

MATTHEW 22:15-46

NOT MERELY A DEFENSE

I have always been fascinated about how Jesus answers questions. You know you are going to get the correct answer, of course. But HOW He answers questions is another thing altogether. Many times He answers a question with a question. Other times not. But He is ALWAYS teaching when He answers a question. And many times you have to refer back to other things He said in order to get the full weight of His answer. Conversations in the Bible are not held in isolation. They, like our conversations are held within a much larger context. And we sell ourselves short when we don't stop and contemplate His answers. There is the first layer of the answer, but then there is a greater lesson within or behind the first one. And that is what I would like us to see today.

We take back up today with a long-running conversation Jesus is having with the religious officials at the Temple complex. They are not happy with the accolades Jesus is getting from the crowds, but they have to play their hands close to their vests. Jesus is popular and is even being called the Messiah. If the religious aristocracy isn't careful, they can find themselves on the outs with the crowds on a crucial holiday. And in the end, the attention and respect are what they crave.

Having already answered many questions, Jesus is now going to be challenged three different times. They hope to entrap Him in his words so as to make Him lose credibility with the crowds. If you turn to Matthew 22, we can pick up on the conversation. The answers Jesus gives are not merely a defense, rather they are a further teaching moment. Jesus has already given the religious leaders a tongue-lashing with His parables in which He says they will be judged due to their lack of fruit production as they have led the people astray. And even if they were to enter the kingdom, they would be the last in line.

Mt. 22: 15 - 22

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.

- Disciples and Herodians: The Pharisee's disciples were young pupils. No doubt anxious to prove themselves to their rabbis. The Herodians were movers and shakers who were avid supporters of the Herodian family and dynasty. (explain) I believe they were present as witnesses in order to testify to Jesus' answer in a court of law, had He said the wrong thing. (Insurrection)
- The disciples fawn deference with their flattery.
- But Jesus sees right through them. **You can approach Jesus as a sinner, but don't do it with an ulterior motive.**
- Jews were suffering under a 50% tax rate. So supporting the paying of the poll tax was not popular with the people. It was probably thought that since Jesus had already run off the moneychangers that He also wouldn't support paying taxes. This would gain points with the people but would also make him guilty of insurrection, allowing Him to be arrested and putting the onus on the Romans. This would have left the religious leaders free and clear.
- Whose inscription? Then render unto Caesar what is his and unto God what is His. So they marveled and left.
- Jesus didn't give them a simple answer, but He didn't just give them a clever answer in order to wriggle out of the hot seat either. There was a much deeper meaning to what He said. More on that later.

Next up to bat were the Sadducees.

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.

- Sadducees – only believe in the Pentateuch. The resurrection isn't developed in scripture until Isa. 26:19 and Dan. 12:2, much later in scripture. So they are asking a riddle of sorts, a riddle in which they don't even believe is possible.
- According to Acts 23:8, they also denied the existence of angels.
- The Temple was there is their stronghold. They run the place.
- The levirate marriage. The levir – a surviving brother of a childless, deceased man. (Explain)
- A crazy scenario. This is an attempt to create a theological trap to prove Jesus is unqualified to teach. After all, He hasn't been to any of their schools. But Jesus turns the heat back on His inquisitors. Not only have they failed in coming up with the perfect trap, they are deficient in their view of the resurrection. They err because they don't know the scriptures. And because they don't know the Word, they can't identify Him as the Messiah.
- Faulty premise: There is no marriage in Heaven. There is no need to procreate there. Furthermore all angels are spoken of in the masculine. Therefore the question is moot from the beginning.
- Since the resurrection isn't developed until later in the OT, Jesus takes the Sadducees to a place in scripture they know well in order to make His point. (Exodus 3:6, 15)
- ***Verse 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."***
- The point can go unnoticed in English. But all the patriarchal references are in the present tense. This shows that in a sense, these men are still alive. Therefore there is an afterlife and these men are in it and in good standing with God. The Sadducees cannot deny the scripture. And with this they are silenced. More on Jesus' point later.

Two strikes! The Pharisees and their lawyer are up next.

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."

- "We got this!" Yeah, right.
- Lawyer: scholar/ theologian of the Law.
- Which is the greatest commandment? The answer comes from Dt. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18.
- This doesn't seem like a hard question, but the rabbis were always debating

the issue of which commandments carried the most weight. Jesus sums things up by quoting the standard verses, which summarize the Law.

- There is no “mic drop moment” here. Jesus doesn’t give them a chance. He actually answered the question to their liking, but now He turns the guns on them.

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?”

- Like the Sadducees before them, the Pharisees don’t have a clear idea of who the Messiah was. They knew He was to come from the line of King David. But they were expecting Him to be another mortal king. This is what Jesus addresses. **Why would David refer to his son as Lord, if he were just his son?** That simply wasn’t done. Only an elder or God would be referred to in that way. At that, the Pharisees’ theology collapsed. And now...

Matthew 22:46

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

Wait for it... Mic Drop!!!!!!!

Not merely a defense.

In the first challenge, Jesus answered by pointing to the inscription on the coin. He told them to pay what they owe to Caesar and to God what was owed God. This isn’t a clever way to wriggle out of a tight spot. Rather it is a statement of Jesus’ place in God’s timeline as well as how those in His kingdom are to operate in this world.

Remember this was a political trap.

- Jesus didn’t come as a political or military threat to the established rulers of this world. (He could have called 10,000 angels.)
- Those who have responded to his invitation will continue to have obligations to the governing authorities of this world. **(Rom. 13: 1-7; 1 Peter 2: 13-17)**
- **Giving what is God’s to God is more than paying a Temple tax or tithing.** We are to pattern our lives in such a way that we show we are stewards of all He has created. And we are to use what is His in the way He would have it used.

- Jesus' tempters have missed an opportunity to repent and take Him up on His invitation.

THE SADDUCEES

The Sadducees attempted to construct the perfect theological riddle, but failed miserably. Why? Because they didn't know the book they claimed to know. Unbelievers do the same today. By only studying part of the book, they had an incomplete picture. **This is why we endeavor to go through the entirety of the Bible, verse by verse.**

By failing to believe in the resurrection, they denied the power of God. That is what Jesus told them.

29 Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

What lies behind the resurrection is the power to pull it off! Because of their lack of Biblical knowledge, they are dramatically hindered in their understanding of the way life is to be lived both here and in the hereafter! We can fall into the same trap.

THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees received the answer they wanted, but they didn't totally understand their question or the answer. Jesus answered with scripture, but the word, "love" seems to have gone unseen by the Pharisees. **Love for God is not to be understood as simply an emotional attachment. Rather it means giving oneself to Him with one's entire person. Head, soul and mind are not rigidly separated compartments of human existence, but they reflect that the entire person is given to God.**

The same goes for loving your neighbor. **Loving your neighbor is not merely an emotional attachment. It requires action and deference.**

When Jesus summed up the Law in this way, He showed how the kingdom life He inaugurated fulfills the deepest inclinations in humans created in God's image. This is impossible under the Law. While the OT Law hangs on these commandments, it is powerless to empower or enable anyone to consistently live in this manner. Only being born again can do that.

Love is an unconditional commitment to an imperfect person in which one gives oneself to another to bring the relationship to God's intended purpose.

The Mic drop question:

Finally, when Jesus sent the Pharisees away speechless, He made the point that Jesus, the Messiah was no mere mortal, sent here to be another political ruler. He was more than a man. He IS more than a man. There was something supernatural going on and God had prophesied it centuries earlier. And they were missing it. They all missed it because of a lack of knowledge of the Word of God. Religion won't get you to Heaven. Ticking off the boxes and going through the motions won't get you to Heaven any more than doing those things will create a good marriage. In the end, it is just a rut.

But realizing the power in, of and behind the resurrection Jesus, who is more than a man or a king, but the Son of God come to take away our sins will get you there! Knowing how that re-birth will empower us to live a kingdom life here on earth while under two different authorities and how it shows us life in the hereafter gives us peace here and now.

Once again:

Love is an unconditional commitment to an imperfect person in which one gives oneself to another to bring the relationship to God's intended purpose.

And this is what we have in Jesus! He has invited us into His kingdom! He has paid and paved the way through the power of His resurrection! And He is able to do this because He is more than a mortal man! He is the Son of God! He has come to be with us! Immanuel! Merry Christmas!

Do you know him?