

MATTHEW 22 TRICK QUESTIONS BY JEWISH LEADERS



At mid-week of Christ's last days, He is again returning to the Temple area where He was teaching, and the Pharisees and Sadducees would ask Him trick questions to entice Him to say something so they could then arrest Him.

He usually answered them in parables, or stories that had a lesson behind them but subtly so they could not catch Him. He practiced being "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Mt. 10:16).

In the parable of the Two Sons he showed their hypocrisy, being pious outward but insincere inwardly. In the parable of the Wicked Vinedressers, he revealed their jealousy and hate by rejecting a prophet like John the Baptist and showing what they would eventually do to Him as the Son of God—kill Him.

Now He gives a third parable to picture how far off they really were about entering the kingdom of God. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.' But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. 'But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (bitter frustration).' For

many are called, but few are chosen" (Mt. 22:1-14).

This parable represents God's invitation or calling to the Jewish people so upon acceptance and obedience they could enter God's kingdom.

Robertson's Word Pictures says, "The prophets of old had given God's invitation to the Jewish people. Now the Baptist and Jesus had given the second invitation that the feast was ready. 'And they would not come.' This negative response characterizes the stubborn refusal of the Jewish leaders to accept Jesus as God's Son (John 1:11).

After they had killed Jesus, the prophecy of this parable would be fulfilled. A few decades later the Romans armies would destroy Jerusalem, the Temple and enslave most of the Jewish people.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary notes, "Jesus had in mind the effect of the nation's rejection of Him. God had made plans for His Son's millennial reign and the invitation had been extended. But the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples had largely been ignored. The nation would even kill those extending the offer. Finally in A.D. 70 the Roman army would come, kill most of the Jews living in Jerusalem, and destroy the temple."

Once the Jewish invitees reject the invitation to enter God's kingdom, He would then go to the Gentiles and extend them the invitation to be part of that kingdom when Christ returns. Paul would be the chief instrument God would use to that end. It includes the "better resurrection" or the first resurrection and begins with the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7). So the Church would be composed of believing Jews and Gentiles—what Paul calls, "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16)

This parable also answers the question, "Can a believer be part of that kingdom without first obeying God's commandments?" Here it shows what happens when someone invited entered the wedding without coming in the right apparel. Since this feast represents entering the kingdom of God, the wedding garments are symbolic of a person's spiritual preparation for it. Notice how this is explained in Revelation 19:7-8 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has

made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is *the righteous acts of the saints*."

With these three parables, Jesus makes his case against the religious leaders and the majority of the unbelieving Jews. But now, the Jewish leaders begin their trick questions against Him.

We read, "Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. 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?' But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, 'Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?'" (Mt. 22:16-18).

The Herodians were Jews that backed the Herodian government and Rome. They were normally opposed to the Pharisees, but now they were united in their opposition to Jesus. They asked Jesus a loaded question and were sure whatever He answered they had Him trapped. If He answered "No," then they had the Herodians right there to arrest Him for sedition and refusing to obey the Roman command to pay taxes. It was not a trivial thing. If He answered "yes" then He was backing the Romans and considered a traitor.

Nelson's Commentary says, "The dilemma is obvious: side with the Pharisees and risk being accused of insurrection against the Roman government, or side with the Herodians and lose the favor of the masses. Taxes included an annual tax paid by every Jewish adult to the Roman government. The Jews despised paying this tax to their hated oppressors."

Yet Jesus had the perfect answer for them. He said, 'Show Me the tax money.' So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' 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 marveled, and left Him and went their way. (Mt. 22:19-22).

He therefore had outfoxed the foxes! *Nelson's Commentary* has another interesting note, "Coins in circulation in Palestine included both Roman and local issues. The typical Roman coin had on

one side a portrait of the emperor or another important person (Mt. 22:20). On the other side was a symbolic design, such as a temple. The lettering around the imperial portraits had recently begun to include the letters 'DIV,' signifying 'divine.' Julius Caesar was the first living person to appear on official Roman coins."

In antiquity, coins were a symbol of the government in charge. As soon as a new king took over, they would make new coins with his image to show the legitimacy of his reign. Thus, the coins really belonged to the king whose image was stamped on them. So Christ ingeniously showed there are certain duties toward God and rulers. In other words, we have a dual citizenship—the first and most important is when one is baptized and becomes a citizen of God's kingdom. Paul said, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). The other citizenship, which we receive at birth in the country we are born in, is *subordinate to the first*. So when the two are in conflict, the duty toward the first citizenship should be chosen. As the apostles said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

So these attackers left astounded and ashamed. Next up were the Sadducees with one of their favorite trick questions: "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.'" (Mt. 22:24-28).

Barclay's Commentary explains, "The Sadducees were not many in number; but they were the wealthy, the aristocratic, and the governing class. The chief priests, for instance, were Sadducees. In politics they were collaborationist; quite ready to cooperate with the Roman government, if co-operation was the price of the retention of their own privileges. In thought, they were quite ready to open their minds to

Greek ideas. In their Jewish belief, they were traditionalists. They refused to accept the oral and scribal law, which to the Pharisees was of such paramount importance. They went even further; the only part of scripture which they regarded as binding was the Pentateuch, the Law par excellence, the first five books of the Old Testament. They did not accept the prophets or the poetical books as scripture at all. In particular they were at variance with the Pharisees in that they completely denied any life after death, a belief on which the Pharisees insisted. The Pharisees indeed laid it down that any man who denied the resurrection of the dead was shut out from God. The Sadducees insisted that the doctrine of life after death could not be proved from the Pentateuch....The Sadducees produced a question which, they believed, reduced the doctrine of the resurrection of the body to an absurdity...The Sadducees cited a case of Levirate marriage (Dt. 25:5-10), in which seven brothers, each dying childless, one after another married the same woman; and then asked, 'When the resurrection takes place, whose wife will this much-married woman be?' Here indeed was a catch question."

Jesus answered 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. 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." And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together" (Mt. 22:30-34).

So Christ first told them they were not interpreting the Scriptures correctly, not being guided by God's spirit. He explains to them that in the resurrection (in this case, the first), after being transformed into spirit beings, all relationships will be far superior than what they were on earth. They will not be flesh and blood, nor will they ever die. Marriages made on earth will be dramatically transformed as the pair will now be spirit beings and part of God's eternal family. All the righteous will be spiritually wedded to Jesus Christ, the

groom, and it will be a greater and different relationship. That is all we presently know.

Jesus also demolishes their arguments against the resurrection of the dead. He mentions how calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and after they died, He still spoke of them as if they were to again come to life. As it says in Hebrews 11:13, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises [of eternal life], but having seen them afar off." This group also slinkered off, while the crowds marveled at His crystal-clear answers.

Next came the Pharisees. But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 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 neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." 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." 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 no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore" (Mt. 22:25-45).

The Pharisaic literature (Talmud) mentions there was a controversy on which was the greatest commandment. Since they stressed so much the ritual law, some considered it was the commandment about wearing tassels. Incredible! So Christ straightens them out with the right answer based on a summary of the first four commandments and the last six. He also poses a question which reveals there were two (Yahwehs) in the Old Testament (God the Father and the Word). They couldn't or wouldn't answer Him because it went against their theology. And with that, they gave up trying to outwit Him regarding Scripture. What an example He gives us of searching the Scriptures and knowing them well!