

Review

Last Sunday morning, we watched as the chief priests and elders of the people walked up and interrupted Jesus' teaching in the temple. We listened as they questioned Him about His authority, and how He then gave the chief priests and elder of the people three parables, illustrating their complete rejection of God's authority. We also heard in those parables the proclamation of God's rejection of them as leaders of Israel.

During the discussion, the Pharisees walked up and heard these parables and Jesus' explanation of them. They understood that He was speaking these parables about them as well (Matt. 21:45).

Matt. 21:46 When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet.

22:15-16a The Pharisees And Herodians Plot

The Pharisees were legalistic Jews who resented the Romans' oppressive occupation of Israel. The Herodians were Jews who actually welcomed the Roman occupation. These people who would be so diametrically opposed to one another had found a common enemy in Jesus. They had been plotting against Jesus ever since He'd healed a man's withered hand early in His ministry (Mark 3:6). But when Jesus had publicly put the chief priests and elders between a rock and a hard place when He asked them about John's baptism, the Pharisees and the Herodians put their heads together with the idea of doing the same thing to Him. And it would seem they've come up with a pretty good plan...

22:16b-17 Pay Taxes To Caesar Or Not?

Tiberius Caesar was the emperor of the Roman Empire. And every census he ordered carried with it a tax of one-day's wage for being counted. It was something that the Jews resented deeply.

The Pharisees' and Herodians' question was quite clever. It was a very good trap. The verb "trap" in verse 15 ("pag-id-YOO-o") speaks of catching a bird in a snare.

Certainly there could be no way out, for the way they worded this question mandated a "yes" or "no" answer. Either one would get Jesus in

trouble. Taxes had been a major source of protest among the Jews, so if He said, "Yes," then He would alienate most of those who followed Him. But because it was unlawful to speak against the Roman government, if He said, "No," then the Herodians would immediately report Him to Caesar, and He would be arrested for treason against the Empire. They thought for sure that they'd ensnared Him.

22:18-22 Render To Caesar

The denarius, used to pay the poll-tax, was a coin with Tiberius Caesar's image stamped upon it. In His infinite wisdom, Jesus said, "Give the money to Caesar, because it's made in his image." What, then, was He saying, when He said, "...and to God the things that are God's"? He was saying, "Give yourself to God, because you're made in His image."

The Pharisees and Herodians were not prepared for an answer such as this,

Matt. 22:22 And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.

22:23 The Sadducees

We have seen the chief priests, the elders of the people, the Pharisees, and the Herodians. Now, we see the Sadducees enter the conflict.

The Sadducees were the liberal theologians of the day. They denied the resurrection of the body after death, as well as many other basic biblical doctrines. Luke tells us in the book of Acts,

Acts 23:8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

But whether they were theologically conservative or liberal, Jesus said they were cut from the same cloth. When He denounced the Sadducees' and Pharisees' respective teachings, He considered them to be one and the same: sinful and hypocritical (Matt. 16:6-12).

22:24-28 The Story Of The Woman With Seven Husbands

Because the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection, they had come up with a crazy example to "disprove" the doctrine.

I see people do this today. They come up with simplistic sayings that are supposed to convince us how stupid this or that Bible doctrine is. Questions like, "Can God make a rock so big He can't lift it?"

Even in the church, this kind of thing is prevalent.

- When seeking to deny the filling of the Holy Spirit, they say, "I got all of the Holy Spirit I'm ever gonna get on the day I was saved."

- When churches are doing things outside of what God has revealed He will do in the Bible, they claim, "You can't put God in a box."

- When seeking to justify their assertion that no one is in danger of hell because they once prayed the sinner's prayer, they say, "Once saved, always saved."

- When seeking to avoid the commands towards holiness and denying our flesh, they respond, "Nobody's perfect."

Such great sayings! So simple and so easy! Yet so clearly in opposition to God's Word. In the same way, the Sadducees had come up with this quaint little story to disprove the idea of the resurrection.

22:29-33 I Am The God Of Abraham

Jesus doesn't seek to answer this ludicrous and fictitious situation. He merely stands on the doctrine of the Bible. He says, "God said, 'I AM the God of Abraham,' AFTER Abraham had died." He hadn't said, "I WAS the God of Abraham." God is the God of the living, end of story.

Just as had happened with the Pharisees and Herodians, the Sadducees were silenced.

22:34-40 Love God, Love Your Neighbor

The Pharisees had failed in their alliance with the Herodians. Now, they have heard that the Sadducees have failed. Certainly, they figured, they must go it alone. Certainly believing themselves to be the smartest and most clever of them all.

They send in one of their lawyers. Now this is not a lawyer like we think of attorneys today. The term "lawyer" in New Testament days

meant, "one learned in the Law." In other words, the Law of Moses.

This learned man in the Law came to Jesus and questioned Him about the Law.

Matt. 22:36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

Jesus summed it up with, "Love God, and love your neighbor."

You know, when you think about it, everything in the entire Bible can be consolidated down to these two practices. Name a commandment, and it will be explained through one of these two commands.

If you love God, you're obeying His Word by living a life of holiness and righteousness. In fact, the Apostle John wrote,

1John 5:3 ...this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments...

If you love your neighbor, you're living a life of service and giving, consideration and kindness. What part of the Bible is going to tell you to do anything different?

Matt. 22:40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

So, loving God and loving your neighbor are the epitome of living according to the Bible. If you study the Bible, yet hate people, you're wasting your time.

1John 3:10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

If you want to know where your walk with God is, just consider how much love you have for others.

1John 2:9 The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

1John 4:7-8 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Are we fulfilling the commands of the whole Bible by loving?