

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Matthew's Gospel - Chapter 22

The marriage feast / Jesus answers His critics

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Introduction

Matthew 22 continues with the confrontation by the chief priests and elders with Jesus when He was teaching in the temple. In Matthew 21 Jesus answers His critics by telling them parables. Parables were often told by Jesus to illustrate what He was trying to get through to His audience. At the end of that chapter the chief priests and Pharisees perceived that Jesus was speaking about them, and they wanted to arrest Him, but they were afraid to do so because of the crowd. In chapter 22 vv.1-14 Jesus continues by telling another parable: the parable of the marriage feast. Chapter 22 continues with the critics of Jesus all trying in different ways to trip Him up.

Vv.15-22 Jesus answers the Herodians.
Vv.23-33 Jesus answers the Sadducees.
Vv.34-40 Jesus answers the Pharisees.
Vv.41-46 Jesus questions the Pharisees.

As I looked through this chapter, I was struck by the fact that Jesus the Lamb of God, without blemish, was examined by unholy men. The Creator was being examined by His creature man. What audacity!

Vv.1-14 The marriage feast

Jesus was speaking to Jews who had rejected Him - that He was the Messiah they were looking for. The Jewish nation are God's chosen earthly people, and the Old Testament tells us of His special love for them. It also tells us of God's patience and mercy towards them on many occasions when they turned away from Him. This parable Jesus told explains to the Jews that they had been invited to a marriage feast, but they had refused to come. So, He was now going to send out His servants to ask others who would come because the wedding hall had to be filled.

The 'certain king' is a picture of God. The 'king's son' is a picture of the Lord Jesus. The marriage feast is an appropriate description of the festive joy which characterises the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is the spiritual realm over which God reigns. Every Jewish household had received an invite from the King. A wonderful banquet had been prepared; the food was ready. There was space in the banquet hall for all. The King wanted to glorify his Son, so you can imagine the King's disappointment with the attitude of the invited guests. Vv.5-7,

“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.”

This was a picture of how the Jewish nation had rejected God's invitation. They had made excuses, far too busy with business and other things. Some of God's servants had been treated terribly and some murdered. God had had enough, and the Jewish nation was going to be set aside for a while. The burning of the city could refer to when Emperor Titus destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70.

In vv.8-14, the King does not rest; the Jewish nation was not worthy, so he sends servants out with new invites to people from other nations. The invites went out to all, good and bad. The King was going to fill his banquet hall and he would provide each one with the appropriate wedding garment. The hall is filled with guests from other nations who respond to the King's invitation. In this picture God extends His invitation to all, even to Gentile people who were unworthy. The Jews always looked down on these people, but not God. God provides the appropriate garment to wear. This is a picture of the garment of righteousness we put on when we come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As sinners, we were unworthy but because of His death we are made righteous, and we become God's righteousness in Him.

We can happily be in the presence of God because our sins have been covered by the blood of Christ. There is also a warning at the end of the parable for those who try to enter the kingdom of God without accepting God's wedding garment. They will be ejected, and they will find themselves in the place of outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. I believe this to be hell, away from the joys of heaven. Just a couple of things to note at this point. Firstly, 'gnashing of teeth' would indicate that even in hell many will still be angry with God. Secondly, although the Jewish nation has been set aside this does not stop individual Jews from coming to faith in Christ.

Vv.15-22 Jesus answers the Herodians

The Pharisees again plotted how they could entangle, trip up, or catch out Jesus in something He says. They sent their disciples along with the Herodians to question Him. The Herodians were a political party that supported the Herod dynasty. The two sects were bitter foes normally, but they were brought together by a common hatred of the Saviour. Together they asked Jesus a political question about taxes. It is interesting to note that they begin by giving Jesus a backhanded compliment by 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” (Matthew 22:16).

Then they drop the loaded question:

“Is it lawful to pay taxes to Ceasar, or not?” (Matthew 22:17).

Jesus knew what they were up to in their wicked ways. If Jesus had answered no, they would have accused Him of rebellion against the Roman government. If He had answered yes, He would have antagonised the Jewish people. Jesus answers them bluntly:

“Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?” (Matthew 22:18).

Palestine was occupied by the Romans and whether the Jews liked it or not they were under Roman rule. Jesus asks them to show Him a coin, He then asks,

“Whose image and inscription is this?” (Matthew 22:20).

Jesus knew very well whose it was, but He forced them to say: 'Ceasar's.' I have read that each ruler minted their own coins, this tax-coin was a constant reminder to the Jews that they were

under bondage to Rome. This was all because of their turning away from God. Jesus goes on to give the Jews a lesson that they must respect and honour those who rule over them. This includes paying what they were due in taxes.

The accusers marvelled at what Jesus said and went on their way. There is a lesson for us from this encounter. Romans 13 v.7 confirms this later. A believer has dual citizenship. Each is a citizen of this world and a citizen of heaven. The Bible is quite clear that we must respect and pay what we are due to our earthly rulers and in doing so we honour God. We are also responsible to God as we ought to bear the image of Christ daily in our lives. This is quite a responsibility and a challenge for us. The Pharisees and the Herodians had the express image of God before them, however, they failed to give Him His rightful place.

Vv.23-33 Jesus answers the Sadducees

The Sadducees were the liberal theologians of Jesus' day. They did not believe or accept the teaching of the resurrection. My Grandfather always used to say: 'This is why they were called Sadducees, they were 'sad you see'!' It is sad if we don't believe in the Resurrection because then there is no hope for us. Resurrection is a fundamental fact of the Bible and of the Christian faith. The words of the Lord Jesus to Martha in John 11 vv.25-26 surely encourages us in our faith:

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Because of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, for a true Christian who dies, their body will be raised on the resurrection day, to meet the Lord in the air: Praise the Lord for this! The examination of Jesus by the Sadducees arose from a law concerning Levite marriage from Deuteronomy 25 v.5. They were questioning the relationship of men and women after the resurrection. The Bible is clear that there will be no marriage relationship as such in the Resurrection. We do not have time to go into the details of their question but sufficient to say Jesus was ready with an answer for them. He told them that they were deceived, they did not know the Scriptures or the power of God. In v.32, He asked them if they had not read what God had said in the scriptures.

"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."

There are many today in this world who keep on asking questions about the afterlife and Satan is blinding their eyes to the truth of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. Don't be one of those, believe what the Bible says. You will miss out on the joy of living for Christ today, and sadly will spend eternity away from the presence of God, and the joy of heaven. When the Sadducees and the multitudes heard the words of Jesus, they were astonished at His teaching.

Vv.34-40 Jesus answers the Pharisees

"When the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together" (Matthew 22:34)

The Pharisees had tried everything but there was one more throw of the dice. There was a lawyer amongst them, surely, he would catch Jesus out? He begins to examine and test Jesus.

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" (Matthew 22:36).

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" (Matthew 22:37-40).

To be told to love your neighbour was a piercing blow to these self-centred Pharisees. Please notice that the lawyer has nothing further to say. Case dismissed! No one, not even a lawyer could lay a finger of accusation on Jesus the Son of God.

Vv.41-46 Jesus questions the Pharisees

Jesus, having now answered all His critics, turns, and questions the Pharisees. He asks them a question:

""What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David"" (Matthew 22:42).

Jesus then says 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?" (Matthew 22:43-45).

Most Pharisees did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. So, Jesus was asking in a general way whose Son would the Messiah be when He appeared. Jesus was quoting from Psalm 110 v.1, a scripture the Pharisees would know very well. David spoke of the Messiah as his Lord. The answer was that the Messiah was both David's Lord and David's Son, He was both God and Man. If the Pharisees had been open to the words of Jesus, they would have realised that they were standing before the Messiah Himself, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would also like to ask you today: "What do you think about the Christ?" Are you unsure, and you would like to know more? Or are you being like the Pharisees, full of questions, and not really interested in the answers from the Bible. Dear friend, today if you hear Jesus speaking to you, don't harden your heart, be warned as He may only speak to you for only a short while longer. Trust in the Saviour today, the blessed Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you.

The chapter finishes by telling us that no one was able to answer Jesus. In fact, they never dare questioned Him any more from that day forward. This is quite a poignant statement. As I said at the beginning, I was struck by the fact that Jesus the promised Messiah of Israel, the Lamb of God, the One without blemish and spot, was examined by unholy men. The Creator was being examined by His creature, but no one could point a finger at Him.

I want to close this study on Matthew 22 by considering 'The perfection of the Lamb of God after examination.' In Exodus 12 vv. 3-6, the Israelites were told to take a lamb without blemish, a male of the first year, kill it and put the blood on the door posts of their houses. The blood of the lamb saved the household from the destroying angel. Everyone was safe under the blood. I am thinking about the man of each house who would carefully examine his lamb to make sure it was without blemish and with spot. He would already know his animals, but he would have given it a thorough examination to make sure it had no defects. Only a perfect animal met the required perfection of God's holiness, so He could righteously forgive their sins.

In Hebrews 9 v.14 we read that,

"[Christ] offered Himself without spot to God."

The lamb in Exodus was a forced sacrifice whereas the Lord offered up Himself as the willing sacrifice for our sins. There was no need to examine the Lord. He is the perfect Son of God. But that did not stop the examination of Jesus. As well as what we have read in Mathew 22, we read of further examinations as the Lord Jesus made His way to the cross of Calvary. When Jesus was arrested, and bound, He was taken to Pontius Pilate the governor. Pilate was a man who was well used to questioning serious criminals. Pilate was also an astute man. As he questioned Jesus, Matthew says he 'marvelled greatly' at the silence of the Lord. Pilate knew that the Jews had handed Jesus over because of envy. And as he sat on the judgement seat a message came from his wife, who had had a dream which troubled her saying,

"Have nothing to do with that just Man" (Matthew 27:19).

Pilate offered the people the release of either Jesus or Barabbas. The cry went up,

"Let Him be crucified!" (Matthew 27:22).

Pilate asked,

"Why what evil has He done?" Pilate washed his hands and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person" (Matthew 27:23-24).

Pilate declared that he could find no fault in this Man, nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. The chief priests could find no evidence to put Jesus to death. A centurion at the cross said,

"Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

The thief on the cross said,

"This Man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41).

Men examined and tried to find fault in Jesus, the Lamb of God, but there was no defect, no spot or blemish found in Him. The morally perfect Man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, laid down His life and was nailed to the cross. His body was bruised for our sins. His perfect sacrifice satisfied a righteous and a Holy God regarding our sins. In Matthew 3 v.17 His Father said,

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The Lord Jesus the Son of God perfectly did what He volunteered to do.

Let me leave you and me with a challenge. 1 Corinthians 11 v.28 says,

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup."

Some of us break bread and drink wine every Lord's Day, as we answer to the Lord's request to remember Him in His death. Before we meet together in church, we are told to examine ourselves. We do not examine ourselves to see if we are worthy or fit to remember Him. If we belong to Jesus, we are worthy, and He delights in our worship and praise. But we are encouraged to examine our hearts, its thoughts, and intents, then we confess our sins, and the Lord faithfully forgives us our sins. Our hearts are then free to give Jesus the praise. We should also examine our hearts daily. A true believer has been made perfect in Christ, but there is nothing perfect about us in ourselves. Therefore, we should continue to examine our lives. Do I reflect Christ in my life?

Can anyone point a finger at me? Strive to be like Daniel, whose accusers could find no fault in him apart from his service for his God. May God bless you today.

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on Matthew's Gospel chapter 22 'The marriage feast / Jesus answers His critics' Talk number T1335.

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