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MATTHEW

QUESTIONING THE KING

MATTHEW 22:15-46

- I. Danger in Jerusalem
 - a. Reminder of the setting
 - i. Jesus and His disciples enter Jerusalem during Passover week – a particularly volatile time in the city
 - ii. The population would grow 10x over as Jews traveled from all over to celebrate God’s deliverance of their people from Egyptian rule centuries ago
 1. It was historically the most likely week for political and social unrest
 - b. Jerusalem was also a dangerous place for Jesus to be
 - i. Something His disciples were well aware of
 1. In *John 8:59*, after Jesus said, ***“Before Abraham was, I AM,”*** the religious leaders picked up stones to stone him
 2. In *John 10:30-33*, after ***“I and My Father are one,”*** they reached for stones again charging Him with blasphemy - ***“because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.”***
 3. In *John 11*, when Jesus told His disciples that they were heading toward Judea to raise Lazarus, they objected ***“Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?”***
 - a. They didn’t want to go anywhere near Jerusalem
 - b. Once they realized He was going Thomas said ***“Let us also go, that we may die with Him”***
 - ii. That’s the Jerusalem that Jesus and His disciples find themselves in
 - c. Jesus doesn’t enter quietly or undercover
 - i. He enters as the Messiah, the Anointed One, the King the people have been waiting for
 - ii. His first act as King? goes directly to the temple, and drives out the money changers: ***“It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves’”***
 1. And then He begins to heal the sick
 - iii. The next morning, he curses a fig tree full of leaves but barren of fruit – a living parable exposing the spiritual condition of Israel
 - iv. Then, back in the temple, the chief priests confront him: ***“By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?”***
 1. What a question – driving out corruption, cleansing the temple, healing the sick and their question is “Who do you think you are?”
 2. Doesn’t answer them directly, instead He tells them three parables
 - d. The Parables
 - i. The first - a father asks two sons to work in the vineyard; one refuses, then goes anyway; the other agrees, then never shows up

1. Jesus asks the question - Which one did the will of the father? Their answer "The first."
2. ***"tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you"***
- ii. The second - A landowner plants a vineyard, leases it out, and sends servants to collect his share of the crops. The vinedressers beat and kill the landowner's servants.
 1. He sends more, and they do the same to them. Finally he sends his own son, believing they will respect him; instead they say, ***"This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance"***
 2. Jesus asks the question "when the owner comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" ***"He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers"***
 3. ***"the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it"***
- iii. The third - A king prepares a wedding feast for his son; the invited guests refuse to come and seize and kill his messengers. The king's judgement on the city, he ***"sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city"***
 1. The invitation doesn't stop there – the king sends his servants out into the highways, to invite ***"both bad and good"***
 2. The one who accepted the invitation but didn't dress for the occasion is judged - 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.'***
- iv. The meaning was not lost on the leaders - ***"they perceived that He was speaking of them."***

II. Picking a Fight?

- a. What is Jesus doing?
 - i. He is pronouncing judgement as a King – riding in on a donkey, cleansing the temple, cursing the tree, the destruction of the city - He even got the religious leaders to render their own verdict
 - ii. He is answering their question ***"By what authority are You doing these things?"***
 1. ***Isaiah 5:1 Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill. 2 He dug it up and cleared out its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, And also made a winepress in it; So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes.***
 2. ***Isaiah 5:7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.***
- b. This makes senses - ***But when they sought to lay hands on Him,***
 - i. ***they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet"***
 - ii. What happens next is plan B for religious leaders who have been publicly embarrassed yet fear the crowds

15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. 16 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. 17 Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? 19 Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius. 20 And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" 21 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." 22 When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.

III. Render to God What is God's

- a. An unlikely alliance
 - i. The Pharisees and Herodians agreed on nothing
 1. The Pharisees were religious traditionalists that resisted Roman influence and the Herodians were loyal to the dynasty of Herod which was backed by the Romans
 - a. Here they are united by their love of power and hatred of Jesus
 - b. The enemy of my enemy
- b. Their goal - *plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk*
 - i. "entangle" – a hunter's snare – the question was the bait
 - ii. The Pharisees send one of their disciples (men they were to train up in the righteousness of God)
 - iii. *"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. 17 Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"*
 1. It was the perfect trap – if Jesus said yes He would lose the crowd and they could arrest Him without fear, if Jesus said no they would hand Him over to the Romans on the charge of treason (the very reason the Herodians were there)
 - iv. *"Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money."*
 1. The hypocrisy – the Pharisees objected to Roman taxation for, what they claimed were, religious reasons
 2. The denarius had the phrase "son of the divine Augustus" inscribed on it, so many Jews considered it idolatrous to even carry the coin
 3. But when Jesus asks for a coin, someone produces it instantly
- c. *"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."*
 - i. Render – goes beyond "give", it means pay back what is owed
 - ii. The coin bears Caesar's image, so it belongs to Caesar.
 1. But you bear the image of God (Genesis 1:27), so give to God what belongs to God
 - iii. Tears down the walls of religious compartmentalization – this belongs to me, this belongs to Rome, this belongs to God
 1. This day is my day, this day is the Lord's day, this day is my employers day
 2. We bear His image, we belong to Him, and life doesn't make any sense until we really begin to understand that
 - iv. This was a diagnosis of Israel's problem – you've created these compartments that belong to God but He doesn't want compartments – He wants you – He wants your whole life, your whole being

1. *When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.*

Mat 22:23 The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, 24 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. 25 Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. 27 Last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her." 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. 31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 32 '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." 33 And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

IV. Lost in Hypotheticals

- a. The Sadducees – were more friendly towards Roman rule than the Pharisees and more limited in their acceptance of the scriptures as the inspired Word of God
 - i. They only recognized the first five books as binding
 - ii. Denied bodily resurrection, angels, and a spiritual realm
- b. Their ridiculous hypothetical situation exposes their hearts. They are not looking for an answer, they are looking to give public credibility to their position
 - i. They're not seeking to understand; they are seeking to reinforce their claims – not a place we want to be in when we are talking with the creator of universe, not a condition we want to find ourselves in when we are studying His Word
- c. *29 Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.*
 - i. You don't know God and you don't know His Word – that is the result of that kind of heart posture when we approach God – we completely miss Him
 1. We miss His power, what He is able to do and we miss His character, what He wills to do
 2. Proverbs calls it being wise in our own eyes – and it is the enemy of wisdom
 - ii. The question is legitimate – what happens when we die? But the Sadducees have already settled that in their own minds, they are looking for ammunition
 - iii. Jesus takes them to Exodus 3 - *"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*
 1. Not I was, I Am!

Matt 22:34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

V. The Greatest Commandment

- a. Lawyer – expert in the Law
 - i. Not just the scriptures, but the over 4,000 man-made laws that the Pharisees had built up around them
 - ii. Motivation – testing, identical word used of satan when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness – that gives us an idea of who is ultimately at work here
- b. The question was a common one – how do you rank the laws? What is most important?
 - i. This would be a common debate amongst the rabbis and this was an obvious effort to pull Jesus into that controversy
 - ii. Jesus joins Deuteronomy 6:5 (love the Lord your God) to Leviticus 19:18 (love your neighbor as yourself) - ***“On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets”***
 1. Hang – all of scripture is suspended on these two commands
 2. Remove either one and it all falls – the religious leaders had neither
 3. They had mastered the technical side of the commandments – straining out gnats, crafting phylacteries and tassels, praying in the streets, giving coins that rang out when they were deposited, looking famished whenever they fasted
 - a. But they didn’t love God or His creation
 - iii. Again, great question, terrible heart condition
 1. Our motives matter

Mat 22:41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 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 then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: 44 ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool” ’? 45 If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” 46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

VI. One Last Question

- a. Psalm 110 – the single most quoted Psalm in all the New Testament
 - i. Is the Messiah just a man descended from a great Israelite king or is he someone greater than David himself, someone David would call "Lord"? – a puzzling statement in a culture where the father is honored over the son
 - ii. The question Jesus is really asking – “Who do you actually believe I am? Just a Savior, or Savior and Lord” That is the only question that matters in all of this.
- b. We are faced with the same question “Who do we actually believe Jesus is?”
 - i. Some to reinforce our position, legitimize our lifestyle, confirm what we've already decided, help us win an argument, find a loophole that lets us do what we know He has already warned us about, someone to bless a plan we never asked Him about because we were afraid to say no
 - ii. In all of these examples, who is Lord over our lives? That is not surrender, that is not your will, by my will be done
 - iii. ***James 4:2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.***
 1. That is not a life lived under the good rule and reign of our King Jesus, ask for something more – ask for His power and His will, there is nothing better