

>>>>>> Matthew – Lesson 44 <<<<<<<

- 1) After the parable of the Wedding Feast which poked the bear again for the Pharisees, it appears that they go away and begin to plan a more serious attack on Jesus ... Or at least that is what they thought.

Matthew 22:15–22(ESV)

Paying Taxes to Caesar

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. ¹⁶ And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. ¹⁷ Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” ¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, **“Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show me the coin for the tax.”** And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ And Jesus said to them, **“Whose likeness and inscription is this?”** ²¹ They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, **“Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”** ²² When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

- 2) Nice try but too bad so sad – didn’t work!!
- 3) There are several; interesting parts to the beginning of this passage.
 - a) First, there is the fact that these two groups, the Pharisees and the Herodians, were really polar opposites.
 - i) The Pharisees were primarily a religious movement and the Herodians were primarily /a political faction supporting the Herodian rulers and their relationship to Roman authority.
 - (1) Remember, Rome had installed the Herods as kings beginning with Herod the Great in 40BCE.
 - ii) Second, it is interesting to note that the Pharisees sent their disciples with the Herodians – they themselves did not go.
- 4) The two groups had very different political interests, yet they could unite against Jesus.
- 5) Both the Herodians and the Pharisees cared about Jesus' answer but for different reasons.
 - a) If Jesus’ answer was “Yes, you should pay the tax” then ...
 - i) The Pharisees could portray him as someone who accepted Roman domination and compromised Israel's covenant identity.
 - b) If Jesus’ answer was “No, you should not pay the tax” then ...
 - i) The Herodians could potentially characterize him as opposing the Roman political order and therefore as a dangerous revolutionary.
- 6) One commentator describes the political trap essentially this way:

The Herodians had a reason to take notice if Jesus opposed the imperial regime, while the Pharisees had reason to challenge an affirmative endorsement of Roman taxation.

7) Now, what makes Jesus' answer brilliant and “marveled” the two groups was that He did not choose either side's preferred answer.

8) He says:

“Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

- a) The remarkable thing is that he doesn't say, "pay the tax because Rome is legitimate," nor does he say, "don't pay the tax because Rome is illegitimate."
- b) Instead, he introduces a distinction between Caesar's claims and God's claims.

1) The Sadducees decide to take their turn next ...

Matthew 22:23–33(ESV)

Sadducees Ask About the Resurrection

²³ The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, ²⁴ saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.’ ²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ So too the second and third, down to the seventh. ²⁷ After them all, the woman died. ²⁸ In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her.”

²⁹ But Jesus answered them, **“You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ³¹ And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”** ³³ And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

2) As with the patronizing intro of the Pharisees’ disciples and the Herodians in the last passage, here we have even worse, a blatant use of a deception.

- a) The question the Sadducees asked was about the resurrection and, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection so how off base can you get with a question like this?
- b) Jesus answers the first question in a rather direct manner:

“You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

3) He then proceeds to answer the unasked question – resurrection – basically calling them out on their deception.

- a) He points out clearly that God is the God of the living as stated unequivocally in scripture.

Exodus 3:6 (ESV)

⁶ And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

- b) This is a scripture from the Pentateuch which the Sadducees accepted.

- c) The key is God tells Moses “I am ...” present tense the God of ... the clear meaning being that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are resurrected – they are living in a resurrected state – present tense.
- 4) The crowd was astonished at his teaching but as we will see next, the attacks do not stop there.
- 1) Moving on, let’s see what happens with the religious establishment as they continue their relentless attempts to trap Jesus ...
- 2) We will see, in verse 34, two things:
 - a) First, the Pharisees probably did not send the Sadducees to try to trap Jesus as we saw them do with their disciples and Herodians in that last passage.
 - b) Second, it is obvious they realized they are not making much headway so they enlist one of the scribes (a lawyer) to ask him a question, Surely this will trip him up ...

Matthew 22:34–46(ESV)

The Great Commandment

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.** ³⁸ **This is the great and first commandment.** ³⁹ **And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** ⁴⁰ **On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”**

- 3) Jesus gives the absolute correct answer to the question about the greatest commandment and then moves on to a question of his own which we will get to in a moment.
- 4) First, a couple of the interesting things about this passage combined with the last; first, to me, the question the scribe (lawyer) asked was almost too easy.
 - a) I would think any self-respecting Jew would have answered the question correctly, especially the lawyer who was asking the question.
 - b) Jesus does, however, carry this one step further when he connects the two commandments making a significant theological claim:

On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.

- 5) We really do not know, but perhaps, Jesus decides at this point to put an end to all this questioning and attempts to trap Him.
 - a) One way or the other, Jesus decides to ask them including the lawyer (expert in the Law) a question which proves to be very difficult to answer – it causes them to reevaluate things.

Whose Son Is the Christ?

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, ⁴² saying, “**What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?**” They said to him, “The son of David.” ⁴³ He said to them, “**How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,**

⁴⁴ “**‘The Lord said to my Lord,**

“Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet” ’?

⁴⁵ If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” ⁴⁶ And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

- b) The first answer they gave was obviously correct – “the son of David.”
 - c) The difficulty comes in the conundrum caused by Jesus’ quote of Psalm 110:1.
 - d) Their expectation of the Messiah being David’s human son was not an issue.
 - e) The issue was not how the son of David could be greater than David himself.
 - i) That would be easily answered – many decedents of kings became greater than their fathers in deeds and actions.
 - f) The real conundrum came in the word “Lord” used in Psalm 110.
 - g) Jesus’ question forces them to recognize that “Son of David” isn't sufficient to explain the Messiah's identity.
 - h) In other words: They correctly identify the Messiah as David's son, but they have not adequately understood who David's Son actually is.
 - i) The true answer is that Jesus is both **David's son according to his human lineage** and **David's Lord because of his unique divine identity and exalted status**.
 - j) That is precisely the direction Matthew has been taking the reader throughout the Gospel.
- 6) At any rate, this appears to be THE END! Drat! Thwarted at their own game.
- 7) Time for drastic measures – plan B!
- 8) And of course, plan B is to capture Jesus, turn him over to the Roman authorities, and have them kill him.
- 9) This whole episode to this point has been all about jealousy, fear, and dare I say anger; all brought about by the hardness of their hearts.

Thoughts / Questions / Comments?

- 10) Jesus now begins a long dissertation to first, the crowd and the disciples then He turns to the scribes and Pharisees directly.
- a) We will look at the comments to the crowd and then address each of the “woes” to the scribes and Pharisees ...

Matthew 23:1–7(ESV)

Seven Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ²“**The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat,** ³**so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.** ⁴**They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.** ⁵**They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long,** ⁶**and they love the place**

of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues ⁷ and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.

11) In essence, Jesus is starting with the crowds but the theme will be the same – these religious leaders are hypocrites.

- a) Their words say one thing and their actions tell a different story.
- b) They are speaking correctly but much of what they do is contrary to what they are saying.
- c) The Pharisees were notorious for adding minute details and requirements to the law which made it impossible for the average person, whose life did not revolve around the law, to keep the law.
- d) These were the heavy burdens, hard to bear.
- e) After giving the people all these impossible commands, the leaders were unwilling to lift a finger to move them.
 - i) In other words, they lived in their “ivory towers,” teaching their lofty commands and interpretations.
 - ii) Yet, they offered the people no practical advice in working these out in their lives or in building a relationship with the heavenly Father.⁴⁶
- f) This would be like hearing sermon after sermon about all the things you should be doing without ever giving any ideas whatsoever about how to live these things out in our lives.
 - i) That would be a hard pill to swallow.

12) And why did they do this – mostly because they loved the attention and notoriety.

13) Jesus begins his description of this behavior of showiness with the phylacteries and fringes.

- a) Phylacteries were small leather boxes containing passages from Exodus and Deuteronomy, worn on the arm and forehead during prayer.
- b) They were common among observant Jews, especially Pharisees, but there is no evidence that every Jewish man in first-century Palestine wore them regularly.
- c) The issue was of course that the Pharisees made theirs large and the straps that held them broad so that they would be noticed.
- d) The "fringes" are the tassels that God commanded Israelites to wear on the corners of their garments.

Numbers 15:37–39 (ESV)

Tassels on Garments

³⁷ The LORD said to Moses, ³⁸ “Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. ³⁹ And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after.

- e) Jesus’ problem was not with the fringes but again, the Pharisees made theirs exceptionally long so they would be noticed.

14) Jesus goes on to mention other things the pharisees did that spoke to their love of attention:

⁴⁶ Bruce B. Barton, Matthew, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 448.

- a) They loved the place of honor at feasts,
- b) the best seats in the synagogues,
- c) greetings in the marketplaces,
- d) and being called rabbi by others.

15) Continuing, Jesus gives the crowd a few do and don'ts that perhaps prevent them from becoming like the Pharisees.

- a) He's telling them how they should act in comparison to these folks.

Matthew 23:8–12(ESV)

⁸ But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers.
⁹ And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.
¹⁰ Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. ¹¹ The greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

- b) To be clear, there is an overlap in the Greek between the word for rabbi and that used here for teacher and instructor.
 - i) The word used for instructor (καθηγητής kathēgētēs) only appears two times in the NT – both are here in Mat 23:10 in different forms.
- c) The rabbi was a Jewish super title used for respected teachers of the Torah.
 - i) It referred to someone recognized as an interpreter of Scripture and Jewish tradition.
 - ii) It carried social prestige and authority.
 - iii) Jesus was frequently addressed as "Rabbi."

16) All of this, Jesus concludes by teaching the crowd the lesson he has been trying to teach his disciples.