a break time started, someone I had never met came over and sat in the row in front of me, and almost without any introduction started asking me what I thought about Calvinism — and it was evident very quickly that she didn't really want to know what I thought, but wanted me to agree with what she thought. And here, this lawyer, this scribe, this Pharisee, wanted to see if Jesus would fit in with what they taught, with what *they* deemed to be important. But we read:

Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

And so in one swift move, Jesus summarised all of the ten commandments. For the first four are regarding our relationship to God, and the final six are regarding our relationship to our fellow man.

And the passage Jesus quoted from was Deuteronomy six, verse 5 onwards, which says:

Deuteronomy 6:5-9

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.
"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

And this is the foundation for a godly life. But note, Jesus then said the second is like it. What did He mean by that? Well, He is saying that it is linked to it. That is, while the world likes to say that we must love ourselves before we can love others, God says the love of self is actually the problem. And we need to walk in a way that is obedient to Him if we are going to have any chance of loving others as we really ought to. For our selfishness, and our love of self always bubbles to the surface.

Oh, but I hate myself, you say. Is that really the case? You know, if we took a group photo this morning and put it up on the wall next week for everyone to see, who is the first person you'd try and find in it?! Isn't it yourself? *I'm so ugly!* You exclaim. Well, if you hated yourself, you'd be pleased you're ugly, right? The problem is that we love ourselves so much, that our perceived flaws bother us. We want to be more handsome, more pretty, more this, more that. And our love for ourself causes us to fail in our love to others as we become ever more consumed in ourself. We'd rather tear down the perfectly good photo of *everyone else*, simply because we don't like how we look in it!

Indeed, Paul warned Timothy that the world would only get worse and worse in this regard. He wrote:

2 Timothy 3:1-5

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

And so, what Jesus answered the Pharisees here, was that that these two things were monumentally important, and inseparably linked. For we cannot love others as we ought to if we don't love God, if we don't obey Him as we should. But also we cannot love God if we don't love others, as John also wrote in his first letter, saying:

1 John 4:20-21

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

Therefore, we cannot stand here on Sunday and sing of how wonderful our God is, how much we love Him, and then on Monday be talking about our boss behind his back, be shouting at other drivers on our commute, or be making snide or derogatory remarks about or to our spouse. The love of God and love of others should go hand in hand, and so you cannot pick and choose which of God's commands you want to listen to this week. In essence this lawyer had asked which of God's commands were the important ones, but Jesus had replied *"all of them"*.

And there really was no answer that the Pharisees could give to counter this, but before they had chance to form another question with which to test Him, we read:

JESUS QUESTION TO THE PHARISEES

Matthew 22:41-42

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David."

So then, they knew that the Christ (which comes from the Greek word for Messiah) would be born a descendant of King David, the greatest of Israel's kings. But what they had either failed to or were unwilling to observe, was that Jesus fit that description, being a direct descendent as recorded in Matthew chapter one and Luke chapter three. And so Jesus questioned them more:

Matthew 22:43-45

He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool" '? If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?"

And so again, Jesus has turned their question to Him into a question to *them*, wanting them to think (for He already knew the answer, of course). And quoting here from Psalm 110 (which is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament), He gives a predicament for the Pharisees to unravel, for no-one (especially a king) would call their children or any of their descendants *Lord*.

So how come, Jesus asks, does *David* call the Messiah Lord, since He would be descended from him? And the answer is simple, in the end, for that was only possible through the virgin birth of the Messiah. For without that, He would have been another mere man whom David would not have called Lord. But instead, He was the One whom God had promised and whose birth the prophets foretold, who would be the Saviour of the world. And of course, Jesus was the only one to have ever fulfilled this prophecy.

But whether *unwilling* to acknowledge this (for they would then have to accept that Jesus was the Messiah), or simply *unable* to get their heads around it, the Pharisees don't give an answer. We read:

Matthew 22:46

And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

And so much like Job did when putting question after question to God, they reached the point where they have nothing they can say to Jesus, for their own knowledge and understanding was at an end. There was nothing they could challenge Him with. And as they retreat in order to find another way to silence Him, we find Jesus next gives a scathing rebuke of them as we read chapter 23 — which in fact would be His last public sermon before the cross. But we'll get to that next week, God willing.

Application questions

So, as we go in to the week ahead, how do we apply this passage to our lives? For we should, right? The Bible isn't there merely for our information, but our transformation. And we should *pray* that it would transform us, but we should also actively *think* about it, and *act* on it too. So, let me ask you four things based on the 3 questions brought to Jesus, and the one He brought to the Pharisees:

- **Are you paying your taxes as you should? Are you giving to God as you should?**
 - I think it most likely that we do all pay our taxes, whether we see the need or not, whether we agree with how they are used, or not. But do we give everything we should to God? You know, back in Malachi chapter 1 God challenged His people over what they offered, for they were bringing the sick and lame animals, instead of their first and best. And He said to them, try shortchanging those who rule over you and see how they like it! So consider that. Consider whether you are shortchanging God in any way — with your time, or energy, or your money.
- **Is your view of marriage, or anything, based on the Bible?**
 - It's real easy, isn't it, to have our opinion of marriage — what it is, how to do it, what the purpose of it is — informed by the culture around us. But this is a special institution that God established before the fall of man. And it is one that we must approach correctly, and honour properly. And we need to know our Bibles to do that. So do we know what it says? Do we? We should.
- **Are you loving God as you should? Are you loving others as you should?**

- You know, don't you, that it's one thing to write in a card "I love you with all my heart". And quite another to actually do that. Well, it's the same with God. It's one thing to stand here and sing God's praises, declaring our love for Him. But it's quite another to *actually* love God with all our heart, soul and mind, as we're instructed to in the Bible. It requires effort. And likewise, when it comes to loving others, it's quite one thing to say we love our family, or church family, but it's quite another to do it. But love is a verb, which means it's a *doing* word. So what are you doing for others? Are you putting others before self? For that is what the Bible tells us to do.
- **Do you have a right view of who Jesus is? Is He your Lord?**
 - As I and others have said a few time recently, you can't say no Lord, and mean both words. If Jesus really is our Lord, then we need to submit to Him and His will. We can't both be in charge of our lives. Either He is, or we are. And I think we all know very well that if left to our own devices then we'll make a right dogs dinner of our lives. So let us submit to Him in all things.

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